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Hela L'Wein: Performing Nationalisms, Citizenship, and Belonging in Displaced Syrian Communities

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by

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Dedication

For my family: Jessica, Tennessee, and Adelaide Pitchford. With love and gratitude for supporting me in this endeavor.

For the all of the Syrian artists who opened their stories, lives, and art to me. Your spirits glow with the light of a thousand suns.

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Abstract

Hela L'Wein: Performing Nationalisms, Citizenship, and Belonging in Displaced Syrian Communities

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Hela L'Wein examines cultural production through a textual analysis of selected theatrical output by displaced Syrians "temporarily" relocated to Zaatari camp, Azraq camp, and Amman, Jordan. In concert with analyzing several theatrical works, I also consider the process and daily lives of the producing artists. A textual analysis of both the fictional worlds created in these plays and the nonfiction worlds their creators inhabit reveals a narrative of radical democratic citizenship bound closely with identity formation in the wake of dislocation and national fragmentation. The narrative I elucidate hinges on the interrelated logics of nostalgia, desire, and hope. Taken together these three affective registers, negotiate, and combine throughout the lives and stories of the artists discussed. Nostalgia, hope, and desire become the affective filters through which these displaced Syrians grapple with recent events, sift through memories, and begin to reconstitute themselves as stateless citizens.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the spaces of displacement in which these productions took place as well as briefly summarizes each work in its entirety. Each subsequent chapter examines a selection of work through the affective registers nostalgia,

desire and hope. Chapter two focuses on moments in three productions *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, *Our Journey*, and *Love Boat* where nostalgia is used strategically to reinforce specific modes of citizenship or to induce behavior change. Chapter three examines desire as a tactic which draws on improvisation and immediacy to control small actions within larger chaotic situations. The three theatrical moments discussed in this chapter, *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, the classroom of Iman Zabeida, and *Romeo and Juliet Separated by War* exhibit agency by transgressing regulated territory. Chapter four elevates moments of hope present in the act of creating theatre for the participants in *Syrian Trojan Women*, *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*, and *Love Boat*. Experiences described in this chapter allowed the participants to project themselves into a future where the trauma of war disappears and they belong to a community. Throughout this dissertation I argue that the intersecting flow of nostalgia, desire, and hope open new pathways for the displaced participants to reconsider and remake citizenship.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

On July 13, 2011, standing near the al-Hassan Mosque in the al-Midan area of Damascus, several artists, writers, and intellectuals waited nervously for six o'clock in the evening to begin their first organized march against Assad's military actions in the southern city of Dara'a. Journalist Eiyad Sharbaji recalls standing under the freeway bridge with fellow protest organizers, actor May Skaff, screen writer Rima Fleihan, theatre director Fadi Zeidan, and "hundreds" of protesters. "The size of the crowd had clearly begun to grow," Sharbaji remembers, "[with] hundreds of them [protesters] waiting for us." In addition to the protesters, Sharbaji also recalled a large gathering of shabiha[1], "waving sticks and batons angrily at them" (Bayoud). After a brief confrontation with the police where the group of protesters attempted to reassure them that the demonstration would be peaceful, the march began. Almost immediately, the crowd of shabiha following behind them began shouting, "God, Syria, Bashar." According to Sharbaji, one of the protesters responded back with, "God, Freedom, Syria, and nothing else" (Bayoud). This pronouncement enraged the shabiha who charged the protesters and began beating them. The police, according to Sharbaji joined the melee on the side of the shabiha. Soon the police restrained several of the protesters and threw them into the back of a police transport. In a brief video clip that Sharbaji posted to YouTube, actor Ahmed Malas has a severe wound bleeding on the right side of his head.

[1] *Shabiha* (شبيحة) – translates loosely to "thugs," but is commonly used as a civilian militia paid for by supporters of the Assad regime in order to suppress oppositional views in their neighborhood or area. *Shabiha* often used bats, knives, guns, and other "light" weapons to create fear and subdue anti-regime protests in urban areas such as Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus (Abboud 81).

In all the police arrested twenty-seven protesters--ten women and seventeen men (Fleihan). The protests, particularly to this group of artists, was a performance of active citizenship engaging in a transformative act during what many thought was the denouement to decades of ruthless authoritarian nationalism in the Middle East. As they marched through the streets to the chorus of voices shouting "God, Syria, Freedom, and nothing else," these protesters attempted to reshape nationally and globally what it means to be Syrian.

Critique of government oppression is a long held tradition amongst the theatrical community in Syria. Theatre scholar Edward Ziter notes, "Over the past fifty years, the very best Syrian theatre has engaged forbidden [political] topics" (*Political Performance* 2). A street protest led by artists, however, was an unusual avenue for critique. The seeds of the artists and intellectuals protest actually began a few months prior to July 13, 2011. In the immediate aftermath of the Syrian military's siege on Dara'a in March of the same year, this same group of artists issued a letter to the Syrian government appealing for the food embargo to stop, arguing that it "negatively affected the children who could not be part of the revolt" (Canaan). The "Statement for the Children of Dara'a" or "Milk Statement" as it pejoratively came to be known, sparked an internal schism between artists in Syria's renowned television drama industry. The petition, which over one hundred artists signed, was severely criticized by several state owned media sites, the Syrian Syndicate of Artists[2], and many established actors and producers in Syria.

[2] The Syrian Syndicate of Artists is a professional social organization with administrative, financial, and legal responsibility for all professional Syrian artists. http://www.artists-syndicate.sy.

Twenty-two production companies in Syria such as Bana and Nizda Anzour Art Productions responded by blacklisting any artist who signed the petition. In their counter-statement, the production companies accused the artists of making a "political statement wrapped in a humanitarian appeal," and of being, "biased towards the terrorist campaign" (Manar). The charge made against the artists who signed the "Milk Statement" was that they were lying about the situation in Dara'a in order to turn people against Assad and his supporters. The pro-Assad factions feared that the public notoriety of some signatories would be enough to convince averages citizens to join in the protests. This fear was so palpable that Actor Zuhair Abdel-Karim argued fervently on national television that anyone party to this statement should have their Syrian citizenship stripped from them (Canaan).

In addition to criticism from the pro-Assad artists, the signatories of the "Milk Statement" and other artist remaining neutral faced pressure from the people already in the streets protesting. Several online lists were started to identify those who had spoken either for or against the revolution. On May 23, 2011 someone from the artist community started a Facebook page titled, "*قائمة الفنانين السوريين الشرفاء*" (List of Honorable Syrian Artists) which sought to encourage artists to join the side of a peaceful revolution. Other lists hoped to name and shame those who spoke openly against the revolution. The pressure increased significantly when a person using the name "Electronic Army" posted the telephone numbers of artists who had joined the revolution. This back and forth between sides culminated in the July 13th protests.

The events described by artists and writers of the Syrian revolution form a narrative that traces multiple schisms surrounding the questions: what should a future Syria look like and how far should we be willing to go to obtain it? On the one hand, there can be little doubt that many artists, even those who remained loyal to the Assad regime, believed that democratic reforms were necessary. In fact, shortly after the "Milk Statement's" publication, a group of artists proclaiming solidarity with Assad met with him to discuss possible reforms that might appease the crowd of protesters. This contingency of entertainment stars, calling themselves the "honorary list," sought to separate themselves from the artists protesting by issuing a statement which read, "The meeting underlined the role of artists in social reform and promoting awareness and the need to reflect reality to help solve problems" (Al-Jassem). As this meeting suggests, the question for many artists was not whether new measures should be taken towards a more democratic Syria, but how much each artist and the country at large should sacrifice to get there. Even some artists who did eventually join the protests equivocated in the onset. As mentioned, some of the artists who originally signed the "Milk Statement," went on television to qualify their positions. Others, contemplated the consequences of voicing their positions publicly. Theatre, television, and film actor Nawar Bulbul explained,

> For a normal person on the street, it is one thing. Of course it is dangerous, it is dangerous for anyone to go against the shabiha. But for a person who is not a star on television, maybe they are seen and maybe they are not. But for a person from the TV, it is very dangerous. Surely he will be seen. Then he will lose his position with the Artist Syndicate and shabiha will catch him (Bulbul "March 11, 2016").

Bulbul's fears were quite justified considering that shortly after the "Milk Statement" appeared all of its signatories were banned from the Artist Syndicate. As further proof, all of the people arrested at the protests on July 13, 2011 were public personalities in either entertainment or journalism.

At the same time that artists marginally agreed on the need for some kind of political reform in Syria, they diverged broadly on how far each was willing to push for these reforms. Artists who joined in the protests early on, including those who organized the July 13th protest in al-Midan, believed that reforms must include the replacement of Assad with a democratically elected government. As evidenced by the resulting actions that followed the protest on July 13th, Skaf, the Malas twins, Fares al-Helou and others were willing to go to prison and lose their careers to see reforms enacted. Others such as Rami al-Aswad, another actor from *Bab-al-Hara*, saw the need for reform, but also valued the career he had built and the safety of his family (Bulbul "March 11, 2016").

The questions circulating in the narratives created by the stories of these Syrian artists prior to the eruption of unmitigated war violence are grounded in identity, citizenship, and community. The actors and writers who vocalized their positions, for or against the protest/revolution, also staked claims on what they viewed as the future of political belonging in Syria. Early on many of the protesters, in line with other Arab Spring protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and across the Arab World, made clear that the future of their citizenship was predicated on political reforms that increased freedoms of speech, freedom of press, and a turn towards respect for human rights. While the movement in Syria was ultimately hijacked by extremist groups—Islamic State, Jabat al-

Nusra, and others--who used Assad's brutal oppression as a recruitment tool for a violent insurgency, the initial protests, according to Fleihan, hoped for political reform and leadership change without fighting. "All people who participate *(sic)* in the protest were artists, writers, etc.," insists Fleihan, "It was peaceful" (Fleihan).

Eight years after the beginning of the protests in Syria many of the artists and writers participating in the July 13th protests, and those that joined them in the weeks following, live in forced exile. If and when a truce is established between the current Syrian government and the diverse factions that have been unceremoniously lumped into the heading "opposition," this group of creative dissidents will not be allowed to return to Syria. Because of their celebrity status, their choice to oppose Assad was public and powerful. In the absence of their Syrian citizenship, how did these artists continue to grapple with the concept of belonging as a political imperative? How did their cultural production reflect their struggle to make sense of displacement? What of Syrians without the same celebrity status who were displaced? What does their cultural production say of citizenship absent the nation-state?

THESIS

This dissertation examines cultural production through a textual analysis of selected theatrical output by displaced Syrians "temporarily" relocated to Zaatari camp, Azraq camp, and Jordan's capital city Amman. In concert with analyzing several theatrical works, I also consider the process and daily lives of the producing artists. A textual analysis of both the fictional worlds created in these plays and the nonfiction

worlds their creators inhabit reveals a narrative of radical democratic citizenship bound closely with identity formation in the wake of dislocation and national fragmentation. The narrative I elucidate hinges on an ecology of affect (Shields, Park and Davidson) that circulates through the interrelated logics of nostalgia, desire, and hope. Taken together these three affective registers, negotiate, and combine throughout the lives and stories of the artists discussed. Nostalgia, hope, and desire become the affective filters through which these displaced Syrians grapple with recent events, sift through memories, and begin to reconstitute themselves as stateless citizens.

This chapter began with the artist protests in Syria because this brief moment sparked the formation of a new subjectivity amongst those protesting. Before the massive violence began, before their exodus, many of the artists remember feeling truly free to voice their desires and hopes for a new Syria. The rapid and violent loss of this newly imagined subjectivity along with the disappearance of an entrenched Syrian national identity disrupted the subject formation of the artists in this study. Once beyond the initial shock of displacement, the artists turned to narrative as a means of relocating themselves in a stateless space. Applied theatre director Omar Abu Said, for instance, worked with several displaced women to process their stories about war trauma and their flight from Syria. Another example is Eman al-Shayab, who acted in *Love Boat*. She used narrative as a way to reframe the moment when she lost her leg in a bombing. While the artists' narratives I discuss here formed and circulated in a variety of ways, all gravitate toward theatrical production. Moreover, all of the plays discussed in this dissertation rely on

narrative to consider the essential question of what it now means to be Syrian. They all resonate with the question titling this dissertation, *Hela l'Wein* (where to now)?

The remainder of this introduction begins by describing the methodology and theoretical frames governing my fieldwork and analysis. First, I examine narrative analysis through the concept of emplotment as laid out by Paul Ricouer. Then I propose that everyday life, especially in such extreme circumstances, may be read as narrative. Furthermore, because my field research included moments of participatory observation, I attempt to distance myself a bit by relying on a close reading of the narratives described in this dissertation. Finally, I close my theoretical review section by proposing that citizenship is both a narrative and affective construction. It is through the intersection of the stories told as part of these productions and the emotions which they elicit that I situate the themes nostalgia, desire, and hope.

To conclude this chapter I provide an overview of the three environments--Zaatari, Azraq, and Amman--in which the performances I observed occurred. I describe similarities and differences that define each space, paying particular attention to their impact on theatrical practice. Then I briefly discuss each production as a unit, summarizing the plot and making note of the people involved in the production. Finally, I conclude with an outline of my chapters.

METHODOLOGY

From a data collection perspective, this study relied on three primary qualitative methods—Ethnographic interviews, participant-observation, and archival research. To

begin, I took an ethnographic approach for four of the productions discussed in this dissertation. My intention was to work ethnographically for the entire study with archival research to contextualize my observations and interview responses. Security and access to the refugee camps, however, limited my ability to observe multiple performances from groups working inside the fences. My access to both Za'atari and Azraq camps required sponsorship by NGO partners working in each space. Furthermore, while in the camps I was only allowed to access those areas belonging to my sponsor NGOs. Despite these restrictions I was able to observe one performance in each camp—Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCOD's) in Za'atari and Relief International's in Azraq. Additionally, I obtained interviews with members of my sponsor NGOs and one displaced adult who "volunteers" with Relief International in Azraq. Conversely, while I only observed one production outside of the camps, I had the most substantial ethnographic encounters with the Syrians involved in that production. *Love Boat*, which was performed in the French Institute of Amman, Jordan, provided a unique opportunity to work as a participant observant. The small theatre company that created this new work on Syrian displacement invited me to work with them as a lighting and sound technician, while observing their production process. Additionally, five members of the cast and crew volunteered for interviews, and the entire cast consented to me video recording the public performances. The director, with the permission of the cast, subsequently used some of the footage from these tapes in a documentary about the production.

The remaining productions I analyze in this dissertation—*Shakespeare in Za'atari*, *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*, and *Queens of Syria* occurred in the years prior to my field work. The creator and director for *Shakespeare in Za'atari* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Nawar Bulbul, granted me access to his archival videos from rehearsals and performances. Much of my analysis for these productions derives from close readings of the archival videos. I did, however, conduct further archival research into perception of these productions by reaching into past media reports about each one. Both *Shakespeare in Za'atari* and *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* were high profile media events. These performances were covered by Arabic and Western media including from France (ARTE TV), the United Kingdom (BBC), and the United States (*The New York Times*). Additionally, both *Shakespeare in Za'atari* and *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*, as well as *Love Boat* were subjects of independent documentaries. My access to archival footage and media reports augmented the few interviews I conducted with company members of these productions. Due to concerns expressed by the Internal Review Board at the University of Texas about the sensitive nature of speaking with child refugees, I could not interview the actual cast of *Shakespeare in Za'atari,* and *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*. Several adults participated in the productions as facilitators, but in the intervening years, most of these adults migrated from Jordan to other countries. With the assistance of Bulbul, I was able to contact two adult participants, Ala'a Holani and Hasan al Amari, over the telephone.

The final production I discuss, *Queens of Syria*, also occurred prior to my research timeline in Amman, Jordan. Subsequently, this well-funded and publicized

production toured through several cities in Europe. Consequently, much has been written about this production from academic and non-academic sources. Part of my analysis of the production draws from the reactions that others had to this production. At the same time, since the thrust of my research is focused on how Syrians themselves used theatre to create new narratives of belonging, I refer mostly to documentary and archival footage filmed and edited by producer Yasmin Fedda. Her work, which ultimately led to the acclaimed documentary, *Queens of Syria* (2014), expertly captures intimate moments of the actors during the rehearsal period and through the performances. Finally, I validated my analysis though interviews and correspondence with members of the production team including Fedda, producer Charlotte Eager, and acting coach Nanda Mohammed. The information obtained from these interviews shed light on unscripted moments, group dynamics, and what happened to the actors after the tour ended and they sought to find normalcy in their new situations.

Finally, I need to acknowledge that a significant portion of my research involved productions written and directed by Bulbul. One reason for this was because Bulbul made himself extremely accessible to researchers and journalists interested in writing about the work he created with displaced Syrians. He also thoroughly archived rehearsals and performances, which allowed me to gain in-depth knowledge about productions that occurred before I arrived in Jordan. Additionally, since I was not able to interview the children in these performances, Bulbul offered insight into how the children responded to the narratives and the process. It is important to note that Bulbul was not the only Syrian artist creating this kind of work. A longer examination involving other artists who may

now be more accessible would yield a clearer understanding of the themes at play in this dissertation.

ANALYTICAL FRAMES

My analytical approach functions on two levels aimed at extracting traces of citizenship within theatrical productions by displaced Syrians living in Jordan. First, I identified narrative threads within the productions that I observed as part of my field and archival research. As mentioned above, I use the performances themselves, the production process surrounding the performances, and the aggregate of all projects as units of analysis. Although narrative analysis originated from literary criticism, the narrative turn in sociology opened methods up to exploring lived events as we would a text. To make this case I rely on Paul Ricœur's theory of emplotment, which annunciates a manner for structuring actions into a plot. Then I read across these written and performed narratives, to locate ways that citizenship is pronounced, enacted, and theorized. Although there are several ways that citizenship appears in or through the productions I studied, I chose for this dissertation to focus on concepts of affective citizenship. My analytical framework ultimately leads to the exploration of three affects that flow through and bond the production participants together: Nostalgia, desire, and hope.

Considering that the primary thrust of my research question hinges on the interpretation displaced Syrian artists use to understand the events surrounding their displacement and the current situations in which they find themselves, narrative analysis

offers a methodological pathway into reading these interpretations. As sociologist Steph Lawler notes, narratives are "organising devices through which we interpret and constitute the world" (Lawler). As humans experience events, from the fantastical to the mundane, we seek not only to understand them, but also to place them in context of other events. Through the practice of creating stories out of our experiences we define them with and against other experiences we have, as well as experiences other people have conveyed through their own narratives. This continual need to compare narratives results from the human desire to taxonomize our world. To rephrase anthropologist Henrietta Moore, narratives not only make the world intelligible to us, they also make our experiences intelligible to the world.

One important aspect of meaning making through narratives is the construction of identity. Since the "narrative turn" in sociology, theories concerning narratives and identity formation have considered the role stories maintain in pushing us to "*be* who we *are*." Rather than understanding identity as discrete traits that combine to constitute a person, narrative analysis proposes identity as a semiotic negotiation that occurs in a complex web between a person, environment, other people, history, social norms, and legal structures (De Fina 353). Following the ideas of Stuart Hall, the narrative analysis employed in this research does not view the "self-sustaining subject at the center of post-Cartesian Western metaphysics" (Hall),but rather subjectivity as a discursive process. The displaced Syrians discussed in this dissertation created and performed works that responded to the war, loss of family and friends, and loss of belonging and citizenship. But their work also speaks to a love for life, a hope for future that includes free

expression, and the ability to laugh. Not only do the artists here represent their own thoughts and memories, but they also reflect the world view that sees them simultaneously as victim and terrorist. Through the process of theatre, these artists remember their past, contemplate their current existence, and project themselves into a future.

While multiple threads of identity intertwine throughout the performances I observed in Jordan, the lines that I follow most closely pertain to the formation of a citizenship identity. In some cases citizenship adopted specific forms of nationalism that sought mental reclamation of, to quote Benedict Anderson, an imagined community, specifically one named Syria and endowed with characteristics determined to be distinctly "Syrian." In the same moments, however, Syria was interrupted by smaller communal categories applied geographically such as Dara'a, Homs, and Damascus. These terms were not deployed specifically as cartographic markers, but more so as social and political markers. One person may refer to Za'atari camp as Dara'a, not because it is physically located in the southern Syrian city, but because the culture and people living in Za'atari transported their collective cultural practices with them when they fled Dara'a, Syria.

At the same time, the world outside of Za'atari imagines the camp to be "Syrian," which flattens and oversimplifies not only the collective identities circulating throughout the camp, but those of the nation Syria, as well. The plays performed and the lives in between them take on qualities of both the local and global images as well as several others that exist on and outside of this spectrum. Through a close reading of narrative

constructions, both in the plays told and in the process leading to the performances, different citizenship terminologies, such as those described above, emerge. This type of interactional process parses between different influences that act on individual and collective identities as they continually "become." Examining the relationships between society, culture, global media, the individual, and the performance opens room for reading new hybridized formations of citizenship identity that bind together nostalgic views of the immediate past, with current desires driven by human survival, and future hopes of an existence that places liberty and equality at its core.

Connected to identity construction, narratives function hermeneutically, providing a mode of interpretation for those creating the narrative. The events these displaced Syrian artists experienced beginning with the protests in 2011, through the transition to violence, ultimately leading to their exile in Jordan occurred in such a truncated period of time that little room existed for them to process and interpret. These theatrical productions, even those that did not directly address the war in Syria, opened room for personal reflection and interpretation. Some of the plots performed in these productions were overt in their handling of Syrian politics, addressing themes such as imprisonment and rape by the Syrian regime or interfamilial violence. Alternatively, some plays relied on existing narratives that tangentially revealed political ideology. Regardless of the intent of the plot, however, the extraordinary and urgent nature of displacement wound its way into each of the narratives.

Following the hermeneutic underpinning of narrative analysis allowed me to excavate interpretive moments where the plot may not point directly to a politics of

citizenship, but is, nevertheless, present. Narrative analysis does not attempt to show a singular truth or even multiple truths, but rather to illuminate the perception of truth as seen through the reality of the person or people engaging in narrative creation. As such, this dissertation does not seek to establish an objective view of the war in Syria nor the politics leading to it. Likewise, I am not suggesting that there is an essential or universal displacement experience that leads to specific narrative themes. Instead, I am interested in understanding the varied ways in which displacement and statelessness resonated through the unique performances and performance communities I observed. Particularly, I am interested in reading the narratives through the eyes of citizenship and belonging.

During this dissertation I will view several performances through the lens of citizenship as a narrative structure. In order to interpret meaning from the often fragmented moments I observed or researched, I fashion them as part of their own narratives. This practice, which literary theorist Paul Ricœur clearly annunciated in his seminal three volume work, *Time and Narrative*, traces its roots back to Aristotle's critique of plot in *Poetics.* Aristotle describes plot as, "the arrangement of incidents" (Aristotle). Ricœur argues that the plot is not a singularly arranged system, "but the active sense of organizing the events into a system" (Ricœur). In other words, rather than viewing plot as a static set of events, Ricœur focuses on the dynamism of this activity. When Aristotle speaks of plot—or mimesis as Ricœur goes on to argue—he is pointing at the making of the plot. This act of becoming is essential to my use of emplotment because it emphasizes the subjectivity involved in the creation of narratives by the

displaced Syrians in this study. Rather than dogmatically grounding themselves to one arrangement of incidents, these narratives are fluid.

In considering the use of emplotment, I focus on three different levels—micro, meso, and macro—and the manner in which these three levels interact with each other to create a discourse of stateless citizenship amongst the artists involved in the performances. In the microlevel, I examine the arrangement of actions within the performed plays. In two cases—*Shakespeare in Za'atari* and *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*—the plots derive their structure entirely from one or more existing narratives, but the actions are sequenced in a different manner than the original plots. The inclusion and exclusion of certain scenes in these performances form a narrative themselves that exists simultaneously with the actual plots of the plays. Another performance—*Love Boat*—draws its plot largely from other plays. But rather than being abbreviated as are *Shakespeare in Za'atari* and *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*, *Love Boat* stiches together scenes from canonical works with stories from the lives of displaced Syrians, creating an entirely new narrative. Still another performance—*Our Journey*—draws its narrative from the artwork of the children involved in the performance. The plot for NICCOD's production, unlike all of the other performances written about here, was crafted by someone from outside of the displaced group. The final performance—Iman Zubaida—mimics the public narratives of female celebrities as a way to craft a new narrative for young girls living in Azraq.

Moving outward from the plots written into the performances described, both the mesolevel and macrolevel of this analysis relies on Ricœur's correlation of "mimetic

displacement" with the notion that plot structuration is "only completed with the spectator or reader" (Ricœur 46-47; Schweiker 109). Each performance observed in my study lived at the core of its own process. By that I mean that if we view the process of creating a production as a narrative, then the climax of the plot occurs as the performance opens. Surrounding and leading to or from the performance, the constituent elements of a production make up the other moments of a plot. For example, deciding to create the production may be the inciting incident while the curtain call of the final production and celebratory gatherings after a show closes could be seen as the dénouement. A production process includes similar events such as rehearsals, script formation, logistical arrangements for the production, and production idea genesis. Although the specific characteristics of the elements just mentioned vary from production to production, each are typical parts of most productions. Furthermore, the timeline in which these events occur in each production is fragmented and inconsistent. For example, some rehearsal periods spanned several months, while others occurred over a few weeks. Additionally, the events are interrupted by other events that do not proceed inevitably from the production. In *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, for example, the actors went to school, slept at home, or ate dinner with their families between rehearsals.

The structuration of the plot, as discussed above calls on the narrator to defragment and transpose the actions into a representation that is, "complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude," to quote Aristotle. This is where Ricœur's discussion of mimetic displacement applies. In some ways, the concept of mimetic displacement hails back to Ricœur's earlier work combining Husserlian phenomenology with hermeneutics.

The ability to make meaning of lived experience—which is an interpretive act requiring a reader (spectator)—necessitates the bracketing of those experiences relating to the conflict. Under mimetic displacement, two actions take place to form the narrative. First, the events that do not inevitably succeed or lead to other events in the narrative are removed. This is the act of bracketing referred to above. Recalling Sophocles' *Oedipus*, the audience does not see the mundane or quotidian events that occur between Oedipus sending for the messenger and the messenger's arrival. This moment in the performance is contracted temporally and the spectators accept that. Similarly, in the narrative of a production process, the spectator does not need to witness each event that occurs in the actors lives. Sleeping, eating, and attending school can be removed from the narrative if they do not advance the plot. Once events unrelated to the plot are removed, the narrator transposes the remaining events into the spaces left behind.

Stitching together these fragments leads the spectator from one event to the next without the interruptions of unrelated events. The function of mimesis, of organizing actions or lived experience into a system, for Ricœur, allows the spectator to make meaning of the narrative. I propose that narrativizing the production process of each performance will illuminate the negotiation of ontological meaning for the displaced participants in these performances. Taking this methodology a step further, the macrolevel of this study considers all of the productions as part of a larger debate around the ecology of citizenship. Reading individual productions and the arch of the works combined exposes modes of belonging and varied ways of considering citizenship in the condition of statelessness.

In order to maintain enough critical distance to write about the works in this study without the domination of emotion or instinctual response I perform a close reading of the actual art, the process of making the art, and the environment in which the art was created. While I know that it is impossible and even dangerous to completely distance oneself from the work about which one is writing, it would likewise be disrespectful to the artists of whom I write to fail in my critical responsibility. Echoing applied theatre scholar Helen Nicholson a call for close reading does not infer a search for the "universal truths," as it did in the traditional liberal humanism of critic F.R. Leavis. Instead, close reading as Nicholson proposes, "is a mark of appreciation that someone has taken the work seriously enough to read it in depth, to think and analyse the experience" (184). Performing a close reading on a text, performance, even everyday practices acknowledges the importance both of the text or event itself, and of the artist(s) involved its creation.

At the same time that a close reading adds critical distance between the researcher and the subject of a close reading, it paradoxically serves to close distance between the researcher and the artist(s) creating the work. A close reading insists that we recognize our own way of thinking, of seeing the biases, conflicts, and problems inherent in filtering someone's artistic works or practices purely through our own lived experience, without attempting to understand the conditions which lead the artist(s) to create. A close reading pushes the researcher to recognize different and differing epistemologies from and to which the subject flows. This analytical mode requires that we simultaneously step up and step back. As literary scholar Annette Federico describes, a close reading asks the

critic or researcher to think rationally, "without losing hold of the emotional part of the whole experience" (Federico). Performing a close reading allowed me to maintain critical distance while still remaining close enough to maintain contact with the affective registers of nostalgia, desire, and hope. The practice of close reading binds together formalist principles without denying the frame of interpretation that exists in the critic.

Bridging from the method of narrative analysis employed in this study to the frame of citizenship through which I examine the narratives, I would like to first establish the notion of citizenship itself as a narrative construction. Citizenship as narrative organizes around a temporal structure presupposing a past, present, and future connected to a social locus of gravity. Citizenship tells a story of individuals' relationships to each other and to the larger group. For the individual narrative of citizenship, the inciting incident is a citizen's entrance into the relationship, whether through birth or other means. Major complications occur when the citizen moves physically or ideologically further from the social center of gravity. The climax appears when separation from citizenship is imminent and leads ultimately to the dissolution of this relationship as the dénouement. Several variations of the climax and resolution include: death, voluntary realignment with another social ecosystem, or involuntary removal by other members of the group.

The temporal presupposition of past, present, and future, can be found in citizenship's underlying logic of security and must be believed by its constituent members. While the definition of security takes many forms—security from physical harm or security from loneliness for example—it is at the core of any theory of

citizenship. This need for security brings citizenship's transactional nature into being. I provide you whatever security defines the nature of our social gravity safe in the knowledge that you will also provide the same security. For such a transaction to occur there must be a past that necessitates it. Why seek physical protection of a group if threatened or actual violence did not occur in the past? Why seek psychological protection from loneliness if one has never been lonely? Once the bond of citizenship is made, the present situation must bear out the merits of that decision to join or stay, at least well enough as to outweigh the alternative, dissolving the relationship. Furthermore, the continued transactional nature of citizenship builds a future of expectations. For an individual to be an active member of citizenship, they[3] must be able to project themselves into the future as a full member who participates equally in the transaction. If an individual ceases to see themselves as a beneficiary to citizenship's transaction, then the individual will drift further from the social center of gravity, eventually ceasing to see themselves as a citizen.

Within the dominant system of governance globally--the nation-state--citizenship follows a liberal narrative whereby the governing apparatus conveys legal status to members granting them civic, social, and political rights. For most citizens, this narrative begins at birth when they receive at least partial or contingent membership to a state based either on the parents to whom they were born (*jus sanguinis)* or the land on which they were born (*jus soli)*. I use partial or contingent because no child is granted full

[3] I use "they," "themselves," and other plurals with a singular subject intentionally as to not privilege a gender binary.

membership into a state until reaching a certain age upon which every legal right is conveyed. Indeed, complications in the narrative of citizenship often take the form of legal troubles a person encounters before reaching full citizenship age. Teenagers in the United States, for example, might be imprisoned for a felony before reaching the age of eighteen resulting in forfeiture of full citizenship rights for the rest of their lives. If a child does reach citizenship age and fulfills the requirements for obtaining full citizenship rights, they still must maintain it by not breaking faith with the state's legal framework throughout the remainder of their life when death ultimately ends their story.

While this narrative construction of citizenship applies to a large portion of people throughout the world, it fails to account for the sizeable population that loses citizenship for a variety of reasons. According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees 25.4 million people are registered as refugees, 3.1 million are asylum seekers, and 10 million have been declared officially as "stateless." In other words, 38.5 million people are known to be either temporarily or permanently without citizenship. Clearly, liberal notions of citizenship are not working for a significant population.

In the liberal definition of citizenship, discussion centers almost exclusively around the legal and political dimensions. In this section however, I discuss the implicit connection that affect has to the politics of belonging. In particular, I focus on how affect works to manifest acts of citizenship amongst stateless communities. By 'acts of citizenship,' I am referring to sociologist Anne-Marie Fortier's definition that acts of citizenship are, "institutional and individual practices of making citizens or citizenship, including practices that seek to redefine, decentre (*sic)* or even refuse citizenship" (1039).

Working partially from Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen (2008), Fortier sees in acts of citizenship, those moments when individuals "constitute themselves as citizens" (1040). It is this part of Fortier's definition I take up because the act of constituting oneself as a citizen opens imaginative possibilities to those who otherwise have been denied the legal rights afforded by citizenship. Political scientists, Michael Di Gregorio and Jessica L. Merolli extend the definition of acts of citizenship by declaring that, "Today, each tweet, post, chant, song, word must be read as an act of citizenship, a demand to be heard because we have the right to be heard" (934). Despite containing such a broad inclusion of acts, in the hypervisible world of the present, it is difficult to deny that each public statement or act can be read through the political lens of inclusion/exclusion. This is perhaps even more pronounced in the displaced spaces where my research is set. While some performances I write about in this dissertation overtly manipulated the media's refugee voyeuristic fantasy, I contend that even those performances wishing to remain quiet and covert shouted "see us, please!"

Political visibility is not the only function affective citizenship serves. Perhaps even more integral to the act of citizenship is the bond it creates between those participating in or identifying with the act. If we are to undo the cartesian dualist principles that lie at the core of liberal citizenship, then we must move beyond the belief that citizenship is only built on the "rationalist consent of citizens" (Di Gregorio and Merolli 935). Certainly the informed agency of an individual to be governed through political membership should be part of any solid definition of citizenship. But we cannot deny the importance of the body in negotiating such a political structure. Affect, in all of

its emotion and feeling, is the domain of the body. In order for a collection of individuals to choose, without coercion, citizenship to a specific political entity, they must be able to connect affectively. To this point, political theorist, Emma Cohen De Lara, defines affective citizenship as, "the emotional experience of a collective bond" (De Lara 49). This bond, De Lara continues, comes into existence and strengthens as a result of "interpersonal relationships" built over "shared practices." Theatre, as an affective and collaborative practice, provides a fertile ground on which collective emotional bonds are formed.

In his seminal work on affect in community-based performance, theatre scholar James Thompson argues that perhaps more integral to the work of applied theatre than the structured practice are the moments of shared emotional connection between sessions. Thompson refers to these moments as "bits of practice" that although enjoyed by participants and practitioners alike, tend to go unrecorded or included in the institutional practice of applied theatre (116). Following Thompson's instruction, the theatre productions discussed in this dissertation include moments in between rehearsals or performances where the joy of being part of something spills into the theatrical space. These affective moments include singing, dancing, drinking coffee together, laughing, and sharing meals. They enrich the performance process of course, but more notably, these unscripted affective moments strengthen the collective emotional bond.

THREE DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

Because notions of citizenship often deal so significantly with space, it would be impossible to consider questions regarding citizenship without describing the three broad environments that housed these productions. Furthermore, each narrative constructed as part of these plays was intricately connected to the spaces in which the developed. For example, although Za'atari Camp is in Jordan, the residents rearranged it to resemble their housing structures in Dara'a, Syria. This knowledge plays out significantly in my discussion on nostalgia and *Shakespeare in Za'atari.* Rather than describing the environments throughout the chapters, which would risk repetition and confusion, I have chosen to include them as one unit here.

Driving from Amman to Za'atari Refugee Camp takes approximately an hour and a half. Leading north from Amman and skirting the outside of Zarqa, a town originally settled by Chechen refugees in the early 20th century, is the Damascus Highway which slices through Jordan's high Plateau. This area, once covered by steppe vegetation, is now barren due to desertification. Then detouring east approximately ten miles south of Mafraq and driving until the Baghdad International Highway, the landscape transitions into a rustier color as the steppe gives way to the edges of the Syrian Desert. This is where Za'atari Refugee camp rests, in an agriculturally austere environment miles away from any urban area. The camp covers approximately 1300 acres on the edge of the small town of Za'atari. The main entrance from Baghdad International Highway, is framed by a security gate "welcoming" people to the camp. Beyond the first check point, a sluggish half-mile crawl weaves between lines of people walking to or from the town. Those

returning carry with them large sacks filled with items many will sell on the informal economy thriving inside the camp. The entry road arrives at a second check point and another welcome sign. Immediately to the left just past this gate is the UNHCR service center compound and base camp surrounded by layers of steel fences. Residents of the camp typically stand pressed against the barrier either hoping to speak with UNHCR administrators about living conditions or trying to gain access to the internet. Ring road crosses the main entrance east to west and encircles the entire camp. Across Ring Road from the gate, is Souq Street, which houses improvised shops with crowds making purchases or socializing at coffee stands. This stretch, which the residents refer to as "Sham Elysees"[4] parodying France's Champs Elysees, is the cultural and economic center of Za'atari. Other than the market area, the rest of the camp consists of rows upon rows of temporary housing shelters called caravans intermingled with enclosed mini-compounds for the international organizations working in Za'atari.

Because of the number of Syrians crossing the border into Jordan each day, construction of Za'atari in July 2012 was hurried. In the first part of 2012, approximately 1500 people were leaving the southern region of Syria and requesting asylum in Jordan. By the end of 2012, this grew to 55,000 Syrians. This influx caught the Jordanian government by surprise. In the lead up to summer 2012, rapid settlements of people fleeing southern Syria formed in the northern part of Jordan. In response the government of Jordan commissioned its state NGO, Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization

[4] The "Sham" in Sham Elysees refers to the original name for Syria, *Bilad al-Sham* (Country of Sun).

(JHCO) to oversee the management of the newly formed camp. Lack of time, funding, infrastructure, and experience plagued JHCO as it attempted to provide aid to the quickly growing numbers. Security was originally provided through a joint effort between the Jordanian Gendarmerie[5] and the Royal Badia Forces, a Bedouin paramilitary group from the Northern Jordan area. Neither of these forces were equipped or trained to serve as a policing force. Instead, both groups remained posted outside of the fences and entered only when necessary to quell large scale violence, usually caused by protests and rioting. As comparative politics scholar, Kilian Clarke notes, the lack of governance and consistent security led to several informal leadership networks and high rates of intercamp violence (Clarke).

Realizing that they could no longer continue to manage the camp, JHCO sought the assistance of UNHCR, UNICEF, and several other government and non-government organizations. UNHCR officially assumed control of Za'atari camp in March 2013. Although UNHCR was more experienced and had a wider reach than JHCO, growing refugee crises internationally coupled with slow growth in funding[6] hampered their ability to respond fully. UNHCR's representative in Jordan, Andrew Harper recognized that they were, "prepared to provide the most basic of assistance and maximum protection, but we have to work with what we have" (Wilkes). With the inauguration of UNHCR camp administrator, Killian Kleinschmidt, a new strategy was formulated. The

[5] Jordanian Gendarmerie is a civil security force similar in structure to the National Guard. While they may be called to action in the case of large scale unrest, the gendarmerie is not primarily a policing unit. (https://jordan.gov.jo)

[6] The funding gap for UNHCR operations internationally was 44% in 2010 and grew to 50% by 2014 (https://www.unhcr.org/54fdab5b9.pdf).

"Za'atari Governance Plan" attempted to reassert authority with a centralized approach flowing through UNHCR for service delivery and more policing from the Jordanian security structure.

The entire camp is dissected into twelve districts and each district further divided into blocks. Despite its original impromptu formation, UNHCR attempted to impose a city-grid system. This effort succeeded in many districts, especially those further away from the main entrance. The original districts, which sit closer to the front entrance still maintain an element of structural chaos. Looking at UNHCR's general infrastructure maps from December 2016, the streets zig and zag around clusters of housing units in district 4. Whereas in district 8, for example, the streets cut neatly from border to border. Camp administration tried to maintain an orderly infrastructure by assigning plots to residents in the camp, but the importance of living near family led residents to devise impressive methods for moving their caravans.

The superimposition by UNHCR of grid planning over the self-organized communities is emblematic of the clash between local and global desires that manifests in some of the work I discuss in chapter three. At first, the fragmented governance allowed for improvised local structures and public spaces. But with UNHCR's assumption of control, more focus was given to efficient service delivery. This meant putting a stop to housing rearrangement and reestablishing a city-like structure. On the other side, long-term residents had formed organic structures that were similar to the governance and environment they left in Dara'a. Led primarily by district leaders, street lieutenants, and their informal networks who did not want to relinquish their power, residents would

regularly protest rule changes and enforcement. This tension can often exacerbate already difficult relationships between the camp residents and those tasked with serving them. Fortunately, after the first year of Za'atari's existence, Kleinschmidt realized that the Syrians living in the camp were organizing their own city. As he noted in a 2015 interview, "Refugee camps are the cities of tomorrow [...] The average stay today in a camp is 17 years. That's a generation. In the Middle East, we were building camps as storage facilities for people. But the refugees were building a city"(Radford). Within a certain standard of organization, Kleinschmidt allowed for flexibility regarding the placement of caravans, running of electrical lines, and operation of an informal economy. While I critique Kleinschmidt in chapter three for his approach to working with Bulbul, to his credit, Kleinschmidt stepped back enough to let the residents of Za'atari act as agents in their own "temporary" resettlement.

Examining the infrastructure of the camp also presents several questions about the access to services, particularly education. For example, a 2016 map of Za'atari shows that every district has at least five mosques with some having as many as eight. Yet, four of twelve districts do not have any schools. In total, there were 74 mosques and only 13 school facilities (UNOSAT). I mention these facts to question the availability of educational institutions, not to suggest that Za'atari should have fewer mosques. School eligible children (ages 5 – 17) comprised approximately 36% of the camp's population in 2016 with another 11% soon to reach school age. Despite the overwhelming need for education, it is more likely that a child lives near a mosque than a school. The distance to school and the danger of the walk is sited by the organization Human Rights Watch as a

main obstacle to school attendance. According to their 2016 report, "The distance to school from some parts of the sprawling Zaatari refugee camp, and the need for children to return home at night along dark, unlit paths during the winter, has also been one of the main obstacles to education there, particularly for younger children" (Van Esveld 73). Additionally, there are districts that have four schools and districts that have none. This disparity is due in part to the population distribution between districts, but international and local politics also impact where schools are built. Each district has a leader, often a sheikh who maintained power after fleeing Dara'a. The district sheikhs must petition the camp administration for placement of services. If the sheikh of one district does not have a friendly relationship with the camp administration then that district receives fewer services.

Location and distribution are not the only problematic areas concerning camp services in Za'atari. The top down development model UNHCR employed in Za'atari, as in other humanitarian crisis, diminished the voice and agency of the displaced population and disadvantaged smaller organizations and individuals from the origin country, Syria. This plays out vividly in productions I discuss in chapters two and three. In Za'atari there are currently twenty-one primary NGOs managing service delivery in every sector from food distribution to psychosocial support. Of the twenty-one NGOs only two are local Jordanian organizations while the rest are either European or American. The list of UNHCR partners reads like a who's who of international development with names such as: Save the Children, Mercy Corps, and International Relief and Development among many others (UNHCR).

Za'atari's service management structure follows the neoliberal model that began in the 1980's and grew more robust during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the United States security agenda. The neoliberal model of humanitarian development is defined largely by a top down approach that begins with the financial relationship between western powers and NGOs operating transnationally. The largest donors to INGOs are typically western nations whose foreign diplomacy and national defense strategies funnel millions of dollars into international development. The dependence of INGOs on state funding for development resources creates an inflated international bureaucratic system that breeds exclusivity and inefficiency. Foreign aid agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United Kingdom's Department for International Development often contract with oversized Service INGOs that resemble corporations more than charitable organizations. These complex bureaucratic entities often act as one stop shops for the donors funding them, providing multiple and varying development "packages." Each constituent part of a package is then subcontracted out by the INGO to other smaller NGOs which implement a specific function of the larger project. In some cases, there may be multiple layers of contracts and subcontracts before a service reaches the end user.

The current neoliberal development structure negatively impacts smaller NGOs and individuals, many of whom are either local to the host country or from the country of displacement. Unwieldy bureaucratic program contracts require a robust administrative infrastructure staffed by personnel both in the host country and located at a home office in another country. The dual purpose of the additional staffing is to coordinate the INGOs

global operations while simultaneously identifying new development opportunities. The ability to employ dedicated grant writing staff advantages INGOs because they can maintain relatively stable yearly budgets compared to small NGOs who may devote all staff to implementing a single program. Because donors prefer financially healthy organizations they will often look over smaller ones whom they perceive as financially unreliable. Moreover, donors perceive established INGOs to have more experience which they equate to ability. Yet, it is donor resistance to contracting smaller local NGOs that swells the experiential gap.

Additionally, the extra layers of personnel in INGOs add cost to a program's bottom-line. Each organization contracted or subcontracted to perform a service charges indirect costs to the donor. Indirect costs, which vary often between 10% and 15% of the direct costs, pay for expenses that cannot be traced to the program directly, but insure the viability of the organization implementing the program. Direct costs include program staff salaries, travel, and program materials while indirect costs include administrative salaries, office rental, and legal fees among others. I am not arguing here that indirect costs are ethically dubious. They serve the important function of creating stability in NGOs small or large. I am suggesting, however, that multiple layers of NGOs contracted and subcontracted to perform services necessitates multiple layers of indirect costs, which eat away at the program dedicated funding. The compounded costs of operating in the current development system continues to inflate the actual price tag for providing services to the end user, those who are displaced.

It is worth it to mention that the concerns I express in this dissertation regarding the structure of the international development system, while not the focus of my research, has a profound impact on what kind of services are available to those living in both Za'atari and Azraq camps, and to a lesser extent in Amman. Four of the performances I mention in this paper occurred inside a refugee camp and were therefore subject to the regulatory framework of the international development model. In two cases, *Shakespeare in Zaatari* and Nippon International's psychosocial program, the participants and artwork were negatively impacted because of downward pressure placed on them by the international humanitarian assistance model. In the other two performances I analyze that occurred in the camps, the participants and work were shielded from the downward pressure by the INGO's country director. Danijel Cuturic from Relief International – Jordan helped Syrian teachers living in both Azraq and Za'atari to work as teachers in their "catch-up" education programs, despite the Jordanian Ministry of Education's regulations against Syrians teaching. This cleared the way for two of the performances I discuss to take place.

Where Za'atari is on the edge of the dessert next to a small town, Azraq is in the heart of Jordan's northern desert in Zarqa governate. Opened in 2014, Azraq refugee camp sprawls over 3600 barren acres, almost three times as much area as Za'atari. At the same time Azraq's 40,452 residents is roughly half of Za'atari's. Also unlike Za'atari, the closest town to the camp is twelve miles away. The long distance means those living in Azraq camp have nowhere to go for supplies not found in the camp. Reliance on UNHCR and other service providers for supplies prevented the same type informal economy as

existed in Za'atari camp. Additionally, because this area is so underpopulated, there was no electrical services to the camp. Until May 2017, residents had sporadic access to electricity. Fortunately, Ikea Foundation's Brighter Lives for Refugees campaign funded the construction of a two megawatt solar plant that brought electricity to more than half of the camp (Mur). Recently an extension to the solar plant allows all residents to have basic electricity (Allen).

When constructing Azraq camp, UNHCR hoped to learn lessons from the difficulties experienced in the first years of Za'atari camp. Rather than create city blocks or a grid system, Azraq is more decentralized. Unlike Za'atari where the camp is broken down into districts, Azraq has self-contained "villages." The images conjured by linguistic differences in the naming of these partitions hint at the urban versus rural logics UNHCR employed in their design. To begin, UNHCR believed that villages mimicked the living conditions of many of the Syrians who would be living in the camp, most of whom fled from the rural province of Dara'a. More important, perhaps, is that spreading the villages out rather than keeping them in close proximity as in Za'atari gave the Jordanian security forces in the camp better control over the residents. Having less density per village aimed at answering the major security concerns that plagued Za'atari. Additionally, hoped to increase service delivery efficiency by the NGOs. So confident in its design choices, UNHCR touted Azraq as being the future of refugee camps across the world.

When Azraq camp opened its gates in April 2014, many of the design flaws became apparent. To begin, because the camp was built so far away from populated

areas, the only electricity on site came from a few generators that clustered around service centers. The lack of available electricity meant that residents had no fans or refrigerators and they could not charge their mobile phones. In the soaring temperatures of Jordan's desert during the summer, camp residents found no respite from the heat. Residents spent much of their time in the shadows of their housing units because it was too hot to sit inside. Furthermore they could not store meat for cooking several food essentials such as meat and yogurt. If a family wished to use any of these staple ingredients they had to travel to the one supermarket in the camp to purchase them. Such a trip for many in the camp was miles of walking. Additionally, the food prices in Azraq camp's supermarket were far higher than what one would pay in Za'atari. Many families simply lived off of a legume and bread diet rather than dealing with the price or inconvenience of the supermarket. Finally, no mobile phone meant that communication between people living in Azraq and their family either in Za'atari or elsewhere was non-existent. This communication was a psychological lifeline that simply disappeared in the desert winds of Azraq (Gatter). Between the lack of electricity, the inflated food prices, the constant heat and wind, and the desolation, intolerable conditions in the camp forced many to leave (Cuturic). In 2015, one year after the camp opened only about 18,500 residents lived in a camp that was meant to hold up to 130,000 (Reznick). Many who had been relocated there from Za'atari camp left to live illegally in the city or went back to Syria.

Complicating matters further, Jordan shut all of its land borders down in 2015 and was only allowing fifty new Syrians in per day. Rukban, a large camp that formed as a

transit point on the demilitarized border between Syria and Jordan in 2014 grew significantly. By October 2016 when a car a car bomb slammed into an outpost killing three Jordanian soldiers, the camp had grown to 75,000 people. Suspecting that most of the people in this camp were from ISIS controlled areas near Raqqa, Syria, the Jordanian government would not let anyone in unless they could be vetted and verified not to be terrorists. Furthermore, the Jordanian government would not allow humanitarian assistance to cross in and out of the area, so those living in Rukban were cut off from all supplies. The international community began pressuring the Jordanian government to let more people from this area in per day. In response, the Jordanian government created a fenced area around one of the villages in Azraq camp. They began to transport 200 - 300 people per day into this area so that they could vet them before moving them to another area of the camp. Village Five, as it became known, stood in stark contrast to the rest of the camp. While the buildings were the same as every other village, white metal rectangles all uniform in size, the fence that encircled the compound turned Village Five into a prison. Children living in Village Five lined the fence as children on the outside walked by on their way to or from school. Village Five, more than anything else at Azraq, broke the façade of normalcy UNHCR hoped to restore in their composition of the camp.

Human movement and energy proved to be the starkest difference of note between Azraq and Za'atari. When entering the front gate of Za'atari, as mentioned previously, people line the side of the roads carrying supplies, talking, kicking soccer balls around. The front of Za'atari teemed with residents visiting shops, bakeries, and

sipping tea or coffee in the cafes. The only activity at the entrance of Azraq consisted of trucks and vans carrying NGO workers through the security check points. Camp residents do not venture to the entrance gates because there are no services for them located in this area and they are not allowed to leave for trips to the closest town. Once through the front entrance, the camp still remains lifeless from village to village. Since each village is meant to be self-contained, there is little reason to travel between villages. As one researcher put it, "Azraq looks more like a storage depot than a long-term home for people fleeing violence" (Gatter). So dire were the conditions in Azraq, that those who lived there used the term, "bailed out," to describe the process of leaving (AbuZayd et al.).

One to one-half hour south of both Za'atari and Azraq, lies the Jordanian capital, Amman. Spread amongst seven hilltops, Amman is a mosaic depicting the history of conquest and colonialism that often essentializes the Levant. Fragments of architecture from the ancient Romans, Byzantines, and Ummayads, intermingle with contemporary Arabic and Islamic structures interrupted by the Western palaces of Starbucks, McDonalds, and Ikea. On the southeast side of Amman, al-Wehdat refugee camp stands as a painful reminder that the millions of Palestinian people have been stateless 1948. Conversely, towards the northwest, near the center of Amman, the area of Abdoun, which contains several embassies and mansions, attempts to masque the poverty most in Amman suffer.

It would be difficult to describe every area of the city where displaced Syrians settled following the outbreak of violence. One reason for this is that only a small portion

of Syrians living in Amman actually register with UNHCR as refugees and those that do are not required to list their address. Homogenous pockets of Syrian asylees do form throughout the city, but many remain too small to detect without prior knowledge, even by other Syrians living in Amman. There are some larger areas where displaced Syrians have congregated. Many, for instance, live in East Amman because the accommodations are less expensive, or in the older areas around downtown Amman because goods are cheaper in the shops. Currently, UNHCR lists 197,084 registered Syrian refugees living in Amman (UNHCR). That is more than in both Azraq and Za'atari combined. This does not account for those who chose not to register. For this reason, rather than attempt to define all of the locations where Syrians may be living, I will focus only on the areas where the performances in this dissertation occurred. Specifically I will discuss the organizations and institutions that aided these productions.

The first, Souriyat Across Borders, is a charity that focuses on treating those Syrians wounded by war, providing humanitarian supplies, education, and training for Syrians in need, and being a support system for Syrians experiencing psychological trauma as a result of violence. Located in the University district of Amman, Souriyat Across Borders began as a humanitarian aid delivery charity in 2013. This organization was among the first to provide static caravans to replace tents in Za'atari camp.

As part of their mission to treat the war wounded, Souriyat Across Borders opened the center in Amman to house patients as they recover from and rehabilitate their injuries. The clinic houses men, women, and children on separate floors of the building. Interestingly, the male patients who Souriyat treats come from a variety of political and

religious ideologies. This diversity in belief system often conflicts with the entirely female staff and board who run the facility. Souriyat, however, has listed this as part of their mission. They wish to use the revolution as a way to redefine the role of Syrian women. One section on their website called "Voices of Souriyat" features short essays written by some of the women affiliated with the organization. Several of the essays posted on this page reflect on the role of Syrian women in the revolution and lay out a demand for their role in the future of Syria.

The Souriyat center building itself poses interesting challenges to the many temporary residents recuperating there. Foremost amongst the difficulties imposed was mobility. The government of Jordan does not have laws regarding access for people with disabilities. Multi-level buildings in Amman, therefore, are often built without elevators or lifts of any kind. Access to higher levels of buildings for those with ambulatory disabilities is usually only possible with assistance from other people. For the production that occurred at Souriyat Across Borders, this was particularly relevant as the performance was on the roof of the facility and the actors, as well as many of the audience members, had severe mobility issues.

The other facility that I will mention in connection to the productions listed in this dissertation is the *Institut Français de Jordanie* (French Institute) located in an area of Amman called Jabal Webdeih. The French Institute, which is connected to the French diplomatic mission in Jordan contains classrooms, meeting rooms, a library, a café, and one large assembly space on the top floor. Historically, the French Institute is a part of the larger mission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France, to promote the

Francophone culture abroad. In Jordan, this effort includes holding classes in language, both French and Arabic, photography, art, and film. Additionally, the French Institute hosts film screenings, and scholarly panels that are connected to the Institute's research department.

Jabal Weibdeh, where the French Institute is located provides a unique backdrop to the production *Love Boat*, which I discuss in this dissertation. Although historically Jabal Weideh has structures dating back to Byzantine times, the mountain was not settled substantively until the building boom of the 1920's in Amman. Once established, however, Jabal Weibdeh housed some of Amman's most affluent citizens as well as several embassies. In fact, Jabal Weideh is one of the few places in Amman where Venetian style architecture popular in early 20th century Mediterranean houses can be found. Starting in the late 1970's, however, the affluent residents of Jabal Weibdeh began moving into the Abdoun area of Amman. International embassies followed this migration from Jabal Weibdeh causing the area to decline in popularity. Two decades later interest in Jabal Weibdeh increased slowly as several art houses, led by the notable Darat al-Funun, renovated their facilities or rented new facilities all together. Additionally, the French Embassy collaborated with the Amman Municipality to renovate the Dawar al-Hawaz to be an urban landscape and local gathering space. The area, renamed Square de Paris, is packed with family picnics during the days and artist gatherings at night. Often, during rehearsals for *Love Boat* we could hear music being played from the Square de Paris, which sat several feet from the theatre's windows.

Locating *Love Boat* in Jabal Weibdeh, particularly in the French Institute, starkly contrasts with the primarily refugee spaces at play in the other works I discuss. Logistically speaking, the French Institute was much less accessible to the Syrians participating in *Love Boat*. For *Shakespeare in Zaatari,* NICCOD's psychosocial program, Relief Internationals education work, and *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* the performances and rehearsals occurred in the spaces adjacent to where the performers lived, if not in their actual living spaces. Jabal Weibdeh, however, required automotive transportation to reach. While this did pose a challenge for the production to overcome, it did not limit participation. Some participants took one of Amman's numerous taxis to the location, while others, particularly the younger participants, were transported by a member of a Syrian charity who volunteered to assist.

Beyond logistics, performing *Love Boat* in the French Institute changed the political dynamics circulating several of these productions. As mentioned, the French Institute is a Western space, as opposed to the refugee spaces of Za'atari, Azraq, and Souriyat. Given the history between the Syrians and the French, it would irresponsible not to recognize the ghosts of imperialism floating through the use of the French Institute. More interesting than this facet, however, is the conscious decision to open these plays to a more diverse and decidedly Western audience. While there were non-displaced audience members in attendance at several of the other performances discussed in this dissertation, they were invading a space that was not meant for them. In many ways, the presence of white European bodies sitting in the audience of *Shakespeare in Za'atari* drew attention to the colonialist histories undergirding the entirety of Arab Spring

violence. Flipping this script by having the Syrians invade the colonizers space brazenly elucidates the unequal restriction of movement placed on asylees, particularly those from Syria, while also acknowledging that such movement, given the crisis of displacement internationally, is inevitable.

THE PRODUCTIONS

Similar to my discussion on the environments of these productions, I have chosen to include a brief summary of each play here because some of the plays appear in multiple chapters throughout the dissertation. Rather than explaining the plots in each chapter or locating them throughout the various chapters, aggregating them in the introduction and overview allows for quick reference.

Two of the productions I analyze in this dissertation occurred in Za'atari Camp separated by two years. The first play, *Shakespeare in Za'atari* began in January 2014. Bulbul, who had just resettled temporarily in Amman, Jordan rode with another displaced Syrian named Ala'a Hourani to deliver humanitarian supplies to children in Za'atari. For Bulbul, this would be his first time entering the camp. As a Syrian television actor with a French spouse, Bulbul was able to escape Syria with the help of a friend and travel legally to France. It is certainly important to note that Bulbul was displaced from Syria and would have faced severe political violence had he not left. Nevertheless, his privilege afforded him, if only slightly, an easier exit from Syria than those living in Za'atari. Hourani, on the other hand, escaped Syria after fleeing from a checkpoint he was guarding when his commanding officer ordered him to fire on unarmed protesters. While

he was not a resident of Za'atari, his living conditions in Amman were not much better. He worked illegally for a Syrian charity as a driver and constantly had to be wary of Jordanian police. If he was pulled over and questioned he almost certainly would have been deported back to Syria.

Hourani had driven Syrian celebrities out to Za'atari before and he considered it the worst part of his job. It was not the trip to Za'atari that frustrated Hourani, but the narcissistic motivations of the celebrities he drove. According to Hourani, these celebrities were from Damascus, Homs, and Allepo. What did they know about those in Dara'a? To Hourani, these celebrities merely wanted to take videos of them serving the refugees so that they could build their reputation with those in the revolution. At first, Hourani viewed Bulbul through this same suspicious lens. After all, Bulbul had long hair, no beard, and he wore blue jeans. Not to mention he was married to a French women who smoked, did not cover her hair, and looked men in the eyes. Bulbul, in Hourani's opinion, had nothing in common with the people from Dara'a and was only interested in using them like the other celebrities.

After the initial trip to Za'atari, Bulbul grew excited at the thought of working with the children in the camp to do a play. This excitement, according to Hourani, shifted his opinion of Bulbul. Bulbul's desire to create a longer project that could help to occupy and even teach the children convinced Hourani that he could help the children from his home town of Dara'a by working with this celebrity to gain the community's trust. From this point Hourani and Bulbul forged a partnership with Hourani liaising with the leaders in the districts where the children lived and Bulbul directing the children in rehearsals.

Bulbul's original idea was to work with the children in the oldest parts of the camp where there were few schools and kids were spending days idle and unwatched. He would direct over one hundred children in an abridged and adapted version of *King Lear*. Hourani added to this the possibility of creating small schools of theatre throughout Za'atari. Because Bulbul was willing to work for free and Hourani was already receiving a salary from an NGO in Amman to bring supplies to Za'atari, the project would cost little to implement. Bulbul sought the assistance of UNHCR to find a space for the rehearsals and performances. He also approached several NGOs to request donation of supplies such as water, food for the kids during rehearsals, and paints for the mural they would make as part of the scenery. Initially, International Relief and Development (IRD) permitted the new program to use their large assembly tent once per week for two hours. After the initial meeting with the children, however, IRD withdrew its permission, citing that the tent was now reserved for a Taekwondo program. Without a space for rehearsals and with no NGOs agreeing to donate supplies, Bulbul and Hourani were forced to look for other accommodations. Bulbul reached out to friends from Syria who had settled in other countries to see if they would help. Through this network, Bulbul raised enough money to purchase three UNHCR tents from being sold on the informal economy in Za'atari. The group combined the three new tents into one large covered area and named it "Shakespeare's Tent." This new community space gave the group enough room for rehearsal and painting activities. At the same time, Hourani worked with families in Za'atari to see if any of them would help support the project. One Syrian man who lived in Za'atari since its opening and owned a restaurant on the Shams Elysees agreed to

provide the children with food at a reduced price during the rehearsals. Other families donated painting supplies and water for the children. Some individual members of the community volunteered to help the children walk from their tents to rehearsal so they could remain safe. A musical instructor volunteered to help work with the chorus of children to create sound effects with the voices during the show. An art teacher living in Za'atari volunteered to supervise the children during the painting sessions. The program, which became known as *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, galvanized the community and demonstrated the capacity of a bottom-up approach to social humanitarian relief.

The script of *Shakespeare in Za'atari* itself was a simplified and relatively sterilized version of *King Lear* with a few scenes from *Hamlet* precariously inserted throughout. The play begins with the opening scene of *King Lear*, where the king attempts to divide his land between his three daughters. This first scene follows closely to the original script. Both Gonreil and Regan falsely pledge their love to Lear and are rewarded according to their show of affection. Cordelia, of course, sees Lear's game and refuses to take part in it. After an argument between Cordelia and Lear she is disowned and banished from the kingdom. Kent pleads with Lear to reconsider and is himself banished. Bulbul chose to delete the offers of betrothal to Cordelia due to the issues of early marriage plaguing many young girls in Za'atari. Instead, Cordelia exists alone, with her head held proudly for having taken a stand. The play leaps past the intrigue that occurs within the households of Goneril and Regan. Bulbul is only focused on the most basic outline of the play. After banishing Cordelia and Kent, Lear and the fool trade barbs before requesting entry at Regan's castle, to which she refuses. Having been denied

protection from the approaching storm, Lear is visibly weakened. With what little strength he maintains, Lear faces into the storm and begs it to punish him. This is when Bulbul chooses to end Lear's story. The storm and weight of his choices are too much to bear. He sinks to his knees and collapses into the fools lap where he dies. Cordelia, returning from her exile runs to Lear's body and mourns his passing.

In between each scene from *King Lear* Bulbul inserted a scene from *Hamlet.* He makes no attempt to tie the two stories together. It is as if Bulbul is simply using scenes from *Hamlet* as an interlude to *King Lear*, or maybe *King Lear* as an interlude to *Hamlet*. All of the scenes Bulbul chose to include from *Hamlet* deal with the ghost of Hamlet's father coming back to communicate with his son. For instance, Bulbul inserted the opening scene of *Hamlet* with Horatio and the three guards confronting the ghost in between the opening scene of *King Lear* and the scene where Lear is arguing with the fool. Again, after Regan turns Lear way from her castle, Hamlet, Horatio, and two guards enter. After some brief sword fighting, Hamlet sees his father's ghost and speaks to it. Finally, after Lear's death and Cordelia's pronouncement, Hamlet steps to the center of the space and cries out, "Akoon ow la Akoon. To be or not to be." In call and response fashion the other children, both main characters and chorus join the chant. The boy playing Hamlet leads the group in a line through the audience, weaving in and out of the crowd. Eventually, they all come to the center in a line and bow.

There are some noticeable omissions in Bulbul's script and staging. Most of his cuts can be attributed to the difficulty of teaching young children to act the full version of *King Lear*. But, there are some deletions which seem motivated by other factors. As

mentioned, Bulbul erases all elements of marriage in *King Lear*. None of the husbands are on stage in the first scene when Lear divides the kingdom in parts. There is no discussion of Cordelia's betrothal. In fact, Bulbul did not include the roles of Cornwall, Albany, France or Burgundy at all in the script or performance. In addition to deleting the appearance of marriage, Bulbul does not include any violence in the play. Despite *King Lear* being one of Shakespeare's most violent and grotesque tragedies, It does not appear at all in this production. As described above, Bulbul still writes in Lear's death, but his is the only one, and he dies non-violently at the hands of the storm and his own heartbreak. Finally, rather than have Cordelia die causing Lear to die of heartbreak, Cordelia lives to mourn her father's passing and caress his head after he has passed.

As interesting as the alterations to Lear are, the inclusion of certain scenes in *Hamlet* are perhaps more intriguing. Two of the scenes deal directly with the ghost of Hamlet's father communicating with a few loyal subjects of Denmark, including his son. The second scene when Hamlet speaks with the ghost focuses on his father's death against the current king. This scene ends with Hamlet on his knees pleading for his father to come back again. Most notable, however is the use of "To be or not to be" as close to the performance. This famous phrase, which the children repeat several times in Arabic and in English, mark what I believe is the most important moment of this play. Throughout the entire performance, the children speak their lines in Arabic. Placing this line, "to be or not to be," in English and the repeating it for several minutes, is clearly a plea to the world to see their situation and to help them.

The second production I write about that occurred in Za'atari Camp was part of a psychosocial program for children operated by Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCOD). NICCOD is a Japanese NGO that works internationally to deliver a variety of services to displaced populations. Although NICCOD is currently focused heavily in the Middle East with a presence in Jordan and Palestine, they also maintain projects in Afghanistan and Kenya. NICCOD began providing humanitarian relief and development in Jordan starting in 1993 with a micro financing program in Karak, Jordan. Since then they expanded to education, vocational training, protection of environment, organic farming, and refugee assistance. Prior to the start of violence in Syria, NICCOD was already working in the city of Zarqa, Jordan because it is heavily populated by displaced Iraqis and Palestinians. Starting in 2014, according to the organization's website, NICCOD was contracted by the Japanese government, in coordination with UNHCR, to provide humanitarian assistance in Za'atari Camp.

NICCOD has three primary functions in Za'atari Camp. First, they are a food and relief supply distributor. In 2016, NICCOD reported distributing supplies to 22, 160 people in the camp. Next, the offer psychological counseling to both children and adults in the camp. Their website notes that NICCOD has a team of psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers who are experienced in providing support to survivors of war trauma. Finally, NICCOD operates a community space within the camp where they offer psychosocial support to children, educational and empowerment programs for women, and informational programs aimed at easing integration into the camp.

The performance that I discuss in this dissertation is part of a four month psychosocial program NICCOD operates in Za'atari. This arts based program scaffold's its activities according to dimensionality in artistic production. The first month is devoted strictly to two-dimensional arts such as painting and drawing. The focus for month two switches to three-dimensional representation, which primarily includes sculpting with multiple mediums. Finally, the fourth dimension, as NICCOD refers to it, addresses the human body. The fourth dimension is the lengthiest and most involved portion of NICCOD's 4 month program. Using themes derived from the artwork the children created in the two-dimensional and three-dimensional sections, the team of counselors with the children decide what theme they will use for their four dimensional work. The output of the fourth-dimensional section, according to the manual NICCOD follows should either be a theatrical production or movie made by the children with preference given to the theatrical production (NICCOD). At the end of the four month period, the program culminates in a public showing of the fourth dimensional product. All of the family members are invited, as are the donors, UNHCR officials, Jordanian police, and any other "honored" guests.

The performance I observed at NICCOD's culminating event in February consisted of two primary short plays--one for the boys and one for the girls—bookended with comedic skits and musical performance by a notable Syrian singer. The play written for the boys contained three scenes dealing with the Syrian war. These scenes place the actors in a violent approximation of a fictional battle. During the three scenes, the boys shoot fake guns at each other, argue over culpability for the war, die, and plead for a

return to normalcy. Similar to the boys play, the girls are situated spatially in war violence. Rather than showing the girls as participants, however, their play shows them only in the role of victim. From an initial bombing during the school day, through a desert escape, landing ultimately in the refugee camp, this play was a bit more contemplative. Finally, the culminating event was capped with the men and boys singing and dancing to the very masculine Syrian dance, Dabke, while the women and girls sat in the audience clapping to the music.

Relief International, like NICCOD, is an international NGO that is a primary service provider in the Syrian displacement crisis. Although their country office is located in Amman, Relief International has a large base of operations in both Za'atari and Azraq. Their primary area of service was education. In particular, Relief International managed the informal education programs that were aimed at helping students reintegrate into the formal education system.

For this dissertation, I focused on one performance event that occurred in the Azraq camp. While I did not observe this performance in person, I was able to view it through archival footage. A Syrian teacher serving as a volunteer for Relief International used dramatic scenes in an educational setting to help teenage girls imagine life beyond the restrictive patriarchal structures endemic to the tribes from Dara'a, Syria. The teacher, Iman Zabeida[7] challenged the students in her classes to study and explore the lives of historical women who overcame gender based oppression. Some of the women chosen

[7] Iman Zabeida is pseudonym for the actual teacher.

were Oprah, Cleopatra, and Balquis, Queen of Sheba. As a culmination to the projects, she instructed the students to create scenes from the lives of these women which were then performed and recorded in the trailer that served as her classroom. Zabeida used theatre to teach her students, that they do not have to accept the male dominated society in which they live.

The remaining productions discussed in this dissertation occurred in various locations throughout Amman. In 2013, Refuge Incorporated, a small production company from London run by journalist Charlotte Eagar and film maker William Stirling recruited a Syrian director, acting teacher, and scenographer to build a production for displaced Syrian women based on Euripides *The Trojan Women*. This production, which would later be called *The Syrian Trojan Women* used applied theatre and story-telling techniques such as poster dialogues and letter writing to craft stories around the events each women experienced. Directed by Omar Abu Said, the play blends projected moments where the women quote from the original Euripides text with intimate moments where the women sit in a chair and tell their stories. One story, for example is about the moment that the Syrian Army raided one of the women's houses. When they entered, all of the men and boys were taken outside, lined up with their stomachs on the ground and face in the dirt, and executed under suspicion of being with the revolution. The staging for *The Syrian Trojan Women* was minimalistic with only chairs, microphone stands, and a projection screen. All of the women in the play wore black hijabs and abayas, with some choosing to also wear a niqab. The entire production is bookended by choral moments where the women move and speak in unison.

Also in Amman, two years after *The Syrian Trojan Women*, Bulbul worked with a smaller group of displaced Syrian children at Souriyat Across Borders to produce an adapted version of *Romeo and Juliet*. This production which Bulbul titled *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* used the video conferencing platform Skype in order to perform in tandem with another group of children in Homs, Syria during the siege of 2015. In this version of *Romeo and Juliet*, the Montagues are located in Amman and the Capulets are in Homs. Additionally, Bulbul deletes a number of characters from the script. For example, although we hear of Tybalt we never see him.

Similar to *Shakespeare in Za'atari,* Bulbul truncates the text of the original script, keeping only select scenes and shaping the text to fit the Shami dialect of Arabic. He also fills in vital portions of the story with the insertion of two narrators—one in Amman and one in Homs. The narrators help move the action from one location to another. They also intervene in vital moments of the play. For example, the narrators rather than the apothecary provide Juliet with the vial of poison. Additionally, Bulbul focuses on the star-crossed lovers to the explusion of almost every other character. In fact, he expunges any action that does not contain one or both of them. The play leads with the first meeting between Romeo and Juliet and proceeds quickly through their secret marriage, Juliet's betrothal to Paris, and the friar's plot to help them runaway. Noticeably missing is any mention of Romeo killing Tybalt. The decision to omit the Tybalt's death at Romeo's hand resonates with a similar decision Bulbul made to remove violence from *King Lear* the year prior. This same effort to remove violence from the children's lives also manifests through the altered the ending of *Romeo and Juliet*. Rather than the young

teenagers following an ill-conceived plan that results in their mutual suicides, both Juliet and Romeo throw their poisoned vials to the ground and demand to live.

Similar to *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, Bulbul refrains from making overt political statements. There are, however, a few moments his pro-revolutionary views bleed through the action of the play. To begin, the fact that this play is performed virtually across the controlled border between Jordan and Syria places the war front and center. This fact becomes more pronounced during one of the performances when bombs faintly reverberate in the background of the Homs video feed. That the child performers and their director in Homs must sneak through check-points to rehearse and perform every day is a political act in itself. Another moment that hints at the politics of war is the aforementioned ending scene where Juliet and Romeo refuse to commit suicide. In this act, the children of Syria scream to the adults conducting the war that will not drink the poison of hatred. Finally, Bulbul renames the character Friar Laurence to Father Frans in honor of Jesuit priest Father Frans van der Lugt who served the poor Christian and Muslim communities in Syria since 1966. At age 75, Father Frans refused to leave Syria despite the heavy fighting taking place in Homs. Throughout the first two years of war, Father Frans continued to provide shelter, food, and spiritual support to those made homeless by the violence. On April 7, 2014, a masked assailant entered the monastery where Father Frans was housing both Christian and Muslim families, and shot him twice in the head. Bulbul's use of Father Frans' name in *Romeo and Juliet* is an homage to the peace and humanity embodied by this Jesuit priest.

Finally, In April 2016 at the French Institute located in the heart of Amman, Jordan's artistic enclave Jabal Webdeih, five displaced Syrians and one Palestinian-Jordanian presented a fictional accounting of the journey many Syrians embarked upon following the outbreak of war in 2011. The play, titled *Love Boat*, by its Syrian author Nawar Bulbul tells the story of six actors who reconvene after a five-year separation. Having no hope that they will be able to return home to Syria, they decide to set sail across the sea in a small ship destined for Greece. Along the way, this troupe of actors pass time by rehearsing scenes from a canon of plays they hope to perform for audiences throughout Europe. As the audience learns, however, this hope sinks with the ship carrying its champions. In the ominous glow of the undersea grave, with their beloved properties floating daintily over the wreckage, the play closes with a whisper from fifteen-year old actress Eman al-Shayab. Ethereally she asks, "where to now?" (Bulbul "April 5, 2017" 16).

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The three primary chapters that make up this dissertation focus on ways that theatre productions and the processes surrounding them address affective themes of citizenship and belonging. More specifically, I identify the intersections of nostalgia, desire, and hope within the productions I observed in Za'atari, Azraq, and Amman. Each chapter focuses on specific moments within three plays that speaks to a specific affect. I begin each chapter by introducing the theme through an event that occurs on the periphery of a production and then move into a discussion of the productions themselves.

Although I do discuss the works in separate sections of each chapter, there are some moments where I make connections between the productions.

Chapter two, "Janna, Janna, Janna: Strategic Deployments of Nostalgia," focuses on what I propose is the first major complication in the narrative of displacement: the conscious and unconscious turn toward nostalgia. The moments discussed in this chapter draw from a longing to return to Syria temporally, spatially, or both in order to affect a certain outcome. In *Shakespeare in Za'atari* (2014), the adults coerce the children in the play to perform the revolutionary song, "Janna ya Watana" (Our Homeland, Our Nation) throughout the four month production period. Although I assume no malintent in this action, I do propose that by asking the children to sing this song repeatedly, the adults instilled a nostalgia for a virtual homeland that the children did not remember. While the nostalgia mobilized in *Shakespeare in Za'atari* was initiated by the displaced Syrian adults, the psychosocial applied theatre production by Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCOD) was directed by the local Jordanian staff. In NICCOD's performance with children in Za'atari camp boys were choreographed to shoot fake rifles across the stage at each other while proclaiming that they did not understand the purpose for this violence. The nostalgia at the heart of this play spoke of a Syrian nationalism that imagined the entire war, including the protests, never happened and everyone was back sleeping peacefully in their homes. My discussion on NICCOD's play calls into question the value of propagating nationalistic emotion and argues that this practice amounts to depoliticizing justifiable grievances. Finally, I move to *Love Boat* (2016) which consciously employs nostalgia in a strategic manner to subvert expectations

of the show's primarily Syrian audience. Using a mixture of comedy and nostalgic memorials to victims of Assad's brutality, *Love Boat* lulls the pro-revolutionary audience into a feeling of moral superiority before shining a light on the revolution's complicity in perpetuating sexual violence against Syrian women.

Chapter three, "Akoon ow La Akoon: Desire-Production in Displaced Syrian Theatre," moves into the second complication of displacement which focuses on the immediacy encompassed in desire. All three of moments discussed in this chapter accept the current situation of displacement and yet cannot imagine a future outside of the present. It is in moments of desire and the ingenuity they inspire that I argue resiliency is born. I return first to *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, only this time, rather than being ruled by nostalgia, director Nawar Bulbul uses the prejudices of the West to lure international media to Za'atari for the performance. Bulbul acknowledges that he chose *King Lear* specifically because he knew it would draw the attention of Western news agencies. His intention from the beginning was to make the children in Za'atari visible to the world. Moving over to Azraq, the next production I discuss in chapter three is far more covert than *Shakespeare in Za'atari*. Having lived in exile for four years, Iman Zabeida found work as a volunteer teacher for Relief International. Zabeida, who grew up in Dara'a, Syria was forced to marry at an early age. Now in her forties, Zabeida used her present situation to undermine the patriarchal system that consumed her youth. Using theatrical practice she not only had her female students research important women in history, but they embodied them as well. Finally in chapter three, I discuss a unique adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* that utilized video conferencing technology to cross the virtual borders

between Jordan and Syria. In this production Romeo is an injured boy living in Amman and Juliet is a Syrian girl under siege in Homs. The desire and resilience that runs through this production appears prominently in the logistical labor it took to perform the play. The children in Homs and their director drove four times a week through high security areas where Syrian snipers were positioned on roof tops, just to reach an area outside of government control where they could broadcast to Amman. After the hope of freedom in Syria had faded, theatre became this group's only escape.

Chapter four, "Hope In a Theatrical Pantopia," examines the relationship of hope in the creation and performance of narratives with the ability to project oneself into a future of belonging. I begin chapter four with an exploration of the empowerment made possible through the applied theatre process of *The Syrian Trojan Women*. I argue that through the community formed both in the creation and telling of their stories the women involved in this production began to view themselves as political agents whose voices deserve to be amplified. Moving from political to personal empowerment I return to *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* as the second play discussed in chapter four. This time I focus in on two specific moments where personal hope and love of life inspire the primarily Syrian audience to chant in celebration. The first moment concerns the young actor who played Romeo. Ibrahim, whose leg was severely injured in a bombing, overcomes his lack of mobility in order to perform extraordinary physical movements. The courage and growth Ibrahim made through the rehearsal process allowed him to imagine life as hopeful. Later in the play, when Juliet and Romeo are normally scripted to drink poison and die, the children in *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* break their vials

and declare that they want to live and love. This surprise adaptation, illustrated the contagion of hope that performance scholar Jill Dolan refers to in her writings about utopia. Finally, I move toward the spatial aspects of displacement, especially as the artists who participated in several of the productions in this dissertation found themselves leaving Jordan for new nations. Returning to *Love Boat* I examine more closely, the narrative of the refugee crossing the sea. Often, this narrative plays out through the media with dire consequences as it does in the plot of *Love Boat*. Yet, hope was at the heart of the choice the characters in *Love Boat* made to cross the sea. The analysis I conduct of *Love Boat* in chapter four considers the notion of nomadic citizenship as proposed by scholar May Joseph. As the characters of *Love Boat* imagine themselves traveling to Europe, they never consider the idea of settling in one country. Instead, they picture themselves moving seamlessly through multiple borders, stopping only to perform for the enjoyment of theatre. This free movement, I argue, replaces the West's narrative of fear about the leaching immigrant with a pantopic narrative that sees territory as boundless.

Finally I conclude this dissertation by connecting the affective registers of nostalgia, desire, and hope to the productions discussed throughout. I argue that each affective register has the ability to strengthen and inform the others. For example, nostalgia is a form of desire, but it also has the possibility to produce new desires. Likewise, new desires can alter the memories that inform nostalgia. Furthermore, hope does not exist without a consideration of what came before. I further reiterate the importance that each affective register plays in the consideration and formation of a new citizenship identity. Most importantly, I contend that citizenship both requires and

produces the ability to project oneself into a future of belonging and that the imaginative space of theatre allows for such an event to occur, especially when international legal mechanisms fail.

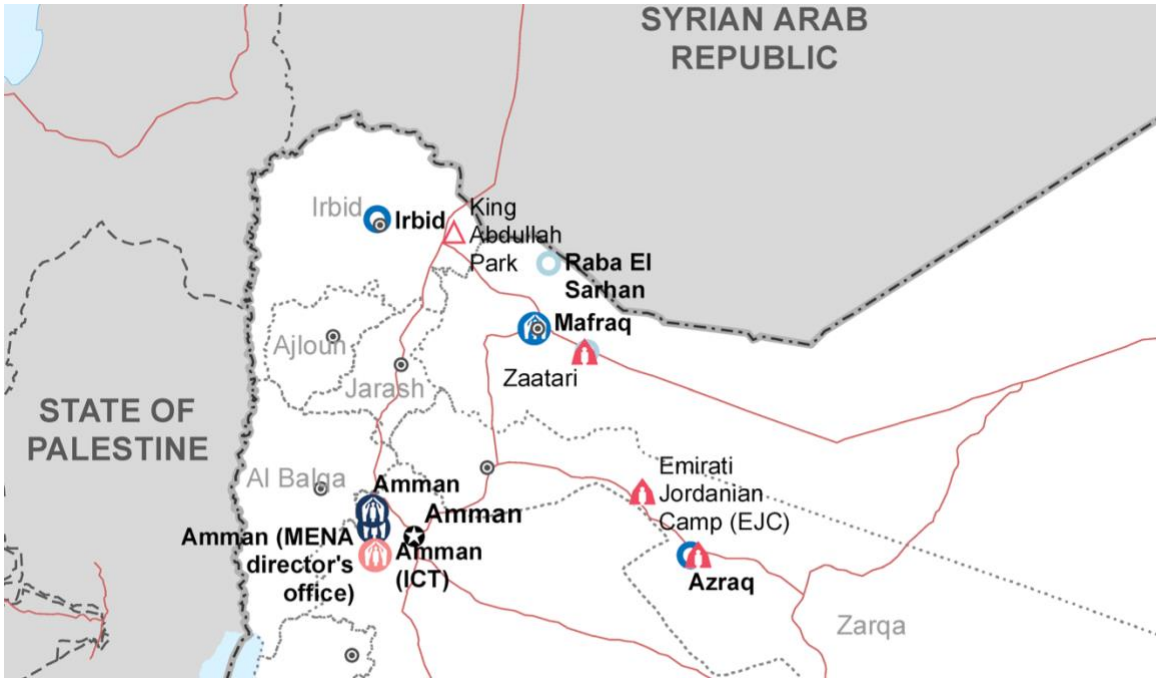

Illustration 1: "Jordan Situation Map April 2018 – A3L" by UNHCR Jordan is licensed under CC BY 3.0

Illustration 2: “17-03-10 08 Zaatari Refugee Camp” by Felton Davis is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Illustration 3: “Camp d’Azraq” by Philweb is licensed under CC BY 3.0

Chapter Two: Janna, Janna, Janna Strategic Deployments of Nostalgia

In the euphoria that accompanied the closing of *Safinat al Hub*, those associated with the show—the actors, director, running crew, family, and friends--gathered for a celebration. The Badr Center[8], which provided shelter, physical therapy and rehabilitation, and psychological support to displaced Syrians under the age of eighteen hosted the event this night. As a partner in the production of Bulbul's most recent play, the Badr Center had become a second home for those involved. When the French Institute's theatre was occupied by another organization, Bulbul held rehearsals at the Badr Center. The staff regularly invited us over for dinners or birthday celebrations. Two of the children associated with the show lived and were treated for their injuries there. It was, therefore, normal that the closing night festivities took place at this facility.

As part of the celebration a singer from the revolution, who flew into Amman from his exile in Qatar to see the performance, serenaded us accompanied by another musician playing the *mijwez*[9]. The music, laden with references to the homeland and calls for the removal of Bashar (Assad), enlivened the already spirited group. The men in the room, some of whom had fought on the side of the Free Syrian Army, entered into a call and response with the vocalist. The metered and dynamic music propelled everyone, including the children, in the room to clap in time with the methodical pulse. After a few

[8] The Badr Center closed in February 2017 after declaring bankruptcy. The Jordanian doctor who was in administrative charge systematically embezzled funding from the nonprofit overseeing the center. As a result, all of the children under care of the staff at Badr Center were displaced once again to various camps around the country. Eman al Shayab, who acted in Safinat al Hub, and her older sister relocated to Zaatari.
[9] "A double-bodied, single-reed wind instrument." (Karkabi)

songs, a handful of the men, including Bulbul, grasped hands to form a line and dance the dabke. Crossing over, left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot kicks front then backwards into a stomp, slowly the men circled in the center of the room. The movements, timid at first, grew more confident as the dancers' rhythms synchronized. With confidence came improvisation and embellishment. More men from the room joined in the dance as the intensity and playfulness increased. One dancer, a Syrian man whose organization sponsored the production *Safinat al Hub,* encouraged me to join the circle. Leary of my positionality in this moment I initially declined to insert my white western body into this culturally and politically specific celebration. After more urging from friends, I considered that maybe dancing in this moment—even though I am not skilled at dabke—would show solidarity. So, I joined the group for the remainder of the song. While my timing and steps were completely out of sync with the group, I felt the energy and joy flowing through their movements and radiating from their smiles.

Dabke is secular traditional music in *Bilad al-Sham*[10] that is often accompanied by audience participation in the form of a dance (Karkabi; Van Aken; Silverstein). Because of the proximity of the dancers' bodies and the shared experience, the dabke calls to mind words such as *jam'iyya* (collective) and *intima'* (belonging). Tension arises, however, in the deployment of these concepts and indeed in the identities which flow through and between the cultural practice of dabke. On the one hand, the dabke has repeatedly been used by the Baathist regime in Syria in effort to create a nationalist

[10] Bilad al-Sham refers to Syria, Lebanon, and portions of northern Jordan, northern Palestine, and southern Turkey. This area is also commonly referred to as the Levant.

identity. On the other hand, regional and cultural identities shift depending on who is dancing, which instruments are playing the music, and specific rhythms within the dance. In part, these tensions over identity are based in nostalgic understandings of what it means to be Syrian. Prior to the revolution the battle over identity creation in dabke could be seen in binaries such as urban/rural, or northern/southern, secular/religious. As the scene in the Badr Center demonstrated, those lines of nostalgia are being redrawn primarily along the lines of the revolution.

The version of dabke the men danced that night in the Badr Center summoned an alternative history heavily dependent on their belief in the righteousness of the revolution against Assad's regime. The men in this group were from various parts of Syria. For example, Bulbul is from Homs but lived half of his life in Damascus. Additionally, he is secular almost to the point of atheism. Holding his hand during the dabke was a member of the Free Syrian Army who was from Dara'a, which is primarily populated by rural, conservative, Bedouin Sunnis. Prior to the revolution Bulbul and this man likely had different visions of what Syria was or should be. But in the Badr Center, dancing dabke, they were linked by a common nostalgia and hope. Both men shared a historical narrative of the events leading to the revolution and those that followed. Likewise, both men shared a hope that the blood spilled during this war would be justified in the creation of a free and self-determined Syrian state.

Nostalgia, in general, is a past looking affect which rewrites particular moments in one's history initiating a longing for a material or virtual place. The etymology of nostalgia comes from the Greek *nostos* (return to home) and the *algos* (pain), denoting a

feeling of sorrow over the desire to return to one's homeland. This definition, first developed by a Swiss medical student named Johaness Hofer in 1688, was used to explain a "wasting disease" that was due in truth to a "spirit perturbed against holding fast to their native land" (Hofer and Harder; Illbruck 5). In other words Hofer was trying to offer a medical term for what had commonly been called homesickness. In contemporary contexts however, nostalgia refers to a wider array of experiences, emotions, and locations—spatial and temporal; real or imagined. Frederic Jameson, for example uses the term "metaphysical nostalgia" to indicate dissembling and (re)membering of past events into an alternative history to what an individual experienced in the memory's moment of origin. This form of nostalgia is equivalent to, "the golden age before the fall, the blissful state of primitive man" (Jameson 38). Within the logic of nostalgia, however, the event memory is posited as real rather than constructed on selective interpretations filtered through other past events, ideologies, and sympathetic remembrances. By "sympathetic remembrances" I mean memories that arise in relation to or as a result of memories that others in close proximity express. Nostalgia rests upon an archive of memories layered into an ever fluid story. New perspectives on old memories, distancing of time and space, interactions with others in close proximity to the original event all rearrange the layers of nostalgia.

Nostalgia, as Hofer original proposed, afflicted only those with actual memories of the subject of their nostalgia. Stated simply, only a person living in the particular space or time can feel nostalgia for it. I propose, however, that by pairing nostalgia together with feminist scholar Marienne Hirsch's theory on postmemory, nostalgia can extend to

individuals generations away from the original event memory. Hirsch posits that memories of traumatic events passed down through generations either through stories, ephemera, or other cultural production from those who migrated originally create memories for generations that will never experience the original event. The transmission of these memories is so deep that they often subsume one's actual memories (Hirsch 5). While Hirsch's "postmemories" applied originally to memories of traumatic events that have been handed down generations, there have been recent arguments that suggest postmemories of trauma can only be understood within a full cache of family memories, including positive and longing memories of home (Wolf 75). Postmemory nostalgia then would be memories from a traumatic time that have been transferred to a "second generation" or beyond and reassembled so as to creates a longing for the past, not for its trauma's but for the joys before and in between the traumas.

Pairing Hirsch's traumatic postmemory together with nostalgia may seem odd to some at first, especially if nostalgia is viewed as a positive longing for an alternative past constructed in one's memories. I contend that this pairing actually makes perfect sense if we return to the etymological roots of nostalgia and recognize it as the disease Hoffer attempted to describe. When viewed pathologically, nostalgia is a symptom of trauma. By its nature, nostalgia presupposes a loss. A person experiencing nostalgia does so only because they can no longer experience the actual thing that created the nostalgic memory in the first place. Furthermore, present conditions for the person experiencing nostalgia are distressing enough that they retreat into past memories in order to escape present discomforts. In some situations, the desire to return to the past, to the "good old days," is

so powerful that the person afflicted with nostalgia attempts to reconstruct the past as it exists in their memory. One powerful tool in this rebuilding process is passing the nostalgic memory on to the next generation so that they can aid in the effort to turn back the clock. Postmemory nostalgia then becomes a pathological longing for an imagined past that was handed down from one generation who experienced the original trauma of loss to the next generation who continues unsuccessfully to recapture what was never truly there.

Because the memories carry the weight of authenticity they shape and affect newer generations' connection to home. For Syrian children who were not old enough to remember the violence of the war, or perhaps were not born yet, are transported, not by their own memories, but by those of their parents, older siblings, and extended family. The movement between the present and the imagined past for these children, "give[s] life to [their] positioning as people, communities and nations, and are couched within context-specific identity narratives" (Drozdzewski, De Nardi and Waterton). With postmemory nostalgia the mixture of nostalgia's affect and the externally influenced memory establishes particularly firm connections because, "engagements with emotion offer new knowledges that deviate from those solely conceived as 'abstract, disembodied, purely rational and objective'" (Jones). Nostalgia, by its nature, is a conflict between joy and pain, and through conflict something new is created. Within the battle between the warm feelings that arise at the thought of a sunset sitting outside of one's home and the anguish at the knowledge that this moment will never be repeated, the memory finds new meaning. For the Syrian children now displaced in Jordan and around the who receive

their memories of home through their parents or other outside sources, the joy and pain, imagined as they may be, are no less real. Postmemories produce a multi-generational link between the place and/or time of origin and the diaspora.

Sharing and creating memories, especially in the circumstances that displaced people exist, is an essential part of forming community and negotiating new modes of citizenship. In this chapter I explore three moments during productions that involved both a sharing and creation of memories which in turn rewrote nostalgic narratives for those participating. The first moment involves a transfer of experience from an older generation of displaced Syrians to the younger through the revolutionary song *Janna* (Our Homeland). Throughout the rehearsal process for *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, the Syrian adults petitioned certain children to sing *Janna*, which paints an image of unification between revolutionary forces throughout Syria. The lyrics and music, along with the mythology that came to describe the young soccer star who originally sang *Janna* gave rise to an alternate nationalism that transcended regional or sectarian differences. Although the performance of this song was secondary to the play's rehearsal, its repeated performance by the children for the entertainment of the adults constructed a dominant narrative for a generation that was scarcely old enough to remember the beginning of the revolution. Through postmemory nostalgia, the children of *Shakespeare in Zaatari* rearticulate a vision of post-revolution Syria, that exists only as a "virtual homeland" in their adhoc existence.

Postmemory nostalgia also plays a role in the second performance I discuss in this chapter. During one of my few visits to Zaatari I attended a performance by children who

were part of the psychosocial program led by Nippon International Committee for Community Development (NICCOD). During this performance, a script written by one of the local NICCOD counselors asked the children to imagine themselves as fighters on separate sides of the revolution. Young boys dressed either in military fatigues or civilian fighting attire enact a fire fight scene, a field hospital scene, and finally mini-monologues on an empty stage declaring their intent to make peace and rebuild Syria. All of this occurred while their families sat crammed in a sweltering temporary metal structure, applauding at the declarations to return. Beyond the questionable ethics of such a performance in the psychosocial setting, this performance brings to the fore questions about the role of international humanitarian organizations regarding the politics of revolution. What are the implications of a non-Syrian organization using Syrian memories to fictionalize scenarios relating to war and citizenship?

Finally, I explore the use of revolutionary nostalgia as a tactic for introducing collective introspection. During Bulbul's production of *Love Boat* the actors continually refer to events that occurred during the early days of the revolution. Some of these are based on memories of the actual actor playing the role in *Love Boat* and some are from stories of events that occurred to people that Bulbul knows. While all of the memories are based on real events, the representation of them in *Love Boat* takes on a certain mythology. I suggest that the company mythologized these memories intentionally in order to build rapport with the prerevolutionary audience. This tactic then allowed *Love Boat* to implicate the revolution itself in emotional violence against its own people. By

using nostalgia as a tactic, the company of *Love Boat* hoped to force backers of the revolution to consider their own understanding of freedom and equality.

JANNA YA WATANA

In late 2011, a local soccer prodigy turned protest leader, named Abdul Basset al Sarout[11] adapted the lyrics of a traditional ballad to reflect the emotion of the revolution. The song, *"Janna ya Watana"* (Our Paradise, Our Nation), which he recorded and published on YouTube, became one of the most adored and sung anthems of the Syrian revolution. (Bulbul "Videoconference on November 22, 2017"; tahseen2111). Al Sarout was already popular with young men and boys in Syria because of his on-field play as the goal keeper for both the Syrian under-20 level and the Syrian League champion Al Karamah Sporting Club. At the height of Syrian protests in 2011, however, al Sarout at age twenty chose to abandon what Asian football media referred to as a "promising career" in order to focus on his new role in social leadership (Ahmed).

When he positioned himself as a public face for the revolution, al Sarout adopted a mythic stature. Images and YouTube videos from protests in Homs paint the image of a herculean figure poised to carry the weight of the Syrian revolution on his back. One image shows al Sarout transforming the top of a car into his make-shift stage with throngs of fellow revolutionaries crowded beneath. Dressed in a red sweater and blue jeans with a Syrian flag scarf around his neck, al Sarout reaches his arms out towards those at his feet who are energetically clapping and singing. This messianic image

[11] Sadly, Abdul Basset al Sarout died on June 6, 2019 as a result of wounds sustained while battling against regime forces in northern Hama province.

conveys the importance al Sarout's role in the early days of the revolution as well as its symbolic significance in post-displacement nostalgia.

For those pro-revolution Syrians who chose to flee the country and seek refuge, al Sarout and other celebrities who openly protested against Assad act as a touchstone tethering their memories spatially and temporally to a moment they view as hopeful. The protest events captured and publically archived on YouTube and other internet formats contain unbridled jubilation at the belief that, like Egypt and Tunisia, if they simply sang and shouted loud and long enough Assad would have to step down. The recorded protests led by al Sarout memorialize a particularly enthusiastic crowd. So, it is no surprise that Syrians living in Zaatari, Amman, or elsewhere experience nostalgia when encountering thoughts, songs, or images of al Sarout.

The power of al Sarout's charisma and the nostalgia it conjures appeared clearly throughout the process of creating *Shakespeare in Zaatari*. Several videos taken by people involved in this project show the lead male actor, Majid, singing al Sarout's version of "*Janna ya Watana"* accompanied primarily by the adults in the room. On one hand, Majid's repeated performance of this song is a unifying act which bridges differences in age, region, and religious ideology between all of the participants in *Shakespeare in Zaatari.* At the same time, *"Janna ya Watana"* maintains a nostalgia for the revolution that reinforces a sense of righteousness regarding the decision to protest and fight, particularly in the face of the disillusionment present during the Assad regimes' deadly offensive against Aleppo and Homs. Furthermore, by pressing Majid and other children into singing this revolutionary song, the adults involved in *Shakespeare in*

Zaatari actively transmit their nostalgia to the next generation who have few if any memories of the protests. This act of postmemory nostalgia reimagines Syrian nationality by looking backwards in order to recreate the future.

The lyrics to "Janna ya Watana" are not obscure in their nationalistic and revolutionary intent. While the song does call for the overthrow of the national government, it does so on behalf of all Syrian citizens regardless of region or religion:

> Paradise, paradise, paradise; Oh God, my homeland
>
> Oh my Homeland, my love; Oh your sweet soil
>
> Even your hell is like paradise
>
> Revolutionary, revolutionary Dara'a; In our darkness you are our candle
>
> Homsians hear your call; Oh our cradle
>
> Oh our cradle
>
> Homs oh mother of the Arab; The weak fear you
>
> What is more difficult; We do not know difficult
>
> Heroes ask about us; Homsians ask about us
>
> Aleppo, oh mother of the greatest men; Syrians call for you
>
> The struggle is alive; Do not abandon our home
>
> Do not shame our people. (tahseen2111)

Sarout opens “Janna ya Watana” by declaring that Syria is both “paradise” and “our homeland,” immediately establishing a unified message and inclusive tone. Following the first verse he crafts specific messages to different cities such as Dara’a, Homs, and Allepo. Each message both outlines the particular city’s role in the revolution while also forwarding a call to action. For example, Sarout refers to Dara’a as “our candle” in “our darkness,” and “our cradle.” Here he implores Syrians to look toward Dara’a in moments of doubt and despair to remember why they are protesting. This is similar to the American phrase, “Remember the Alamo,” where a defeat or violent action is deployed to solidify resistance. A second example occurs when Sarout warns Allepo not to “abandon our home” and “shame our people.” In this verse, Sarout directly speaks for “Syrians” requesting Allepo to join the protests because, “the struggle is alive.”

Not surprisingly, Sarout placed Homs, his home town, at the heart of the revolution in his song. As a native of Homs and a player on the city’s football club, it is clear that Sarout feels affection for Homs. But there is another reason for Sarout to center this fiercely independent city. Homs, considered by many revolutionaries as the ‘capitol of the revolution’ was the first major city outside of Dara’a to protest Assad’s regime in March 2011. The citizens of Homs also transitioned from protests to armed insurgency before any other city. Consequently, the Syrian military launched its first major offensive in Homs to squash first the protests and later the rebellion. To demonstrate its loyalty to the revolution Sarout includes Homs as an actor in many of his verses in “Janna ya Watana.” He assures the Syrians in Dara’a that, “Homsians hear your call,” clearly indicating that the citizens of Homs are willing to stand and fight for the injustices

suffered by people in Dara'a. Furthermore, Sarout positions the people of Homs in higher stature than mythological figures by suggesting that, "heroes ask about us."

The ability to reach across different Syrian cultures and encourage loyal resilience and resistance gives "Janna ya Watana" its potency as a revolution song. This characteristic also made it an amazing mode of expression and communication between the children in *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, their parents—most of whom were from Dara'a—and Bulbul who was from Homs. Throughout the rehearsal process for *Shakespeare in Zaatari* there were many times that portions of the company and those peripherally connected sang "*Janna ya Watana.*" Of course, this song and the emotions it stirs are at their root nostalgia for the revolution. But its influence travels far beyond a simple pang for home and some imagined or perceived past. The nostalgia enacted every time "Janna ya Watana" was sung created Syrian communities based in hope for a new national unity connected by revolutionary sacrifice, real or perceived, rather than political borders.

The three moments I describe here where "Janna ya Watana" appears most prominently during the *Shakespeare in Zaatari* project include the children as the primary vassal through which this song of hope flows. Working through archival footage, I carefully parsed through the videographer's choice to film the children and the role adults in the space played in instigating or convincing the children to sing. This is important because the videographer in these circumstances was French journalist, Vincent Vulin, who had no direct connection to the revolution in Syria. While exploring his framing choices in these videos would be instructive for understanding the Western gaze's fascination with children in trauma, that subject is outside the scope of this dissertation.

What I am interested in showing, however, is how the Syrian men in the periphery of the video, employ postmemory nostalgia by compelling the children to sing about moments that occurred before many of them were intellectually developed enough to understand the idea of revolution. Furthermore, the performance of "Janna ya Watana" by the children in this space intertwines the revolutionary past, liminal present, and future nationalistic hope of the men for whom they sing.

The first time I encountered the children singing "Janna ya Watana" was in a documentary about *Shakespeare in Zaatari* by Syrian film maker Ma'an Mousili. A recording of Majid singing the song plays over video of Zaatari taken from the interior of a car as it drives through the camp. The audio for this moment was actually taken from footage French journalist Vincent Vulin filmed in Shakespeare's tent[12] of children painting a mural in between rehearsals. During two separate days where Vulin recorded the painting sessions, Bulbul requested for Majid, who played King Lear, to sing "Janna ya Watana." In the first video, Bulbul instructs Majid to sing, *"Kaif ma bidak"* (how you want). Without hesitation Majid sang "Janna ya Watana." His young powerful voice belted out the first lines, *"Janna janna janna, wallah ya watana"* (Our paradise our paradise our paradise, I swear by God our nation). While continuing to paint a rainbow on the canvas, Majid melted into the words and melody coming from his voice. When he first reached the chorus, without prompting the rest of the children and adults in the tent joined in. Everyone clearly felt the joy and celebration of this song. As the song carried

[12] Shakespeare's Tent, in Zaatari Refugee Camp was, for a brief period from 2014 – 2015, a community gathering space for the children in district seven.

on, the camera panned around the room to capture the other children singing along with Majid. During one of these transitions, at the back of the tent, one young girl dressed blue jeans, a bright pink sweater and multicolored hijab painted what looks to be the Syrian revolutionary flag with the word *"huriya"* (freedom) in red above it. As the song progressed, Majid gave himself over completely to singing. He stopped painting, and clutched his art supplies while swaying from side to side, eyes closed, and performing the emotions of the song.

This moment in *Shakespeare in Zaatari* operates primarily on two levels that intersect and reinforce each other. The space where Majid performed existed as a community space. When Bulbul was not using it for rehearsal, Shakespeare's tent was open for children to paint or play with swords and for adults to hold community meetings. It was a gathering space that belonged to the Syrians rather than the western organizations. Added to the nature of Shakespeare's tent, singing, especially in a "call and response" format such as the way the group sings in this video, is a collective practice. The group, in this case Bulbul, Majid, Majid's uncle Hassan, and the other children in the tent, accept their roles in a ritualistic performance with nationalist underpinning. Majid is the spiritual leader for the duration of the song. His role is to channel the essence of the revolution that lies at the heart of "Janna ya Watana" and then to act as the conduit through which the rest of the group is affected. The others in Shakespeare's tent, including the adults, accept Majid's preeminence by ceding the creative space to him during the verses and then interjecting their voices as a unified sound during the chorus.

In tandem with the collective nature of the group's performance, the act of singing "Janna ya Watana" which is, at its roots, a call to continue the revolution, also serves to reinforce nostalgia for the revolution in the adults and older children or to plant the seeds of postmemory nostalgia for the revolution in the younger children. All of the people in Shakespeare's tent when Majid sings this song who are old enough to be socially and politically cognizant of the revolution draw strength and a connection to home by participating in the ritual. This was vitally important for the psychological well-being of those who remembered the beginning of the revolution and who felt guilt at leaving the country while others stayed to fight. On the other hand, "Janna ya Watana" for those who were too young to feel a deep patriotism toward Syria or the revolution during the first year of the war or before they fled to Za'atari became the access point for the memories of their parents, uncles, aunts, or older siblings. Songs such as "Janna ya Watana" tell a story about the glory and righteousness of a cause. Similar to other forms of storytelling, or 'situated speech' to use Tschuggnall and Welzer's term, these songs, particularly in private spaces such as a home or amongst family, "form integral pieces of an identity jigsaw" (133; Drozdzewski, De Nardi and Waterton 450). Storytelling and songs such as "Janna ya Watana" allow multiple generations to exchange lived experience and discover meaning. So, even if the younger children could not remember or were not aware of people going out into the streets to protest or the violence that followed, they could connect to the memories of the adults around them and even take them on as their own through the process of performing this song in a collective space.

As a community building tool in a space of displacement and trauma, the act of singing "Janna ya Watana" both connects the participants in the tent to one another and assists them in reconnecting to their Syrian identity. In fact, I propose that one is dependent on the other. Although many of the people participating in *Shakespeare in Zaatari* are from Dara'a, there were several children and adults that fled from other cities such as Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo. As mentioned previously, there is a significant cultural difference between people from the rural area in the South of Syria and those who lived most of their lives in the urban areas further north. "Janna ya Watana" flattens those differences and focuses instead on the belief in revolution against Assad as a marker of identification. So, when a group of people from different regions and different cultures in Syria sing this song in the same physical space, they are recognizing a mutual identity and binding together over that commonality.

For the adults, this act of identifying through song is not only intentional, but it is also essential to combating isolation. But what about for the children, particular for Majid who is regularly the one asked to sing for the group? Was he singing "Janna ya Watana" because he needed to reconnect with his Syrian identity or because as a teenage boy he sought the approval of the male authority figures around him, particularly Bulbul who was a cultural icon? Although, both reasons are present to some degree, I want to explore the possibility that the latter is not only dominant in Majid's performance of the revolutionary song, but is actually vital to the existence of the former. His need for validation from Bulbul and the other adults compels Majid to sing "Janna ya Watana," which in turn helps to shape his Syrian revolutionary identity. Furthermore, because

Majid is positioned at the artistic center of *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, his performance of "Janna ya Watana" influences the other children present which extends the revolutionary identity throughout the group. In other words, Majid becomes the performative conduit through which Bulbul and the other adults transmit their memories of the revolution and identities as revolutionaries to the younger generation of Syrians in *Shakespeare in Zaatari*.

Similar to the first instance described above where Majid led the group in singing "Janna ya Watana," video exists of him repeating this performance two other times. One occurs two days after the first video of Majid singing. This one, like the first, takes place in the tent during painting time. Once again Bulbul asks Majid to sing "Janna ya Watana," but this time, rather than enthusiastically obeying the request, Majid glances quickly at Bulbul and then goes back to painting as if he had not heard. So, Bulbul asks again. This time, Majid sings only the first few words then stops and walks over to the paint table to change colors. Bulbul, who is filming the moment, follows Majid to the table, but is obstructed by another teenage boy who laughingly tells Bulbul that he only wants to draw. A minute later, Majid returns to the spot where he was painting and Bulbul asks him to sing another time. This time Majid does not even turn around, he continues painting, perhaps hoping that Bulbul will relent. Finally, after Bulbul asks a fourth time, Majid, with a perfunctory response, starts singing "Janna ya Watana." Once he complies with Bulbul's request, the rest of the children follow suit and sing during the chorus as they had before. It is clear from the difference in mood and energy that this performance is less enthusiastic than the previous one. The moment appears to be just shy

of compulsory. Majid's reluctance could be because he was simply tired. After all the group had been rehearsing for a few hours. It could also be that Majid was annoyed with being asked to sing the same song repeatedly. Rather than speculate about the cause for Majid's lack of motivation, it is enough to say that his enthusiasm for this nostalgic performance was not equal to Bulbul's.

The third recording of Majid performing "Janna ya Watana" for the adults occurred during a dinner party at his family's housing area in the camp about a week after the first recording. During the day Vulin followed Majid around the camp in order to capture what his life was like outside of *Shakespeare in Zaatari*. Then after rehearsal that night, Vulin and Bulbul attended a gathering held in their honor. The dinner, as show through the footage Vulin filmed of that night, appeared to be a normal guest hosting event. That is to say, the hospitality was visible, multiple conversations filled the room, and the meal, which consisted of kibbe and mansaf, was served family style. There were no extraordinary efforts made just because the guest happened to be a Syrian film star.

Following the dinner, several of the children from the play came into the small caravan where Bulbul and some of the other adults sat. The center of the caravan, which moments before functioned as a table, transformed into a performance space. The children took center stage, and performed the scene where King Lear divides his kingdom between his daughters. Not all of the actors could be there, so Majid's uncle, Hassan, joined them to cover the role of Regan. Once the actors finished the scene a few more children entered the caravan and positioned themselves behind Majid. The group, with all of the adults' focus on them, sang "Janna ya Watana." Similar to the two other recordings

I viewed, Majid started the song and sang solo on the verses with the other children and adults joining in on the chorus.

Unlike the previous two times when Majid sang "Janna ya Watana," the children's performance after dinner existed within a theatrical container. When the song begins Majid stands alone on center stage with three children—backup singers--positioned a row behind him. A fourth child enters the group midway through the performance and stands next to Majid, who counters by stepping forward. Additionally, the only boy standing on the back row moves forward one step, which creates three rows—the first with just Majid, the next with two boys, and the last with two girls. This bit of improvised choreography indicates not only that Majid understands his position as the lead performer, but also that the patriarchy embedded in this community instinctually superimposed itself over the performance.

In addition to the staging, the scenery in the caravan added to the theatrical artifice of the children's performance that night. Vulin, who filmed this mini-performance, moved the camera from house left to house right, always maintaining Majid as the center focus. Behind the group, however, hung a Syrian revolutionary flag with "حرية" *(huriya)* in the top green stripe, three red stars in the middle white stripe, and "freedom" in the bottom black stripe. Despite Vulin's attempt to make the children his focus, the flag, which towered over the children's heads, remained prominent. In concert with the lyrics of "Janna ya Watana," the symbolic backdrop firmly grounded the performance in both nationalistic and revolutionary roots. Indeed, the children sang about

freedom, but they and the adults in the room, clearly imagined that freedom to exist within the borders of Syria.

All three of the performances of "Janna ya Watana" described here function as nostalgia for the adults present in the room. As mentioned previously, the message of the song itself reflects a longing to remember the beginning of the revolution when the hope of change throughout Syria penetrated multiple cultures temporarily replacing significant religious and political differences. Hearing the song conjured memories for the adults, many of whom actively participated in the initial protests.

At the same time, the children, who were too young to have memories similar to the adults became receptacles for the transmission of nostalgia. Their version of the revolution exists, at least in part, as a product of singing "Janna ya Watana" at the urging of those responsible for them. The second performance described in this section, Majid only relents to singing after Bulbul pleads with him. When he does sing, it is clear that it is only in obedience to an authority figure. Even when Majid and the other children sing more willingly, there still exists a level of cajoling from the adults around them. Postmemory nostalgia is learned rather than experienced. The children do not have the memories represented by "Janna ya Watana," so the adults must teach it to them through song and have them perform it repetitively in order to embed these memories in the next generation. Through these performances which are grounded in revolutionary nationalism, the adults work to insure continued resistance.

POSTMEMORY NOSTALGIA IN SERVICE OF INTERNATIONALLY INDUCED NATIONALISM

When the source of a child's postmemories is an international organization, rather than adults from the same community, as they were in *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, the deployment of nostalgia through theatre takes on propagandistic properties. In February 2016, when Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCOD) decided to stage scenes of war and reconciliation as part of the culminating performance to their psychosocial program for children, they used postmemory nostalgia as a way to induce feelings of Syrian nationalism. Unlike the Syrian identity formation discussed in the previous section where the politics of the revolution were centralized, NICCOD's version of nationalism sought to dismiss the real grievances that led to the original protests in Syria. Whether intentional or not, NICCOD, through the performance of *Our Journey*, cast the political divisions in Syria as meaningless in an effort to push a reconciliation agenda.

Arriving late to the prefabricated building that serves as the only inside performance space in Zaatari, one of the NICCOD counselors, Mohammed, led me through the crowded backstage area into the house. He pointed me toward a reserved seat in the front row amongst several of the children who would be performing that day. Inside this temporary structure on a chilly February morning in 2016, several children who participated in NICCOD's psychosocial program for the last four months were preparing to perform their capstone project. Following a brief announcement by the event's master of ceremonies, the lights were turned off and a flurry of bodies entered and exited the stage. Suddenly, red lights followed rapidly by deafening explosions

pierced the darkness. After a brief barrage, which strained the stage left and right speakers, a dim glow revealed two barricades on opposite sides of the performance space. Behind each barricade stood four young Syrian boys. The four boys on stage right wore military outfits while those on stage left wore civilian combatant clothing. Some of the boys on both sides had beards painted on their faces, while some retained a youthful visage. All eight boys held toy Kalashnikov rifles and pretended to fire them across the stage at their "enemy" while the sound of overly amplified automatic gun fire invaded the house. This opening scene, which I characterized in my notes as "accidentally Artaudian," introduced a performance saturated in themes of nationalism and reconciliation.

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, NICCOD's program purported to assist these children in processing their traumas through artistic physical manifestations. In reality, development influenced nationalism rather than psychosocial rehabilitation underpinned the performance I witnessed in 2016. Moreover, like the children in *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, some scenarios presented nationalism through memories that, could not belong to the children performing them which begs the question: whose memories were these?

In *Shakespeare in Zaatari* the Syrian adults converged their own memories with the song, "Janna ya Watana" by al Sarout which created postmemory nostalgia for the child actors. NICCOD, on the other hand, crafted fabricated moments based on banal representations of insurgencies. While the content subject may be drawn from artwork by the children, NICCOD's methodology gives the local facilitators interpretive authority

over the final script to be performed. Psychologist Kuwayama Norihiko, who created the manual NICCOD follows for its work, instructs that everyone should be involved in deciding the overall theme of the drama, but "to save time, it seems effective if one person [the facilitator] eventually summarizes the scenario" (Norihiko).

According to the facilitators with whom I spoke, they closely followed the prescribed process from Norihiko's manual. In Norhiko's methodology a psychosocial workshop can last from four to six months and is divided into three scaffolded parts. The first part focuses on exploring two dimensional non-verbal images. Students are tasked to draw images that represent any trauma's they may have experienced before or during their transition into the camp. Following two dimensional exploration, the group mooves to three dimensional arts by using similar creative prompts explored through sculpture with various mediums. The third section of Norhiko's psychosocial program takes the child into embodied practice. Participants are asked to consider the work they have done in the two previous sections and bring them into existence through music, dance, and finally theatre. The performance of a theatrical production is the culminating event to Norhiko's methodology.

While there certainly is room to examine the efficacy of exploring one's trauma through art, it is in the crafting of the theatrical production that I find most troubling. According to Norhiko's methodology, creation of the script begins by capturing a list of themes that occurred repeatedly in the visual art the children created in phases one and two. These phases are two and three-dimensional representations or painting and modeling, respectively. The facilitators then listed these on a board and discussed them

with the entire group of children. After a few rounds of discussion where the group eliminated themes from the list, the children voted on the three remaining themes to decide which one they would use to create the drama. Once the themes were decided, however, the children's input into the script ended. The children do not participate in the actual script writing. They are not offered any opportunity to control how the theme is developed or represented. Put another way, although the children's trauma based artwork was used to determine the theme of the group's dramatic stories, the script through which that theme manifested was determined entirely by a facilitator. Rather than empowering the children to control their own narratives, facilitators following Norhiko's method abstract the children's traumas and create an entirely fictionalized narrative without regard for the underlying politics.

While removing the children from the process of creating the play's narrative is problematic, Many of the resulting scenes were rather generic and banal. For example, the girls' performance began and ended with two young Syrian girls wearing matching periwinkle jogging suits and white hijabs sitting in front of a UNHCR tent backdrop. They were discussing what happened with them before they came to Zaatari. This scene, while fiction, is recognizable by the other girls in the performance and audience because it resembles activities from their daily routine. The facilitator could recreate this experiences with a relative amount of verisimilitude because he was in the camp five days per week and had heard conversations similar to the one he created from girls in the program. It would have been preferable for the facilitator to hand control for this story to

the children, but there was nothing questionable about the dialogue, action, or mise en scene.

Even in more spectacular and potentially traumatic scenes, the plot was common enough to the situation that it could have happened to some of the Syrian girls there. In one scene, for instance, several teenaged Syrian girls in abayahs of different colors show up to the first day of class. They milled about the stage, through rows of chairs with books in hand talking to one another. One girl wrote on the black board while another standing near her giggled. Once the bell rang all girls moved quickly to their chairs. The teacher directed each student to stand and introduce herself. As the fourth girl rose from her chair and spoke, the sound of bombs exploding erupted from the speakers and the lights strobed between red and white. The students leapt from the chairs and scurried around the stage knocking over chairs and bumping into each other. The danger of this scene, which transitioned instantly from normality to crisis is the potential for reactivating traumatic memories in some of the children on stage or in the audience. Considering that sixty percent of the children in Zaatari were from Dara'a, which was bombed relentlessly by the Syrian government, it is not a far leap to believe that some, if not most, of the children in the building that day experienced a similar event. Nevertheless, the experience was still fiction and written by a facilitator who had not experienced that specific kind of violence. Without experiencing war trauma it is impossible to capture the nuances of such a lived experience.

Most troubling of all the scene the facilitators wrote from the memories of the child participants was the first scenario described in this section. Recalling that the

characters in the first scenario were fighters either in military uniforms or in civilian clothes and that they were represented as adults in a firefight, it stretches the world of possibility that any of the boys acting in those roles would have experienced this event. Even if they had been in the vicinity, given the age of the boys it is unlikely that they would have remembered it. The characters the boys portrayed, the actions they performed, and the dialogue they uttered, all of which were written by someone who was not part of the Syrian Revolution, served as ephemeral artifacts of a memory that was not their own. Not only did the boys in this scene carry with them their own traumatic memories of displacement and war, but the script written for *Our Journey* asked them to also carry the fictionalized traumas of adults whom they did not know.

In both plays discussed so far, postmemory nostalgia served a political end. In *Shakespeare in Zaatari,* Bulbul, Hussein, and the other adults coerced performance from the children as a way to perpetuate their revolutionary fervor through nostalgic memories. In NICCOD's case the politics comingled with what I am referring to here as internationally induced nationalism or nationalism whose object is the internationally defined and recognized borders of the Syrian nation-state rather than the multivariate cultures, languages, and histories contained within. This type of nationalism which is often disguised as patriotism, is a tool of the international community whose primary objective is to maintain a status quo order established by Western democracies, often to the detriment of non-Western countries. When a country, such as Syria, falls into internal conflict it places the borders of that country at risk. The potential of disintegrating borders, in turn, threatens the international order. When internal conflicts erupt in places

like Syria, part of the international response is often to reunify the country whether or not the reason that led to its fracturing was addressed. As a member of the United States Army Psychological Operations Group during Operation Iraqi Freedom, my duties often entailed this reintegration practice. I regularly created propaganda campaigns aimed at bolstering an artificial notion of Iraqi patriotism. The end goal of these efforts as stated in the *Army Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (2006) is to increase host nation government legitimacy. Propaganda, in this effort, is an essential tool. Messages about unity and forgiveness inundate educational and social welfare programs. One goal of the international community, politically, focuses on getting people to set aside their very real grievances and think of themselves as one country.

By mandating that a facilitator write the script for the dramatic production in this instance, NICCOD erased the politics at the heart of the revolution and replaced it with a call for artificial national unity. In the first scene of the boy's production where they reenacted a fire fight between the Syrian Military and the Free Syrian Army, the scripted dialogue painted an image of ambiguity regarding the reasons for the violence. During pauses in the gun fire, the boys playing revolutionaries screamed across the stage to the boys playing soldiers pleading to know the motivation behind this attack. The soldiers responded by accusing the revolutionaries of "sabotaging the nation," which the revolutionaries denied. At the end of this scene, after one of the revolutionary characters died from enemy fire, his friend approached the audience and confessed, "We don't know why we are dying, nor do they know why they are killing us. The problem was small and it became a battle" (Al Haddad). The last line of this dialogue severely diminishes what

many of those who protested saw as life or death. NICCOD stripped away the notion that the violence which led to the creation of Za'atari had any legitimacy.

Setting aside authorial intent of this scene, the meaninglessness of Syria's war clearly existed as a didactic theme. The revolutionary fighters on stage left expressed confusion over why the Syrian soldiers battled with them asking, "What did we do to deserve this?" The soldiers on stage right offered sabotage as an explanation, but it is only because they were, "given orders." Both sides, according to the dialogue, were victims of a nebulous authority controlling the violence for its benefit, leaving both sides ignorant of the reasons. Finally, any reason that may exist—which remained unstated—began as a "small" dispute and spiraled into a larger "battle."

In presenting the war as aimless, Salam al Haddad, the facilitator who wrote this scene elided the very real and powerful reasons millions of Syrians chose to protest and then fight against the Assad regime. The scene failed to mention the brutality visited upon the teenage boys in Dara'a, the deployment of chemical weapons in Ghouta, or even the bombardments of southern Syria that led people to flee their homes and seek refuge in Zaatari. Moreover, neither the text nor the action point to the decades of oppression and political imprisonment perpetrated by the Syrian security apparatus under the control of the Assad regimes. Instead, the facilitator opted for a neutral tone that saw both sides as guilty victims. He, knowingly or unknowingly, absolved the war machine of an authoritarian dictator and reduced the unjust nature of state sponsored violence to a "small problem."

The second scene which, as mentioned previously, occurred in a field hospital, reaffirmed the position of the first scene. Three friends were unhappily reunited in what appeared to be the after math of a battle. Once again, one of the characters, Muhammed, was dying from a wound he received in combat. In this scene, however, Muhammed and his two friends—Soldiers One and Two--were on opposite sides of the battle. Similar to the first scene, there was no discussion of the politics behind the revolution, only a recognition that the boys used to be friends prior to the war. Muhammed's death during this scene forced the two soldiers to reflect upon the war and their participation in it. Soldier One questioned, "what did we do? We kill the people who mean most to us? We kill our people and our friends?" to which Soldier Two responded, "we all were close friends, we used to hang out all the time" (Al Haddad). Once again, the playwright delegitimates the political reasons that led to the protests and trivializes the difficult decisions many people had to make when choosing which side to choose.

While continuing to assert the triviality of the revolution, the field hospital scene also initiated a nationalistic argument that extended into the final scene. By scripting the two soldiers in the second scene to lament killing their friends and recall how they "used to hang out all the time," al Haddad conjured a nostalgic narrative. With these last two lines in the scene, the facilitator, through the soldiers on stage, asked the Syrian audience to remember the good times they spent with people back home who may be on opposite sides of the battle. This moment of nostalgia is not overtly nationalistic. After all, it is possible to think fondly on memories of someone with whom you are no longer friends without discarding the reasons that led to the dissolution of the friendship. But the

nostalgia at play in the field hospital scene did attempt to trigger an emotional vulnerability that primed the audience for the call to reunify in the final scene. Once the lights faded, the scenery changed, and the lights returned several boys, all dressed in civilian clothing, meandered back and forth over an empty stage. One at a time, each boy posed downstage center in a bright spotlight and proclaimed their desire to return home and, "rebuild their nation," or, "to make Syria glorious again" (Al Haddad). Once more, al Haddad dismissed the palpable divisions between the Syrian people, but in this scene the nationalistic motif was unmistakable. The boys on stage during the final scene did not have any specific archetypal character save for being Syrian men. There was no attempt to represent the varied religious, ethnic, political, or social divisions that are at the root of the revolutionary movement. The boys merely walked in an unstructured cluster on stage and shouted lines such as, "we were all Syrian once and we will all be Syrian again."

If al Haddad did indeed insert subtle nationalistic themes within this script, why did he do this and was it intentional? Unfortunately, I am not able to answer these questions satisfactorily because he was not present for the interview I conducted with NICCOD staff. Without hearing al Haddad's explanation, I hesitate to assign intention. I can report that the NICCOD staff present for the interview acknowledged the camp officials, particularly UNHCR and the Jordanian security apparatus, prohibited overtly political subject matter. So, it is possible, in fact probable, that al Haddad was simply following a regulation over which he had little control. Either way, the use of postmemory nostalgia to encourage reconciliation at the cost of achieving political freedom was a primary thread throughout the production of *Our Journey*.

LOVE BOAT

A third use for nostalgia in the performances I witnessed drew from both the need to build resilience and the desire to alter behavior. *Love Boat*, which was Bulbul's third and final production with displaced Syrians in Jordan, placed the politics of nostalgia at its core. Unlike NICCOD, however, the nostalgia evoked in *Love Boat* belonged to a specific Syrian political ideology. Bulbul interweaved nostalgia from the early days of the revolution in a highly purposeful and targeted manner in order to induce emotional reactions to specific political and social questions. On the surface, *Love Boat* weaponized nostalgia in service of the Syrian revolution I argue, however, that this political goal is secondary and subservient to the play's other objective. *Love Boat* uses the revolutionary fervor present in its Syrian audience as a Trojan horse to deliver its primary message about controversial issues of cultural and social reform that test the tenets of Islam.

As a visible participant in the protests before and during the early days of the war in Syria, Bulbul clearly targets the Assad regime throughout *Love Boat.* Many of the scenes he included in the text were chosen specifically because of their ability to be adapted into political jabs at the Syrian government. For example, every time a character refers to a bombing in one of their individual stories, the rest of the group replies with the question "Russian or Regime," to which the answer is always, "they are both the same" (Bulbul "Love Boat "). But this by itself does not create the conditions of nostalgia, so Bulbul inserts these moments into stories about real Syrians who were bombed or jailed. His hope in recalling these war victims is to place the audience in a space of both

memorialization and revolutionary righteousness. In most cases, the people Bulbul invokes are nationally known artists such as actor Samar Kokach who was imprisoned by the regime for three years or playwright and puppeteer, Zaki Kordilo, who was arrested in 2011 with his son from his home in Damascus. Zaki and Mehyar Kordilo have still not been released (Diab).

In one scene, the character Mohammed tells the group about his experience just following the start of the revolution. In this fictionalized version, Mohammed sought refuge in Homs with his friend Abdel Aziz al-Houlani, a famous Syrian actor and director. While staying in al-Houlani's house the duo celebrated the revolution by singing and playing music. Mohammed describes for the group:

> I was playing the oud[13] and he was singing a Mawaaaal[14]. I was giving him Ajam and he responded with Saba and thennnn [*sic*] we shifted to Hijaz[15]…. To make a long story short, this damn plane flew over us […] and dropped its huge barrel, its very, very huge barrel. And my hand dropped dead like a martyr; and Abdel Aziz al-Houlani died as a martyr. Before dying he made me promise to continue the Mawal Ya layllll ya ayn [*sic*] (Bulbul "Love Boat").

While this story is a product of Bulbul's artistic imagination, he does draw two essential realities into view. The Syrian regime did murder Abdel Aziz al-Houlani in Homs, Syria on March 23, 2013 (*Abdul Aziz Al-Hawlani Killed*). Rather than being killed in a

[13] An oud is a guitar like instrument popular in Middle Eastern music.
[14] A genre of Arabic vocal music.
[15] Ajam, Saba, and Hijaz are three of the nine musical scales in Arabic music.

bombing, as *Love Boat* suggests, al-Houlani died from small arms fire. While potentially distorting the historical record, Bulbul's fabrication in this instance highlights the incredible danger posed by the barrel bombings throughout Syria. One of the regimes preferred methods for managing the revolution is to drop barrel bombs from low flying rotary and fixed wing aircraft onto populated areas. According to a report from the Syrian Network for Human Rights, from July 2012 until December 2017 the regime dropped "no less than 68,334 barrel bombs," mostly in urban areas (Clarke). In fact, the young actress playing the role of the child in *Love Boat*, Eman al-Shayabi, lost her right leg when her home in the southern city of Dara'a was bombed in 2014 (Mouslli).

By drawing these two events together, *Love Boat* serves as a record of motives and methods for murder conducted by the Assad regime. Recalling the names of pro-revolution artists such as Kokach, Kordilo, al-Houlani, and recently deceased Syrian-Christian actor May Skaf[16], who were either killed or imprisoned and tortured sheds light on the dismantling of free speech in Syria by official forces. Additionally, the several references to barrel bombs throughout the play reminds the audience that Assad is attempting to systematically erase the opposition by exterminating anyone within physical proximity of pro-revolutionary fighters, including unarmed adult civilians and children.

In addition to being part of Bulbul's artist and friendship network prior to the war, all of the celebrity names he placed in *Love Boat* carry with them memories of movies,

[16] Skaff, who was a close friend and artistic partner to Bulbul died in her Paris apartment on July 23, 2018 from natural causes. She was one of the first media stars to be blacklisted by the cultural ministry for her protest activities against Bashar al Assad.

television programs, and plays that Syrians enjoyed. Much like hearing the names Carrie Fisher or Robin Williams floods me with memories from childhood through adulthood, Skaff, Kordilo, al-Hourani, and Kokach remind Syrians of sitting at home during Ramadan, perhaps at an iftar when friends and family would sit down to watch popular dramas like *Bab al Hara.* The mention of these celebrity names constructs a sense of nostalgia at a moment when Syria is in dire chaos and the people watching *Love Boat* are living as non-citizens in an increasingly hostile foreign community. During one specific performance, when Syrians comprised most of the audience attending, several audience members applauded when Eman mentioned to the group that Skaff, who had been arrested several times for speaking openly against the regime, "is already in France, she is busy finding the most beautiful theatre for us to perform in" (Bulbul "Love Boat "). In the audience that night was the Syrian film star Abdul Hakim Qutifan, who acted in several films with Skaff. As he stood to applaud, tears rolled down his face. The memory of these artists, some who were dead and some still living, provoked an instinctual response from the audience that opened them up to the nostalgia Bulbul constructed.

Bulbul's employment of nostalgia as an affect and theatrical device disarms the audience allowing him to slowly introduce controversial ideas. There are several scenes in *Love Boat* where conservative beliefs and those who either espouse or enable them are directly challenged. When the group of actors in the boat decide to rehearse a scene from *The Servant of Two Masters* by Carlo Goldoni, Truffladino's metatheatrical soliloquies mirror the audiences' own Janus-faced political beliefs. Truffaldino, who serves two masters, represents those Syrians declaring themselves as part of the revolution.

According to Bulbul, these people scream in the streets for freedom and liberty, while proclaiming allegiance to a conservative religious dogma that restricts the freedom of all, especially women. During the brief scene Truffaldino, who is secretly serving Beatrice and Silvio, retrieves letters from both of his masters. In a moment of confusion Truffaldino mixes the letters up. Unable to sort out which letter belongs to which master, Truffaldino declares himself an ass and resigns to the inevitable beating that he will receive as a result of his errors. Similarly, Bulbul argues those who claim to want liberty and yet abide by religious law are serving two masters. Like Truffaldino, these people are doomed to confusing which master they are serving at the moment, which will ultimately lead to them suffering the blows of their masters.

In *Love Boat's* most pronounced critique of conservative religious practices the actors significantly condense Acts I – IV of Moliere's *Tartuffe*. The scene begins when Tartuffe maneuvered around the dining table where the family prepared to eat by chanting an improvised prayer.

> Bless us Lord, bless this meal, those who prepared it, and give bread to those who do not have any. What did the Lord say? "Thou shalt not kill, and thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not sin, and thou shalt not sleep, and thou shalt not eat." Christ said: "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." Lying is a sin, stealing is a sin, crime is a sin, anger is a sin. Amen (Bulbul "Love Boat").

Entranced by Tartuffe's presence Orgon tilted his head to the sky, closed his eyes, and clasped his hands in prayer. Intermittently Orgon released a gentle sigh and every time Tartuffe walked within reach, Orgon lurched for him as if Tartuffe's touch was God's

blessing made human. The others around the table reluctantly bowed their heads fearing Orgon's anger should they appear to be disrespectful. Tartuffe forced the others to pay tribute to him by kissing his hand. When he approached Elmire, Tartuffe leaned into her personal space and raised his wrist for her to kiss. Elmire resisted until Orgon, seated to her left, pounded repeatedly on the table coercing her consent. Loath to touch Tartuffe, she quickly pressed her pursed lips to his hand. Tartuffe pulled his hand to his face after her kiss and furtively breathed in Elmire's scent. Then he walked to the head of the table, finished his prayer and excused himself for the evening. The irreverence of this scene played in a religious country like Jordan posed a serious risk, but also tapped into the very cultural conservatism Bulbul hoped to undermine.

This scene represents a microcosm of what Bulbul sees as the social and religious contradictions that the Arab world must overcome. Although Orgon is by title the authority of the household, Adnan Rejjal's portrayal of the patriarchal character hilariously abdicates control of the house to the religious charlatan. Even further, Orgon aids Tartuffe in maintaining obedience over the family by insisting on their adoration him. Similarly, Bulbul sees this as the condition of Arab leaders in every country. For example, Bulbul made note in an interview that the Saud family uses this tactic to stay in power of the Saudi Arabia. They allow the religious leaders to enforce morality laws over the common citizens in exchange for not delegitimizing their rule in the face of the faithful. As a counterpoint, Bulbul also refers to similar situations in Israel with Judaism and the United States with Christianity. In other words, his contempt is not reserved only for Islam but extends to all organized religion.

At the same time that we see Orgon deferring to the religiosity of Tartuffe, Mohammed Kabbour's interpretation of the eponymous character exaggerates the duplicity found in the three Abrahamic faiths. To begin, his costuming melded together symbolism from Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. His black robe mimicked both the outer cassock of a Greek Orthodox priest and a Sunni imam's bisht. Tartuffe's headwear could have been a kufiyah or the spodik of a Heradi rabbi, but with a halo as depicted in many Baroque Christian paintings. The garish gold necklace around his neck attached to an oversized pendent that was an amalgamation between the cross, the star of David, and the crescent moon. Vocally, Tartuffe's religious androgyny is signified when Mohammed sings the prayer referred to above. Throughout the chant, his choral pattern moved between the Islamic Tajweed and the Catholic Gregorian Chant. Contrary to his religious presentation, Kabbour's version of Tartuffe spoke of lust and narcissism. His demand for adoration by having each character kiss his hand conjures images of a Catholic Pope amongst a synod. Likewise, the persistent sexual harassment Tartuffe aims at Elmire was quite prescient considering the recent resurfacing of sexual abuse allegations leveled against priests. While the costuming and vocalization pushed the audience to see Tartuffe as a mixture of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (leader of ISIS), Joseph I (Patriarch of Antiochia), or Yitzhak Yosef (Chief Rabbi of Israel), Kabbour's actions as the character implicated the naked corruption alive within these religions.

Still, the criticisms of religion in the Tartuffe scene remained veiled enough to allow the audience distance from thoroughly questioning their own complicity. This shifted, however, as the scene abruptly transitioned into the next interlude. Kabbour, as

Tartuffe, chased Matar, playing Elmire, around the table hoping to have sex with her. When he reached across the table, forcibly grasping Elmire's wrist, Tartuffe triggered Matar's actual memory of being raped in one of Assad's prisons. Breaking character from the role of Elmire, Matar screamed:

> My God, 227 days in detention. They hit me, they tortured me, they didn't spare me anything 227 days, day after day. 227 times the shabihas raped me, and I didn't say anything. I bit my tongue. And when I go out of there, your ugly, dirty, shit society raped me a thousand times. I spit on you, I spit on your dirty mentality, I spit on you[…] My rape is the rape of all Syrian women and an indelible stain on your revolution. It is the crown on your heads, the crown on the head of your revolution (Bulbul "Love Boat").

This fracturing moment, which blurred the line between imagined and real violence, was central to *Love Boat*'s argument. It was the reason why Bulbul chose nostalgia as a literary device. He hoped, that by feeding the Syrian audience with a mixture of comedy, nostalgia, and insults of Assad they would unprepared, and therefore vulnerable to this harsh critique of the revolution. The story Matar revealed, was not her own. Instead, the experience belonged to a Syrian woman named Alma Shahoud. Bulbul, who met Shahoud in Amman prior to her death in 2015, determined that her story must be visible so that all of Syrian society, including those claiming to be with the revolution, could see that little separated the multiple sides in the war.

It is no secret that many women arrested in Syria endure severe sexual violence at the hands of their captors. The lessor known story, and the one that Bulbul felt compelled

to tell, was about the treatment of these women once they were released from prison. Often, women re-entering society from prison refuse to discuss or acknowledge the sexual violence they endured because of the fear of shame from their families and others in their communities. According to a 2012 report by the International Federation for Human Rights, "it is particularly difficult to document crimes of sexual violence in the Syrian context. Survivors are generally extremely reluctant to talk about their experiences, due in particular to stigmatization and cultural, social and religious pressures" (Sulzer 7). In those cases where the survivor discussed their sexual traumas openly or where it was otherwise discovered, a more recent report by Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights reveals,

> The women have also been stung by a negative attitude in the community towards them. [Two women interviewed] say that people look at them in shame. [Another survivor] also found that people look at her in accusatory way. She felt like she had been rejected by her community, and that 'the closest people gave up on her. Husband left and married someone else. (22)

Shahoud's story is, perhaps one of the most well documented cases because she was open about her situation.

Shahoud was a member of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) since the early days of the revolution in 2011. According to a 2013 interview with Lauren Wolfe, Director of WMC Women Under Siege, [17] she was a battalion commander in charge of about fifteen men

[17] Women Under Siege is a subsection of the Women's Media Center which is, "a progressive, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to raise the visibility, viability and decision-making power of

and was integrally involved in front line combat (Wolfe). Shouhoud went to prison twice, once to Harasta prison which is north of Damascus, for 38 days and then again about 18 months later to Fir' al-Khatib in Damascus for a shorter period. While she was in Harasta blindfolded and drugged, the guards repeatedly raped and tortured her. As Wolfe writes, "She describes being gang-raped daily by men who smelled strongly of alcohol. Floating in and out of consciousness, she would kick and yell as best she could while lying next to another woman doing the same"[18] . Later, after being released from Harasta, she would go back to fighting in the FSA. Bulbul mentioned that Shahoud moved outside of Damascus to Ghouta[19] where she was not only fighting, but administering medical attention to those injured by regime forces. In late 2012, during an attack on a regime check point, Shahoud, who was pregnant at the time, stopped to treat a fighter who was shot. While attempting to administer life saving measures, she too was shot in the leg, back, and neck. Although not dead, the injuries did paralyze Shahoud. She would spend the next few months in both regime and FSA hospitals, before finally being transferred to Jordan. The baby, according to Wolfe, was delivered by C-section while in a regime hospital and then given to her family (Wolfe; Putintin).

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women and girls in media and, thereby, ensuring that their stories get told and their voices are heard" (Mission Statement from WMC website).

[18] Wolfe's article titled "'Take your portion': A victim speaks out about rape in Syria," provides a thorough and descriptive account of Alma's life prior to the revolution, imprisonment, and bravery on the battle field (Wolfe).

[19] Ghouta was the site of the controversial 2013 chemical attack by the Assad regime. This chemical attack which killed scores of civilians provoked Pres. Obama to issue his, now infamous "Red Line" remarks. Although Alma was already in Jordan by 2013, her presence in Ghouta prior to this underscores how valuable the area was to the FSA.

The atrocities Shahoud and other women in the regime prisons suffered were made significantly worse by the receptions they received once released back into their communities. The reactions by those around these women ranged from ostracism to murder. Sexual purity is so important to the honor of the family, that brothers and fathers will sometimes kill female relatives to restore the family's reputation. In Bulbul's words, "they take them and kick them to the corner so they are not in sight" ("Nawar Bulbul Skype Interview 9/3/2017"). For many of these women, the fear that their rape will be discovered is so potent they will attempt to hide it by any means possible. Shahoud, however, wanted everyone to know what happened to her. She wanted the world to know what was happening to women in the prisons of Assad. Shahoud's story was the primary reason that Bulbul chose to couch his criticisms in nostalgia. This moment in the play was the point upon which everything else turned.

It was clear to Bulbul, considering what these women were being forced to endure, that the real revolution was not against Assad, but against the society that nurtured these beliefs. Meeting Shahoud, and others like her provided the inspiration for Matar's character and the speech Bulbul gave her. Their stories about sexual violence and the impact it had on them regarding their families and communities, became a driving force behind Bulbul's artistic vision in the *Tartuffe* scene.

The problem as Bulbul sees it, is that this form of social engineering ties a family's reputation to each member's religious adherence and nationalistic devotion. At the same time, the position of a family in society is intricately linked with their reputation. Therefore, a mark against the reputation of an individual is a mark against the

family's reputation, and a mark against the family's reputation could impact the family's overall societal status. So, when a woman is perceived to be unclean because she engaged in or was forced to commit a sexual act the entire family suffers. This situation leads members of the family to take action to restore the family's reputation, up to and including murder.

The fear of dishonoring the family was the primary connection point for Matar as well. In the few weeks before the performance Matar confronted the decision of whether or not to wear a hijab in the show. Both Bulbul and another Syrian actor and playwright, Sawsan Darwaza pleaded with Matar and al Shayabi to remove their hijabs for the production. Darwaza, who is a prominent voice for women and human rights in the Arabic performance world, spoke at length with Matar during one rehearsal hoping to convince her. Matar's concern, however, was that a family friend or relative would find out and her father's and brothers' reputations would suffer. Interestingly, Matar's husband was not against her removing her hijab for the performance. Furthermore, since the family has been resettled in France, Matar no longer covers her head. Never the less, while in Jordan, the threat of dishonor still invoked a well-established fear for Matar, preventing her from acting publically as independent as she was in private.

Matar's reluctance to remove her hijab should not lessen, however, the amount of courage she displayed in telling Shahoud's story. Publically speaking about sexual assault in the Arab world, even in the fictional construct of a play, carries an enormous risk to one's social or even physical life. Placed adjacent to the scripted rebuke of the revolution, Matar's willingness to tell Shahoud's story in *Love Boat* becomes a heroic act of

resilience. According to Matar, it is the primary reason she accepted Bulbul's offer to act in *Love Boat.* In an interview, Matar admitted that she,

> Didn't come to Love Boat to be an actress. I am not an actress. I am here to send a message for society for the western world. There are women in Syria arrested and raped and after all of this [*sic*] miserable things, our society also raped them. From the tragedy of the prison to the tragedy of society. I am here to deliver the voices of all of these raped women (Matar).

Like Bulbul, Matar believes that the people of the revolution are as guilty for the treatment of these women as the regime. As she says during her traumatic monologue, the rapes sit like, "a crown of thorns on the head of [their] revolution," In this one line of dialogue, Matar impugns the sanctity of the Syrian revolution, many of whom were sitting in the audience watching her.

The placement of Matar's monologue, especially the charges against the revolution, towards the end of the play, lulled the pro-revolution audience into a false sense of security. The nostalgia that the cast and Bulbul employed throughout the show was a mirage crafted to lure the audience to this one explosive moment. *Love Boat* conjured memories of the protests in 2011 and the early military successes the FSA had against the Assad regime. Nostalgia led the audience to assume *Love Boat* was a polemical comedy meant to codify the audience over a binary view of the revolution. So, when Matar accused the revolution of failing to differentiate itself from the regime, she disrupted the comfortable harmony between the Syrian spectators.

Following a moment of disbelief, the audiences' reactions, throughout the run of *Love Boat*, revealed a schism amongst a previously unified assemblage. During some performances, there was applause from portions of the audience as soon as Matar indicted the revolution. In other performances, the audience held its breath before applauding. There was one night when applause began further back in Matar's monologue, when she pleaded with Kabbour not to touch her. There was even one performance where no one applauded at all. This reaction seemed most genuine to me, especially on an individual level. In re-watching the recording of this night, the audience is clearly engaged. During the moment prior to Matar screaming, while Kabbour chased her around the table, several spectators in view of the camera laughed at the dialogue and the action. They enjoyed seeing the flirtatious play between a professed religious man and the clever Elmire. At the transition moment, however, many of the spectator's expressions melted from amusement to bewilderment. One young woman wearing a pink hijab and sitting in the front row slowly moved her hand up, first to her chin, and then to her mouth. As the heavy pause lingered over the audience, underneath this woman's hand she was smiling. There was something in the unexpected exchange that prompted a visceral reaction. Why does this woman smile at such a horrendous pronouncement? Why does she attempt to hide her smile with her hand? It could be that this woman, who moments ago openly laughed about seemingly vulgar behavior, was uncomfortable with the shift in mood and smiled anxiously as a result. It could also be that she was pleased to finally hear the plight of raped Syrian women so unapologetically delivered on stage.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the audience universally accepted this moment. The reaction of Syrian men was starkly divided. Many of the younger men present applauded as resolutely as the women, although there were some who either did not applaud or did so unconvincingly. Conversely, older Syrian men, particularly those whose wives were present, did not applaud regardless of whether their wives did. There were a few older Syrian men, however, who led the audience in applauding. For example, journalist Thear al-Tahli, whose wife spent four months in one of Assad's prisons. During the recording of *Love Boat's* opening night performance, he can be seen sparking the initial reaction. Mostly, though, the older Syrian men were reticent, applauding briefly if at all.

The impact of Shahoud's story being told through Matar's character was made possible only through the misdirection Bulbul's use of nostalgia provided. By inserting jokes about the Assad regime into the play and then recalling memories of artists who sacrificed their freedom and lives to secure political reforms in Syria, *Love Boat* disarmed the audience by leading them to believe that the play would be a nostalgic journey through the Syrian revolution. The violent speed of *Love Boat*'s turn from comedy to self-reflective drama forced the audience into a space where they had to at least hear the traces of Shahouda's before they could react. Nostalgia in this manner became an unsuspected delivery device for the plays condemnation of conservative religious principles.

LOOKING BACK TO GO FORWARD

Regardless of the differences that flow between the instrumental use and outcomes of nostalgia in all three productions, one element binds them together. Each production calls on nostalgia to consider questions about citizenship. The resilience and resolve pushed by the adults in *Shakespeare in Zaatari* through the continual performances of "Janna ya Watana" endeavored to indoctrinate the child participants in what they viewed as essential qualities for continuing the revolution. Weaving the memories recalled through al Sarout's song into the playfulness of rehearsals created a positive emotional link between the sense of belonging that inseparable from the theatrical process and the condition of supporting the revolution. In other words, Bulbul and the other adults present during these moments where "Janna ya Watana" was sung made citizenship in the small community dependent on the performance of revolution.

For the children involved in NICCOD's production, being a good citizen required looking past the injustices of the Syrian government and forgiving those on the opposite side. While naively noble in its pursuit of peace and reconciliation, NICCOD's construction of citizenship in this production abandons the political reality that created these children's psychological condition in the first place. Intentional or not, the artificial national unity at the heart of the play serves the international community and the Syrian government rather than the children in the program or their parents. It would indeed be wonderful to begin dreaming of the day when displaced Syrians could return to Syria and help rebuild it. The reality is, however, that even if this war ends, Assad and his regime will likely retain control, making it virtually impossible for those who left to return

without placing their lives in danger. The citizenship that NICCOD attempted to paint in this theatrical production is unlikely to materialize, not because of the children or their parents, but because the original political circumstances will not be addressed.

Finally, the Syrians involved in producing *Love Boat* challenge the audience to see beyond just their anger at the Assad regime and to consider how creating a truly liberated country means shedding the authority of religion and conservative culture. *Love Boat* attempts to recast nostalgia of the revolution as a mirror that reflects back the hypocrisies which could undermine a citizenship built on freedom, equality, and liberty. Of particular concern in this forward-looking performance is the treatment of women as sexual possessions that can be weaponized by one side to bring dishonor to the other. No matter the outcome of the Syrian revolution, without addressing women's subjectivity, *Love Boat* posits that the entire hope for a free Syria will sink to the bottom of the sea. The different strategic uses of nostalgia in the three productions discussed in this chapter demonstrate the potential nostalgia maintains for guiding and adjusting future actions. In two examples, *Shakespeare in Zaatari* and NICCOD, the nostalgia summoned by the transmitting groups did not belong to the memories of receiving groups. The adults in *Shakespeare in Zaatari* and NICCOD planted the seeds of events and feelings into the memories of the children where they did not, indeed could not have existed previously. While the methods shared this postmemory commonality, the desired ends differed markedly between *Shakespeare in Zaatari* and NICCOD. The adults in *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, as mentioned previously, hoped to pass on their ideological belief in the righteousness of revolution against the Assad regime. Countering this goal, NICCOD's

use of nostalgia hoped to interrupt the divisiveness between pro-government and revolutionary factions by channeling artificial national unity through the community's children.

While the nostalgia at play in *Love Boat* differs from both *Shakespeare in Zaatari* and NICCOD in that it was not postmemory nor was it aimed at children, it did share commonalities with each in unique ways. Like the moments during *Shakespeare in Zaatari's* rehearsals, the participants in *Love Boat* did not attempt to hide their contempt for Assad. In both cases, they longed for a romanticized version of the early days in the revolution. While acknowledging the pain and loss of friends and family, the participants, particularly the adults still believed in a future Syria that extended from the nostalgia they held of the revolution, where Assad no longer reigned, and the freedom of speech prevailed. On the other hand, like the nostalgia present in NICCOD's production, *Love Boat* intended to change behavior. In the tradition of international development, NICCOD tried to encourage reconciliation by fabricating memories and feelings of national unity. Alternatively, *Love Boat* impelled the Syrian audience to sever their obedience to religious authority. While these are very discrete objectives, both serve a propagandistic end.

Illustration 4: “Majid Singing.” Photographed by Vincent Voulin. Used with permission.

Illustration 5: Kids singing “Janna Ya Watana” in family trailer, 2014. Still from video by Vincent Voulin. Used with permission.

Illustration 6: Kids shooting in *Our Journey* NICCOD production, 2016. Photograph by author.

Illustration 7: Haya Matar in scene from *Love Boat* about Alma Shahoud, 2016. Still taken from video by author.

Chapter Three: Akoon ow La Akoon - Desire-Production in Displaced Syrian Theatre

In May 2016 the town of Saraqb, Syria lay in ruins from constant bombing by the Syrian regime. Buildings toppled and reduced to rocks were unrecognizable for the structures they once were. This town which lay about an hour south of Aleppo and twenty minutes east of Idlib was caught in between factions of ISIS and Jabat al Nusra[20] who fought for superiority of the region. The people who remained in Saraqb were mostly loyal to the Free Syrian Army. From the top of one building that still stood, Mohammed[21] from the Youth Group of Saraqb gave me a tour of the area over Skype. He pointed out the building where he and his family lived before the war and each building they moved to throughout the campaign against the anti-Assad forces in Idlib province. From the mediated perspective it seemed like the building Mohammed was broadcasting from was the only building standing in the entire neighborhood. As he stood on the roof talking about the progression of Assad's bombing campaign on Saraqb, regime planes flew overhead. Mohammed did not flinch because he knew the planes were on the way to Aleppo. At this point Mohammed was able to distinguish between bombing raids meant for Saraqb and those meant for another city.

In the midst of so much trauma and destruction, resilience and survival are tightly bound to the present. For the amateur theatre company, Youth Group of Saraqb, to move

[20] Jabhat al Nusra was the name for an Al Qaeda affiliated militia in Syria that was active in the war. In late 2016 this militia changed in name to As Jabhat Fatah al Sham.

[21] Although Mohammed publicly posts anti-regime skits on Facebook regularly, I am using only his first name out of respect for his safety.

from moment to moment in their city required them to develop strategies for existence that responded to the fluidity of the situation. Rather than simply reacting to anything lacking in their lives—because in the midst of war there was plenty--The Youth Group of Saraqb interacted with their current social and political environment to create new modes of resistance. While their will to live may speak to a larger hope at play, the strategies of simply making it through each day were produced through desire.

The Youth Group of Saraqb is both a theatrical group and service organization. It formed in October 2015 after two brothers, Mohammed and Ahmed stopped fighting for the Free Syrian Army due to injuries. According to Mohammed, they still wanted to do something for the revolution, so they decided to make people laugh (Saraqb). The brief manifesto posted to the group's Facebook feed declares:

> We are ready to develop all the artistic and literary talents of people from different ages. The goal of our plays is to draw a smile on all of our tired faces tired. Despite the darkness there are candles burning and roses sprout from the rock. You are our people and we are your support. God bless us[22] (tajamo3shabab.saraqib).

Youth Group of Saraqb started as seven men, none of whom had studied theatre or film as a profession. Several of the members were actually teachers prior to the start of the revolution. In addition to creating theatrical productions and YouTube videos, many of

[22] Translation is my own.

the members also taught children in the town so that the kids would not be so far behind once the war ends.

The group's theatrical work takes on two formats. First, they write, direct, and produce episodic series and variety show style performances that are filmed and broadcast on both FaceBook and Youtube. For example, the first series they posted, *Karmalak Ya Baladi* (Just For You My Country), is a ten episode satiric look at life for the people living in "the liberated areas" of Syria. Throughout this first series Mohammed and Ahmed criticize people who have used the revolution as a way to make money. Along with creating series they occasionally will produce a variety show that is similar in structure to Egyptian comedian Bassem Youssef's al Bernameg. While satire is the primary driver of the comedy in the group's series, the variety shows rely heavily on slapstick and clowning. Each actor plays several characters who pretend to do interviews from around Syria, so costuming plays a major role in the comedic action (tajamo3shabab.saraqib). In addition to the work they produce on the internet, Youth Group of Saraqb performs live plays for local audiences. In some cases their plays are specifically to aimed at children in the town. For example on April 28, 2015 the group performed an adaptation of a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon for children who had just finished their studies. Not every performance is comedic, however. In the fall of 2015, the group performed a play called *Ai'ila Taht al-Sifr* (Family Under Zero), that dramatizes a family caught in the middle of the revolution (Khattab). This play and the others they perform, according to Mohammed, are only announced the day before the performance for fear that one of the militias in the area will attack them.

The Youth Group of Saraqb's theatre is a creation of desire because it is focused on the present. The topics from which they draw inspiration are local and contemporary. The group's work does not look so much at the future but rather considers what it means to live in the contested areas of Syria today. Furthermore their motivation for creating theatre, as stated in their manifesto, is to put a smile on the faces of the people in Saraqb so that they can help "roses sprout from the rock.".

In this chapter I explore the various ways that desire produces and is produced by the theatrical moments in three plays by displaced Syrians. Deleuze and Guattari define desire as a pre-organic force that both produces and is produced by a body's "interaction […] with its surroundings" (Świątkowski 14). Countering an epistemological regime from Plato to Lacan that viewed desire as a "lack of the real object," Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as a drive whose subject is not fixed. Put simply, desire in humans exists, not because of unfulfilled needs, but rather because of human existence. Taken this way, it is desire that generates needs and not the converse. Desire, in this configuration clearly led to the creative work by the Youth Group of Saraqb. The deterioration around them deprived them of jobs and normal life. They could not escape the town because of the forces surrounding them. While the men could have retreated psychologically by quarantining themselves and their families indoors, they chose fight the darkness with comedy. Despite their lack of professional training, the group used this time to explore their daily life through the lens of performance. In a similar way, each of the examples I cite in this chapter takes advantage in different ways of the current circumstances in order to enact resilience, resistance, or joy. While there are potential

future effects of the actions taken by the artists I discuss in chapter three, the primary motivation that produced these moments of desire lives in the present.

Starting again with *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, I answer the often asked question, why did Bulbul use Shakespeare for a production with the children in the camp rather than a Syrian play. By viewing *King Lear* as a canonical play with prescribed performance format, I argue that Bulbul's choice subverts an imposed Western order that believes Shakespeare to be beyond the capabilities of both children and those from the Arabic World. Furthermore, Bulbul's desire to upend orientalist beliefs about Syrian people's knowledge and cultural sophistication was actually a well-crafted strategy to lure Western media into publicizing the work he and the children produced. Bulbul, by understanding the biases of the West, manipulated internationally recognized media into writing articles and recording news segments about *Shakespeare in Za'atari*.

Following *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, I move to another Syrian camp in Jordan, Azraq, where I discuss the brave work of a camp resident using theatre to teach feminist thought. This teacher, who I refer to as Zabeida for anonymity sake, constructs dramatic scenes based on internationally renowned women leaders from around the world throughout history, to provide alternative visions of womanhood that rival the early marriage model prevalent throughout the displaced population. Zabeida's desire to teach combined with the Jordanian government's refusal to allow displaced Syrians employment in the formal education system created the conditions which allowed Zabeida to design her own curriculum. Desire under Deleuze and Guattari flourishes because of its unpredictability which is due to the underlying logics of efficiency and

discovery. Zabeida diagnosed her circumstances and realized that her position in the informal NGO education system gave her freedom that was not possible in the state run system. Working through the more liberal development system allowed Zabeida to address topics considered too controversial for Jordanian schools.

Lastly, I enter the digital space between Amman and Homs, Syria where I explore the unregulated use of video conferencing in order to perform a play with children on both sides of the border. Using Skype a small group of young actors evaded detection by the Syrian authorities while co-producing a version of *Romeo and Juliet* with young actors at a recovery facility in Amman. The lines of communication that enabled this production transgressed space regulated by the Syrian government. Desire, as a reaction force does not adhere to established pathways. It creates shortcuts outside, and often counter to regulations governing private and public space. *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* used satellite connections secured illegally by Free Syrian Army forces to house the video feed. This performance, which placed the actors in Syria at risk, also allowed them to reconnect with the world outside of Homs.

Desire as an affect is fluid, unstable, and improvisatory. It operates as a tactic from points of opportunity and then moves as quickly as it arrived. The characteristics of desire open possibilities for the contestation of power precisely because it is appears in unpredictable ways and spaces. While desire is too unstable to form the basis of citizenship, it does leave traces that can point the way toward new forms of social interaction. The plays in this chapter answer to and produce new circumstances. By

reading the traces left in the lines of desire carved by these productions, subtle marks of engagement within the displaced population point toward new possibilities.

SHAKESPEARE IS LIKE THE BAIT

"Why play Shakespeare in Zaatari," Bulbul repeated during his interview with documentary film maker Ma'an Mousili, "I get this question from the media a lot" (Mousili). As innocent or benign as "why Shakespeare" appears, the question is loaded with critique couched in curiosity. Implicit in this simple question are other questions steeped in assumptions about Shakespeare, the children in the camp, and theatre in the Arabic world. For example, one may ask, "Isn't *King Lear* ambitious for children?" Or further, "Isn't *King Lear* ambitious for children living in a refugee camp?" Or perhaps even, "Isn't *King Lear* ambitious for Arabic children living in a refugee camp?" Each progression diminutively circumscribes the knowledge or capacity of demographic sets and subsets: children, refugees, and Arabs.

Although the question of performing *King Lear* in Zaatari carries with it traces of imperialism, it is connected more to certain orientalist attitudes about the cultural sophistication of theatre makers in the Arab world than it is to any notion of imperialist transmission of the text. Shakespeare's appearance into Middle Eastern cultures is actually due more to the influence French and Soviet theatrical institutions held over Arabic theatre practitioners who sought advanced degrees from them rather than British colonialism. Most of the Arabic translations, especially earlier ones came from French neoclassical translations of Shakespeare (Holderness 82; Litvin 8). Additionally as

literary scholar Margaret Litvin demonstrates through her monograph, *Hamlet's Arab Journey* (2011), Shakespeare's texts arrived in the Arab world long ago from multiple locations other than Britain and have been rewritten several times over to suit the social and political moment in which the plays were performed (2). Yet, despite the rich and varied history that Shakespeare holds throughout the Arabic World, Litvin notes that some western literary professors still see "Arab Shakespeare […] as a novelty" inviting "easy laughs and old jokes that Shakespeare was really a crypto-Arab, 'Shaykh Zubayr'" (5). The assumption comments such as this makes is that Arabic theatre makers are not sophisticated enough to understand, let alone artfully appropriate Shakespeare. This view, while not ubiquitous with western journalists and scholars was echoed through the media in various ways. Most egregiously, comments such those that appeared in a 2014 CNN World art article expose the existence of cultural elitism towards the Arabic World. Reporter Jason Miks writing about *Shakespeare in Za'atari* mused at the thought of Syrians celebrating Shakespeare, before proceeding to defend the choice of *King Lear*. This Eurocentric view is both orientalist in its perspective and infinitely predictable.

The orientalist reaction to Arabic children performing Shakespeare can be tied in part to the logic of the canon. Any canon, through the use of its modifier, claims ownership over the cultural production of those it lists. The term "Western" in front of canon draws a border around a small subset of writers that it labels as belonging to Europe and America. Ownership confers rule making authority for a work to the entities that named the canon. For Shakespeare, the rules define authenticity, aesthetics, and meaning among others. In other words, those who take part in establishing a canon of

theatrical work are also those who judge the validity of a reproduction of that work. This is not to say that a single person, group, or even institution is responsible for naming the Western theatrical canon. As Shakespearean scholar, Graham Holderness notes, the people and institutions that give shape to a Western canon are, "much more dispersed, spontaneous and fragmented," circulating through what Bourdieu calls a "field of cultural production" (Holderness 76; Bourdieu 123). Made up of educators, critics, theatrical producers, audience, and arts funders, the field of production works through a "universe of belief which produces the value of the work of art as a fetish by producing the belief in the creative power of the artist" (Bourdieu 141). The logic leading to the formation of the canon then presupposes cultural ownership over any writer that is part of that canon.

Asserting such control over cultural production flattens the complexity of an author's work, denyies the intersectional flows of knowledge and experience, and authorizes national, linguistic, or racial claims to superiority. By asserting cultural ownership over the plays of Shakespeare, the field of production for the Western canon legitimates a singular meaning of his plays and the acceptable styles of production. Therefore anyone subscribing to the belief in a canon localizes the authenticity of its works. In other words, Shakespeare is more authentic when performed in London by the Globe Theatre and the further away a production stretches from that point of departure the less authentic it is or the less capable the performers are of capturing the play's essence.

Assuming that Western perception of Syrian refugees living in a camp were uneducated and poor, Bulbul used the authenticity of the canon as the center piece in a

strategy for securing international media coverage. In the documentary film *Shakespeare in Zaatari* (2016), Bulbul offers his explanation, to the media's question, "why play Shakespeare in Zaatari." Answering metaphorically, Bullbul reveals, "I am a clever fisherman, and I used an irresistible bait. All the fish came to eat it" (Mousili). Bulbul refers here to the media coverage this show attracted. Not surprisingly, several local media companies filmed both the show and moments during the rehearsals. Some companies, such as the pro-revolution Orient TV, saw the performance as a way to rally support against Assad. Other local and regional media outlets responded to a combination of Bulbul's celebrity and the hypervisible nature of children in a refugee camp. These media outlets may have covered the performance regardless of the play choice. Bulbul, however, sought to attract international attention from major news networks such as CNN International, Al Jazeera, and BBC Arabia. Shakespeare, was the "bait" he tossed out to lure the international news into the performance. Undoubtedly much of the attention these international outlets afforded the play stemmed from the curiosity to see young rural displaced Syrians performing Shakespeare. Ben Hubbard from the *New York Times* noted as much in his article about the performance, calling it "a plan to show the world that the least fortunate Syrian refugees could produce the loftiest theater" (Hubbard). Had Bulbul performed a Syrian play, written his own work, or worked with the children to devise their own play as many organizations in camps often do, international media would not have given *Shakespeare in Zaatari* the amount of attention Bulbul desired.

While Bulbul spoke about people questioning the choice to do Shakespeare, the question I encountered most when discussing this play with people in the United States

was why *King Lear*? This question, unlike the previous one, was not formed out of elitist or orientalist views, but because the choice to perform a tragedy about families and land being divided by war seemed a bit on point, especially for children. In several interviews, Bulbul spoke of bringing humanity back to the children through theatre. "The subtitle for this project," according to Bulbul was, "return childhood. Recreate laughter, revive life" (Mousili). Assistant director Ala'a Horani confirmed that they wanted, "a way to make those children feel better and to fill their time with joy" (Mousili). Watching the videos documenting the rehearsal process, there can be no doubt that Bulbul, Horani, and all of the adults involved wanted to provide a healthy distraction for the children. Between running scenes, learning fight choreography, and hours of painting the 500 meter canvas, laughter and joy filled Shakespeare's Tent. By this measure, *Shakespeare in Zaatari* achieved its aim. Regardless, Bulbul's goal to bring happiness to the children still does not answer the question about *King Lear* specifically.

The wish to attract media attention hints at a separate and more political purpose for *Shakespeare in Zaatari.* This is not too say that Bulbul wanted to entice the media for professional exposure. If that were the case certainly any Shakespearean play would suffice. In fact, Shakespeare is so ubiquitous throughout the Arabic world that the adaptations are known by their identifiable themes. In recounting how different Shakespearean productions in the Arab world are often rewritten, Litvin asserts that, "Arab *Antony and Cleopatra, Othello,* and *The Merchant of Venice,* […] have all […] attracted more explicitly anticolonial rewritings." *Taming of the Shrew* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* according to some Arabic scholars reiterate certain tales in *One Thousand*

and One Nights. *Hamlet, King Lear, Julius Caesar,* and *Richard III* all revolve around dictatorial leaders (Litvin 7, 192). Any of these plays would have been both recognized by the Arabic media and interesting to the international media. Bulbul chose *King Lear* because he wanted to attract the media in order to bring attention to the conditions of the people living in the camp and to the pain caused by the fracturing of their country due to poor autocratic leadership. Furthermore, Bulbul's desire to produce something that looked toward the end violence in Syria drove his textual adaptation philosophy.

King Lear, at its root is a play about a country divided and the violence that follows. As a Shakespearean tragedy, it is primarily concerned with the tension between those in power and the traumas they suffer as a result of pride, greed, and poor communication. Lear decides to divide his kingdom up between his three daughters based on their show of gratitude and affection for the old king. Two daughters, Goneril and Regan indulge Lear's vanity by feigning full devotion to him. Cordelia, the youngest daughter, provides a measured and honest response which angers her father. Lear mistakes Cordelia's honest affection for insolence and banishes her, leaving the entire kingdom to be divided between Goneril and Regan. Disunity and competition between factions ultimately leads to the kingdom's deterioration and the death of Lear's entire family, among several others.

While following the same basic premise and structure, Bulbul's Lear adaptation makes three pivotal changes. To begin, although his script does portray the division of the kingdom, Cordelia's banishment, and Lear's rejection by Goneril and Regan, Bulbul's version does not show the internal violence by characters such as Cornwall, Oswald, or

Edmund. Bulbul also departs from Shakespeare's version by having Lear die of grief in Cordelia's arms. Cordelia, who Bulbul represents as pure and innocent, does not die, but rather announces Lear's death to the crowd. Finally, as mentioned earlier, Bulbul inserted a moment of *Hamlet* into the performance. Following Lear's death, the scene from *Hamlet* where the titular character meets the ghost of his father is curiously spliced into the performance. Hamlet entered followed by Horatio, Barnardo, Francisco, and Marcellus. The ghost of Hamlet's father is played by the chorus of children encircling the stage. This is the point where Hamlet swears to avenge his father's death, declaring himself the Prince of Denmark.

In line with his insistence that the play was meant to bring joy to the children, Bulbul removed any notion of violent death. While he did have one scene where four boys had a sword fight, no one's character was stabbed or died during the fight. This suggests that Bulbul included this choreography in the play simply so the boys could have fun playing with wooden swords. In fact, video footage of the choreography rehearsals shows how enjoyable this moment was for these four actors. Additionally, the fact that the only death was by natural causes speaks to Bulbul's desire to down play the violence out of respect for the children's recent experiences.

At the same time, there are three specific moments that read to me as veiled political moments aimed at drawing attention to the crimes of Assad. First, the most developed scene in the performance was the opening scene where Lear divides his kingdom. Both in terms of actors on stage and running time, this scene felt important to the direction of the play. Majd played Lear in the opening scene as dominant and cocky.

He shamelessly solicited public adoration from his daughters in exchange for larger portions of the kingdom. Furthermore, he enjoyed the act of carving up the land. Read politically, this scene is a condemnation of Assad who sold off parts of the country's wealth to his close relatives and friends based on their loyalty and then reveled at the destruction he wrought. Then later, Lear dies because his heart is broken and the daughter that he drove into exile is the one who announces his death. Again, placed in political terms, this scene appears to be wishful thinking on Bulbul's part. Finally, while Bulbul was careful not to insert overt references to Syria or Assad into the text, the politics of revolution was clear in his insertion of the scene from *Hamlet*. Feeling the betrayal of his uncle, Hamlet pledges to avenge his father's death. Including this message of revenge in a play acted by children who lost loved ones to the brutality of the regime reads like a call to arms. At the same time, by maintaining the original translation throughout, Bulbul creates the perception of deniability.

The last moment of *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, however, was the moment Bulbul intended for the international audience to see. Following his pledge to avenge his father's death, Hamlet leads the entire cast in a call and response, asking the question *"Akoon ow la Akoon* to be or not to be." Snaking through the audience in a line, the children repeated this phrase both in Arabic and in English. The contemplation underscoring the nature of "to be or not to be" illuminated the crucial question at the heart of *Shakespeare in Zaatari*: should they (displaced Syrians) fight to exist—in Syria, in Jordan, in the world—or should they simply fade into insignificance.

The alterations Bulbul made to the text of Shakespeare's *King Lear* amounted to more than simple revisions for the sake of cultural translation. The creation and deployment of this adaptation was not simply "assimilation" or "a cross-cultural migration across borders," as Holderness puts it (82). In this production, Shakespeare was not simply "adapted to suit the conditions of local Arab theatres and native culture" (82). *Shakespeare in Zaatari* acted tactically, deterritorializing the canonical text and then reconstituting it as a desire-production whose product was a progression forward. In *The Practice of Life* (1984), de Certeau posits that tactics are everyday practices by those not in power that use the spaces of the powerful to oppose the in-group's dominate strategies. It is, as de Certeau calls it, the "art of making do." While the powerful draw the maps and decide how the space should be segmented, the non-powerful determine how the space best suits their needs, including cutting through parking lots, fields, or through buildings. The practitioners, according to de Certeau, "make use of spaces that cannot be seen" (93). Bulbul understood well the way to entice the sort of media presence he wanted. With Za'atari as the backdrop for their play, Bulbul new that the thought of refugee children acting in a Shakespearean play would attract attention in the West the same way that a side show does. Bulbul used that in order to craft an extremely visible message about the conditions of Syrians living in Za'atari and about the Assad regime. Although Shakespeare originally mapped *King Lear*, Bulbul and the children of Zaatari simply followed their desire and drew lines through the map.

FINDING CREVICES IN THE MAP TO TEACH FEMINISM

The ability to "make do" by finding the small tactical spaces in which to operate is driven by desire. As an affect, desire has a powerful potential to focus our attention on an immediate object. While the object of a specific desire may simply be a target of opportunity that produces desire by its presence and accessibility, sometimes the object of desire has been long sought and remained dormant only because there was no possibility for fulfilling it. *Shakespeare in Za'atari* was a target of opportunity that Bulbul seized in order to both to feel closer to other Syrians living in exile and to put their issues on the international stage. Prior to his initial visit to Za'atari, Bulbul had not thought about creating a theatre project with children. The 43 year old teacher, Iman Zabeida, on the other hand, had long wanted to change the power dynamics between men and women in rural Syria. Zabeida fled from Dara'a with her husband and children during the war. First she would live in Za'atari camp, but after two years her family was resettled into the desert camp in Azraq. Once in Azraq, Zabeida used her experience as an English literature teacher prior to the war to secure employment with Relief International's remedial education program. Through her work as a teaching assistant, Zabeida drew from her experiences as a child bride to encourage her female teenage students to find their own power. The desire for independence and equality Zabeida had buried for decades now fueled her class curriculum.

Prior to my visit in 2016 some of the key issues facing the residents of the camps were sanitation, education, and early marriage. Several international NGOs created a "life skills" curriculum to address these three areas of concern. Life skills, according to

UNHCR, consisted of teaching proper hygiene with a strong focus on hand washing and personal cleanliness, conflict mitigation, professional development, and strategies to combat sexual violence. This last subject, sexual violence, was perhaps the most contentious because part of the curriculum addressed early marriage.

Life skills instruction fell underneath UNICEF's "Makani" program. Makini, which is Arabic for "my space," provided a comprehensive learning space for children and teenagers. In the varied areas of the Makani program, students had access to support services, skills building programs, psychosocial support, on-site water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and educational support (UNICEF). One of the primary organizations UNICEF tasked with maintaining Makani sites in Azraq and Zaatari was Relief International. Part of Relief International's mandate was to provide "non-formal" education classes to students who were not allowed to attend the official Jordanian schools. According to Ministry of Education law, any child who had not attended school for three or more years, was not allowed to return. The "Drop Out" programs led by UNICEF aimed to prevent Syrian children from falling out of the educational system entirely. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, the non-formal education programs conducted by Relief International and other similar organizations, would allow graduating students to receive a tenth grade equivalency rating in Jordan. This at least allowed the student to participate in vocational training and enter the work force. Additionally, Relief International operated a remedial education curriculum that provided extra education opportunities to students who were allowed to attend official Jordanian schools, but struggled maintaining grade level standards.

Neither Relief International, nor the other organizations administering remedial or non-formal education programs, were allowed to determine the specific curriculum or provide the teachers. The Ministry of Education in Jordan demanded that all classroom instruction level decisions remain in their purview. Relief International's responsibilities primarily included space administration, program assessment, and training teachers[23] in the specific curriculum. By maintaining hiring authority of teachers, the Ministry of Education in Jordan assured that no foreign teachers were employed. In response to populist anger by Jordanian citizens over the influx of displaced Syrians and Iraqis, the government established migrant work laws that prevented noncitizens from holding certain employment positions. The "Closed Professions List" limited the ability of both migrants and Palestinian permanent residents from obtaining employment in jobs where Jordanian citizens preferred to work. The list, which the Ministry of Labor published in October 2016, listed teaching amongst other high skilled professions such as banking, engineer, and business professional (Briggs 14). This meant that no Syrian teacher residing in Jordan could teach without receiving express permission from the Ministry of Labor, which was only given in extreme circumstances. No matter how desperate the need or qualified the teacher, Syrians were not to be employed in this capacity, even in the camps.

The inability to employ Syrian teachers in camp education programs weighed heavily on the international NGOs working in the education field. Although the Ministry

[23] According to the 2017 Terms of Reference for Service Contracting, the NGO Questscope was given sole teacher training responsibility for the Drop Out program.

of Education claimed to hire enough teachers, with enrollment sizes reaching 1000 students per space for primary and secondary levels classrooms often went long periods without official instructors. According to Danijel Cuturic, Relief International's Jordanian country office director, while there were many dedicated teachers working at the schools, it was common for several teachers to simply not show up at all. In order to insure that the classroom had at least one instructor present, Relief International payed qualified Syrian teachers a small stipend to work as "volunteers." While this circumvention allowed Relief International to place Syrian teachers in the classrooms, they were not allowed to pay the same salary to the volunteers as the Jordanian teachers received. Furthermore, Relief International could not remove any Jordanian teacher for failure to attend or accomplish educational benchmarks. This task, like hiring, fell exclusively to the Ministry of Education.

Despite the inequality in pay, many of the volunteers appreciated the opportunity to teach the Syrian children. Not only did their position allow them to earn a small amount of money, but they enjoyed feeling productive and needed. In some situations, the volunteers filling in for ghost teachers[24] were able to treat the classroom as their own, adjusting the curriculum delivery method to suit their personal style of instruction. This was the situation for Iman Zabeida[25]. Her experience as an English teacher prior to the war qualified her to volunteer for Relief International as a remedial education assistants.

[24] A ghost teacher is a teacher that is on the official record for the Ministry of Education as teaching at a specific school, is being paid for this position, but does not actually report to work. This is often used as a method for ministry officials to provide a salary to relatives or friends.

[25] Iman Zabeida is a pseudonym for the interviewee. Due to potential sensitivities, I will not use her real name.

According to several staff members at the Relief International Makani, Zabeida was one of their most successful teachers. As an English and History teacher, she regularly used theatre as an integral part of her pedagogy.

Zabeida intersected her belief in the tenets of Islam with a quiet fierce feminism that grew from her life experiences. At the age of 14, Zabeida's father arranged for her to marry an older man in neighboring town. Although she dreamed of attending university and becoming a teacher, she followed her father's instruction to marry. Early marriage in the southern province of Dara'a, was a common practice. Zabeida's options, therefore, were limited both by the culture in which she grew up and her belief in the importance of respecting her family at all costs. Nevertheless, Zabeida successfully pleaded with her husband to let her finish school.

In the first several years of marriage, while finishing school, Zabeida also gave birth to their first two children. In all, Zabeida and her husband eventually had seven children, all of whom fled to Jordan with them. Despite maintaining her duties as a wife in a conservative Syrian family, Zabeida continued her education eventually earning her bachelor's and teaching certificate. Shortly after she began teaching English literature to secondary school students in Dara'a. Shakespeare, Zabeida insists, was her inspiration for continuing to teach and for incorporating theatre into her pedagogy.

Due to her experience as a young mother, Zabeida makes women's issues, particularly early marriage a primary focus in her classes with teenaged girls. Despite being allowed to continue her education and eventually work as a teacher, Zabeida's marriage, especially in earlier years was difficult. "At fourteen," Zabeida offers, "I was

not old enough to be a mother. No young girl is. She should be allowed to finish her education" (Zabeida). In fact, part of the reason that Zabeida believes she was able to complete her school was that her husband had another wife, and so he was not at the house much of the time.

While seemingly not revolutionary in its methodology, Zabeida's theatre in education practice, I contend is indeed a tactical strategy that uses the map of humanitarian assistance to empower a new generation of Syrian women with values that extend beyond the duties of motherhood. In one exercise, Zabeida assigns her students powerful historical women to research. Examples of figures Zabeida mentioned are: Oprah, Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth II, and Queen Zenobia[26]. After a period of research, her students must craft a monologue or scene where the historical person is being interviewed by other girls in the class. Dressed in a costumes that draw form their research, the girls answer questions related the history of the character. For instance, in one video, the student playing Queen Zenobia sits in a chair that has been decorated to look like a throne. Wearing flowing fabric covered with a layer of green chiffon, the student assumes an air of confidence and authority. Out of the frame, a person posing as a reporter asks her questions about her life as the queen of Palmyra: "How did you feel when your husband Odaenathus was murdered," and "How did it feel to be in charge of everyone, even the men?" (Zabeida). Through this exercise, Zabeida hoped that her

[26] Palmyrene queen in from 240 – 274 AD

students would learn that women can have power, and are capable of accomplishing similar goals as men.

Historical knowledge and generalized empowerment was not the only message that Zabeida included in this lesson, however. In addition to the historically based questions, she also encouraged the students to ask the characters about more personal quotidian issues. For example, in the same scene where the student acted as Queen Zenobia, one question the reporter posed was about how the Palmyrenes viewed menstruation and how did they maintain hygiene during this time every month. In the Cleopatra scene, the student playing Cleopatra talked about how using make-up helped her feel powerful. Many of these questions would be considered taboo to discuss in public areas such as a school. Indeed, Zabeida claimed that many of the girls in the camp were not being taught about these issues at home.

Perhaps the most daring scene that Zabeida showed on her computer was of a student who researched Oprah Winfrey. Unsurprisingly, Zabeida and her students admire Oprah for her independence, intelligence, and charitable works. Many of the questions the reporter asked Oprah centered on questions about creating her own show, acting, living as a single woman without children. The most revealing moment occurred, however, when the reporter asked the student playing Oprah about her life before becoming a talk show host. Without trepidation, the young student playing Oprah recounted the poverty that Winfrey endured as a child, including having to wear burlap sacks for clothing. She also discussed, in character, being raped by men from her family and being pregnant at a young age, but losing the child. She completed her scene by

recognizing that even in the worst circumstances, a woman can use her intelligence and education to improve her life without the need for a husband.

As theatrical practice in general, the scenes Zabeida asks her students to play seem tame. Theatre in Education texts are filled with examples of this type, where scene work intersects with history to open up previously unexplored questions about historical figures. When placed in the cautious camp environment, however, Zabeida's pedagogy is not only tactical, it is subversive. Because of the anxious nature of a refugee camp, organizations providing support services to the residents often refrain from approaching any subject that may seem sensitive or political in nature. While this sort of careful posture is prudent in many cases, it can also inadvertently strengthen certain forms of oppression. In both Zaatari and Azraq, discussions around normative gender roles was certainly one area that required organizations to be hyperattentive to cultural sensitivities. To their credit, organizations such as Relief International certainly did attempt repeatedly to open the debate over early marriage. In fact, the same day that I interviewed Zabeida, Relief International held a family day that included a skit about the danger of early marriage followed by testimony of several Syrian women who were married early. At the same time, discussions about feminine hygiene, sex before marriage, and rape were anathema to the patriarchal ethos and thus considered appropriate only between a mother and her daughters. For Zabeida to tackle such issues in the confines of the classroom, stretched the limits of propriety in Azraq.

Taken as a subversive action, Zabeida's classroom scene exercise reconfigures the geography of patriarchy at play in the camp space of Azraq. The map of propriety for

Azraq consists primarily of structures conceived, built, and institutionalized by the male dominated culture of southern Syria negotiating its own marginalization with the neoliberal powers of Western development organizations. There is little room for displaced women living in Azraq to claim a space of security or growth that does not exist because a man allows it. That does not mean that Syrian women in the camp are resigning themselves to the control of either the patriarchal or neoliberal forces. It is to say that women who wish to push against these boundaries must do so from temporary niches recessed within the corners and shadows of Azraq. Even as Zabeida uses a space provided by a Western organization, controlled by the Government of Jordan, and only with the permission of her husband, she inscribes a politics of desire that drives forward into a new understanding of gender roles in a traditionally conservative society. She plants seeds of feminist empowerment in a patriarchal landscape that will trace her presence and make visible a path for young Syrian women to follow.

VIRTUAL DESIRE LINES

In the two previous cases, the desire functioned in two very different spaces. In *Shakespeare in Zaatari* desire worked to manipulate the international media by using the Western canon and then inscribing Syrian revolutionary politics over Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In Azraq, Zabeida marked a space in between the cultural patriarchy, governmental authority, and international development regime where young women could explore feminist topics in safety. Although both examples operate through separate methodologies and from different circumstances, *Shakespeare in Zaatari* and Zabeida's

use of theatre in education rely on the immediacy and instability of desire. *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* similarly relies on the improvisatory nature of desire, but explores the transgression of authorized space through the use of the video conferencing platform Skype. With the help of satellite equipment stolen from the regime by the Free Syrian Army, young actors under siege in the suburban area, al-Waer, that lies just to the east of Homs, Syria were able to perform a play with young actors displaced in Amman, Jordan. Driven by the desire to touch even if digitally, their homeland, several children living in a recovery facility in Amman rehearsed an adapted version of *Romeo and Juliet.* At the same time, another group of children, driven by the desire to imagine an existence outside of the violence and war surrounding them, secretly rehearsed in an apartment in al-Waer. Eventually the two casts met through a combination of computers, cameras, and screens. Their rehearsals and performances, mediated through binary code, opened momentary pathways through borders and conflict zones allowing the children to make a unified plea for the violence and killing to stop.

Souriyat Across Borders is a hospice for war wounded Syrians who are recovering from severe injuries suffered as a result of the war. The nonprofit center was founded and continues to be run exclusively by Syrian women who were themselves displaced to Jordan. Located near the University of Jordan in Amman, Souriyat houses Syrians of all ages with physically debilitating injuries. The older residents staying in the hospice have a decidedly pro-revolution political affiliation. In fact, many of the audience members present for the performances of *Romeo and Juliet* arrived at Souriyat after being injured in skirmishes with the Syrian Army or *al-Dawlah al-Islamïyah* (Islamic State). At

the same time there were children living in Souriyat who fell victim to the barrage of barrel bombs dropped from the Syrian and Russian planes. The eleven-year old boy who played Romeo lost the full use of his right leg when he ran to escape a falling bomb.

Bulbul chose to work at Souriyat for this production because UNHCR and the Jordanian government prohibited him from accessing the camp. Following the 2014 performance of *King Lear* in Zaatari, Bulbul, Horani, and the community in which they worked wanted to launch a theatre program that would establish cultural centers around Zaatari. They would follow up *Shakespeare in Zaatari* with Cervantes or Moliere. A new tent would be built and named after the playwright of whichever play they chose. Bulbul would rehearse the children for four months and then hold the performance on March 27th, which is World Theatre Day. Unfortunately, because Bulbul and Kleinschmidt could not overcome their differences, Bulbul was disallowed from working anywhere inside the camp. Still wanting to work with Syrian children, Bulbul approached Souriyat with his idea for producing *Romeo and Juliet* over Skype with children in Homs. Considering that one of Souriyat's primary focuses is on the children wounded in the Syrian war, the board allowed Bulbul and the actors to use the roof of the facility which had a large empty storage room.

At the same time Bulbul worked to secure a performance space and adapt the script, Abu Ameen, a drama teacher and pro-revolution activist who fled Homs to the suburban enclave al-Waer, worked with his teenaged students to make masks and develop rules to maintain their anonymity. The cast of *Romeo and Juliet* living in Homs needed to remain vigilant about their secrecy. By January of 2015, the regime forces in

Syria had taken control of the entire city of Homs. Serving as the heart of the revolution, Homs had initially resisted attempts by the military to quell the 2011 marches. Because of their resiliency, citizens in Homs gave life to the revolution after the protests temporarily died out in Dara'a. But with Hezbollah reinforcing the Syrian military, the Free Syrian Army were forced to evacuate Homs in May 2014 (Zuhur; Sherlock and Samman). While the most vocal and known activist moved with the Free Syrian army to al-Waer, other Sunni citizens remained in Homs living under a cloud of suspicion from Syrian intelligence. The regime forced people remaining in the city to sign a declaration of loyalty to Assad. Although many people signed it, they remained silently hopeful that the revolution would succeed. This included the parents of the children participating in *Romeo and Juliet.* Any activity deemed subversive likely would be met with prison, torture, and possibly death. The regime intelligence apparatus likely would have considered any theatre potentially subversive. But performing theatre over the internet in collaboration with Ameen and Bulbul, who were considered a dissidents, would certainly have registered as an act of treason against the regime. Nevertheless, the parents allowed their children to make the treacherous journey from Homs across oppositional lines to al-Waer five times per week for four months (Ameen).

Over those four months, Ameen and Bulbul rehearsed *Romeo and Juliet* with both groups of children. In the mornings Bulbul traveled to the Souriyat building and rehearsed with the Amman group for three hours. Working in a small activity room with speckled brown concrete floors and white walls lined with the children's artwork, the cast in Amman traded positions reading the lines played by the actors in al-Waer. Then

between noon and three in the afternoon, Ameen brought the children to his temporary apartment for rehearsal. The timing varied daily in order to avoid creating a predictable pattern of movement that could make capturing them easier. Returning home from Souriyat, Bulbul waited for an email from Ameem to say that the children were ready. Then Bulbul would call Ameen on Skype for the group to begin rehearsal. While Bulbul directed, Ameen took notes and read the Amman casts' roles. After two months of meeting in this way, Bulbul and scenographer, Jean Yves Bizien, cleared the rooftop of Souriyat, and multimedia designer, Hassan Muhra, completed the Skype projection installment. This allowed the two casts to rehearse together for the first time. Until this point, the children in Amman and Homs had not met each other.

The first meeting, which Muhra captured on video, was a moment of joy for both those in Amman and al-Waer. Bulbul had the children standing in a group behind him in Amman, while in al-Waer Ameen kept the children out of camera frame. After a few minutes of adjusting the camera image so that it was clear, and ensuring that the sound preferences were all correct, Ameen instructed the children in al-Waer to enter the frame. As soon as the two groups saw each other they both giggled coyly. Ameen noted that the children in Syria desperately wanted to make this connection with other Syrian children living outside of the war. At the same time, Bulbul explained that seeing the children in Syria for the first time, reminded the children in Amman that they were still connected to the country. The giggling, Bulbul speculated was a combination of the children processing these complex emotions bound up with the romantic connotations at play in *Romeo and Juliet.* After a few moments of feigned embarrassment, the children

composed themselves and Bulbul introduced the actors from Amman. Ameen followed by introducing the actors in the apartment in al Waer. For two months following this initial introduction, the children forged a virtual bond necessary for the performance and psychological benefit of each.

The ability for the children to meet and perform *Romeo and Juliet* relied on a confluence of tactics and technologies that created enough space for the project to exist temporarily and then leave traces in the act of its disappearance. In a physical way, the Syrians involved in creating *Romeo and Juliet* located pockets in the crevices of the map, from which they could contest power. In al-Waer, just outside of Homs, under the protection of the Free Syrian Army, Ameen and the children worked from a private apartment. The regime, however, continued advancing towards this suburban enclave from its regained position in Homs. This meant that during rehearsals and performances the group endured regular shelling from mortar rounds and barrel bombs. In a particularly tense moment during the first performance, when the siege was audible in the background, the internet connection severed leaving the audience in Amman to wonder if the apartment in al-Waer had been struck.

Adding to the already perilous situation of producing a play while under bombardment, the four children participating lived in a regime held neighborhood in Homs. As mentioned earlier, regime forces captured Homs a few months prior to the beginning of rehearsals. For four months, five days per week, Ameen drove through the front line between opposition and regime forces in order to pick the children up for rehearsals. Describing his drive back from Homs, Ameen noted that there was one road

on which he had to travel where the regime forces positioned snipers on the rooftops. Both entering and exiting the area on this road, Ameen recalls having to drive quickly in a specific lane because it created a difficult angle for the snipers attempting to shoot. Additionally, he varied the days and times of the rehearsals, some days picking the children up at 2pm, then the next day at 5pm. In this manner he avoided predictability making it more difficult to become a target (Ameen). During a documentary produced by Arte TV called *Jordan: Romeo and Juliet, Love at War*, Ameen drove a reporter through the streets of al-Waer after dropping the children off following rehearsal. The landscape was littered with debris from the war, crumbling buildings that the Syrian forces destroyed, and charred automobiles parked where ever they had been when the fighting began.

Ameen, acknowledged the risk he and the children took by performing this play on the internet. At the same time, he argues that to be silent in the face of oppression would be the same as agreeing with Assad's brutality. The children's parents, according to Ameen, agreed and were excited that their children were working with him and Bulbul. Of course, both Bulbul and Ameen admit that at the time of the play, all involved still believed that the revolution would be successful. Russia had not yet committed its full presence and the Free Syrian Army still held major areas in the south and east including Dara'a, Idlib, and Aleppo (ARTE GEIE).

The apartment they rehearsed and performed in did not belong to Ameen, nor anyone else involved in the play. Its owner had allowed Ameen to live there with his family so that he could escape Homs when the regime took control. Prior to living in the

apartment, Ameen moved seven other times to escape the regime forces who actively looked for him. In the camera frame, two rooms were visible. The room where the actors performed looked to be a small living room. In some of the videos and images a couch and other furniture was visible. The room in the background, which was separated from the living room by standard double door frame passage, was an office. During the performance, however, Ameen converted this room into audience seating. On the frame over the doorway, he and the children crafted a brick façade that mimicked Bizien's scenography in Amman.

Meanwhile, in Jordan, Bulbul and the children carved out space on the roof of a private building so that they would not have to worry about being censored by Jordanian authorities for presenting potentially political material. When Bulbul began working on the adaptation for *Romeo and Juliet*, intended for it to be performed in Zaatari. When those plans were scuttled by UNHCR and camp authorities, he searched for another space. There are performances spaces in Amman belonging to the Ministry of Culture that Bulbul could have used. In fact, a friend of Bulbul's from the High Institute of Dramatic Art in Damascus, managed one of these spaces. But using a government owned space meant exposing the show to the eye of the Jordanian censors. While the play was not explicitly political, at least not in a manner that would cause concern to the government, Bulbul's experience with censors in Syria followed by his recent run in with Jordanian authorities in Zaatari meant that he was overly cautious in the way he viewed access to the work.

Moreover, even if the Jordanian authorities did not attempt to censor the play, there was always the risk that Syrian intelligence would create problems for the production if it were held in a public location. According to Bulbul, following the media coverage of *Shakespeare in Zaatari* he felt certain that Syrian intelligence was surveilling him in Amman. He did not want to risk them creating a conflict that would derail the performance or harm the children. For that reason, he sought a place that had controlled access. This would be a tactic Bulbul repeated for his next play *Love Boat* (2016) which was performed in the French Institute in Amman.

The use of physical space in this manner, by both Ameen and Bulbul, demonstrates an understanding of the official flow of power over two separate geographical areas sufficient enough to subtly cut across them. For Bulbul and the cast in Amman, the ability to operate in an space outside Jordanian authority meant that a performance absent government intrusion was possible. For Ameen and the cast in Homs, moving in the shadows and working from the apartment reduced their risk of imprisonment, torture, or death. In Syria's current state of exception, the regime heavily regulates the landscape. Even though the group in al-Waer this space was not entirely safe from the state. As Giorgio Agamben notes, in the state of exception there is no space free from government intrusion (Agamben). It is quite literally a matter of one's life that under the suspension of the rule of law, those seeking to subvert an oppressive state create their own map of shadows with trajectories that travelled in between them.

That the internet would be used as a pathway for resistance is not, itself, extraordinary. Going back to 1989, Chinese university students used web based bulletin

boards to organize and announce protests. In 1998, from exile in New Jersey, Gabonese scholar and activist Daniel Mengara created a website to promote the overthrow of Omar Bongo's dictatorial regime. More recently, social media on mobile platforms fueled protests for the 2009 Green Revolution in Iran as well as in 2011 for the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. As Edward Ziter discusses in his recent tome, *Political Performance in Syria* (2014), platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, once Assad allowed access to them, offered theatre artists new ways of imagining dissident performance. For example, two comedic artists that Ziter writes about, Ahmed and Mohammed Malas, posted short two-character plays performed from their bedroom on YouTube. These plays, and many of the videos they posted to their YouTube account since addressed oppression under the regime, the revolution, and life as Syrian refugees in France (E. Ziter *Political Performance* 51).

Cyberactivism grew significantly in Syria from 2011 until the point that *Romeo and Juliet* was performed in 2015. As a study into circumventing attempted internet censoring by the Syrian regime, internet scholar, Walid al-Saqaf noted that by 2012, Syrian internet penetration reached 22% or over five million users. Unfortunately, SyriaTel, a company owned by Assad's cousin Rami Makhlouf owned most of the access to it (Al-Saqaf 43). This meant that internet in Syria was highly susceptible to state censorship. One manner that cyberactivists used to circumvent censorship as al-Saqaf points out, was through proxy servers. Software such as alKasir, which al-Saqaf created, allowed internet users to report blocked websites and then rerouted the users to proxy servers located in the United States so that they could access the blocked website. Among

the websites most visited through alKasir were FaceBook, YouTube, and Skype (Al-Saqaf 46). While the Free Syrian Army and other dissidents used "soft" methods such as alKasir, this type "liberation technology" requires one to work completely within the regime's internet infrastructure. But software and proxy servers do not function if the regime simply cuts internet service to certain portions of the country, as they did during the war. Ameen, therefore had turned to a different type of liberation technology, satellite communications networks.

Liberation technology is a term used by political theorist, Larry Diamond, to note "any form of information and communication technology (ICT) that can expand political, social, and economic freedom" (Diamond 69). This form of technology can include hardware--routers, computers, mobile phones, and satellite phones—software such as alKasir, and internet applications like Facebook, Twitter, and others. Diamond employs the term because the decentralized nature of the internet is ideal for communications between grassroots organizers seeking to circumvent restrictions placed on it, particularly by authoritarian regimes. At the same time, Diamond warns not to see technology as utopic because it is simply a tool that can be wielded by those with selfish or nefarious purposes as easily as it can by those hoping to subvert oppression. The two primary ways that the Free Syrian Army utilized liberation technology was through proxy servers as al-Saqaf notes and through satellite communications. As mentioned previously proxy servers made use of regime internet infrastructure, but could not be used in opposition controlled territory because the regime had disabled the nations communications infrastructure in areas it did not control. In areas such as where Ameen lived during the

production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2015, satellite communications were necessary. Most of the equipment needed to access satellite signals belonged to the Free Syrian Army, al Nusra, or Daesh. Anyone wanting access to this equipment needed to have connections with one of these groups. Ameen, because of his reputation as an outspoken anti-regime activist, negotiated with the Free Syrian Army for satellite internet in order to rehearse and broadcast the performance over Skype. According to both Bulbul and Ameen, they framed the project of *Romeo and Juliet* as pro-revolutionary messaging that would reach beyond the borders of Syria and into the international media (Ameen). Given the media exposure Bulbul managed for *Shakespeare in Zaatari*, the Free Syrian Army recognized the propagandistic value in logistically supporting *Romeo and Juliet*.

Ameen's use of satellite communications in order to broadcast anti-regime theatre is, by itself a production of desire that uses the structures and geographies of the powerful tactically to reach beyond the map of the Syrian revolution into the international sphere. Ameen, operated from space within the Syrian borders. Although the Free Syrian Army defended this position from the Syrian regime, under the logic of the nation-state, it still belonged to the government. Using defense terminology, the land under Free Syrian Army Control was occupied by illegal opposition forces. Al-Waer, the area from where Ameen broadcast *Romeo and Juliet* was cordoned off on all sides by regime forces (SNAP). The only option for the children in Homs and Ameen to connect with anyone outside of the nation's border, was through the internet. Even with proxy servers, using the regime's infrastructure to propagate anti-regime material meant both being in regime controlled area and risking detection due to the surveillance of online traffic by the

Ministry of Information. Using satellite communications, therefore, was the group's only alternative. Furthermore, the technology required for this communication, although currently in the possession of the Free Syrian Army, originally belonged to the regime. Members of the Syrian Army took the equipment when they defected to the Free Syrian Army once Assad began assaulting civilians. *Romeo and Juliet*, therefore, relied on equipment purchased by the regime in order to cross regime controlled territory into Jordanian communication space. This re-appropriation of equipment is common place in insurgency situations where the oppositional forces requisition regime equipment for operational communication. What is most extraordinary about this tactical use of regime technology is that it was employed in service of theatre as a revolutionary apparatus. In insurgencies communications are an essential element to the success of operations. The Free Syrian Army, as the primary insurgency force in this area, recognized the political value in this theatrical project, and enabled it through use of critical satellite resources.

THE TACTICS OF DESIRE

Beyond its own cartographic inversion, *Romeo and Juliet* circulates within a larger milieu of work that argues effectively for the revolutionary value of theatre. That the Free Syrian Army in al-Waer saw it as important, underscores the ability theatre has in crafting scenarios that imagine life inside and beyond the revolution. One production alone did not create this understanding though. *Romeo and Juliet Separated by War* must be viewed in concert with other anti-regime productions such as *Shakespeare in Zaatari* and *Love Boat*, or as mentioned earlier, the two-character plays produced by the Malas

twins from the apartment in Damascus. These works must also be coupled with the activist performances by artists such as the late May Skaff who helped lead the effort to collect over 300 artist and scholar signatures on the "Milk Statement," which responded to the initial crisis in Dara'a by demanding that humanitarian aid supplies be delivered to those under siege in the southern Syrian province (E. Ziter "Clowns" 140, 45). Even more important is to place these performance besides others that have yet to be told. Performances such as those by amateur theatre group *Tajma Shabab Saraqib* (The Youth Group of Saraqib) which started this chapter.

All of these individual performers and groups are led by desire to produce. The children of *Shakespeare in Zaatari* who needed somewhere to place their energy, fears, sadness, and anger found a solace through the process of theatre. At the same time, they discovered that their voices, especially when unified could demand attention from adults in the camp and throughout the world. Using performance as a tool they were able to ask the question at the heart of so many Syrians in 2014: "To be, or not to be." Alternatively, Zabeida's revolution applied broadly to an oppressive patriarchy rather than to a dictatorial regime or failed international humanitarian response. Zabeida working in Azraq wanted to show the teenage girls in her class that they did not have to accept the role of caretaker assigned to them by the male dominated culture. Through performance she created a vocabulary for the girls to find value in their intellectual capacity. Finally, the children in Homs and Amman, along with Ameen and Bulbul, operated within and counter to physical and technological limitations. Both groups needed to connect—Homs

with those outside Syria and Amman, those within. Furthermore, they had a drive to scream to the world about the violence occurring in Syria.

The desire to produce for each of the groups mentioned in this chapter worked instinctually to push life forward despite desperate circumstances. Although each of their desires manifested in some sort of cultural product, neither the product, nor accumulation of any object, was the focus of their desires. Bulbul, acknowledges that he did not enter Zaatari camp with the goal of directing over 100 children in a Shakespearean production. The decision to direct *King Lear* with the children grew as a need from his desire. Likewise, the children did not enter the tent on the first day of *Shakespeare in Zaatari* with the desire to act in *King Lear*. Their desire created both the want to meet a TV celebrity and then the need to rehearse and perform *King Lear*. For Zabeida, desire produced an opportunity to teach young women about their value. This need to teach for Zabeida recurrently appeared in her life as a displaced Syrian in both Azraq and Zaatari. Of course, in Azraq it led her to seek a volunteer position in teaching with Relief International. Prior to this experience, however, Zabeida lived in Zaatari with her family. While there she adopted five siblings whose parents were killed during the war in Syria (IRC). Neither of these circumstances originated in a desire aimed at an object or accumulation.

In each of the examples in this chapter, the people participating in theatre exist as nomadic rather than fixed subjects in the continued process of becoming. Desire is the force propelling these artists over infinite planes and through the points virtually and physically. Through each line travelled, new intersections are formed. The cast of

Shakespeare in Zaatari that leapt from the play experience into school for the first time since they arrived at Zaatari; or the young women in Zabeida's class who continue to pursue their academic goals rather than enter into an early marriage; or the children in Homs and Amman who know that there are crevices and shadows from which to resist oppression, they all inscribed lines along which other subjectivities have and will follow for a time. Theatre, for these groups was neither the object nor a representation of desire. It was a product of desire that represents the forward movement of life. Eventually those paths too will dissipate and new ones will form for new people in the process of becoming.

Illustration 8: Play from Saraqb Youth Group, 2015. Printed with permission of photographer.

Illustration 9: Nawar Bulbul with camera person from Orient TV during rehearsal for *Shakespeare in Za'atari*. Photograph by Ala'a Hourani. Used with permission.

Illustration 10: Image of children in Homs performing *Romeo and Juliet Separated by War* with children in Amman over Skype, 2015. Still taken from video by Nawar Bulbul. Used with permission by owner.

Chapter Four: Hope in a Theatrical Pantopia

"When hope has gone life has ended, actually or potentially," – Erich Fromm, Revolution of Hope

Sitting at Kepi Café in the Circle of Paris, one of Amman's quaint bohemian enclaves, Bulbul and I had already begun drinking our afternoon espresso when Tarek al Hassan arrived. After a few moments greeting each other with idle chat, and once al Hassan ordered his coffee, we began the interview. Although al Hassan and I had spent a significant amount of time together while working on the lighting and sound for *Love Boat* the year prior, this was only the second time I interviewed him in an official capacity. Now that almost a year had passed since we completed the production, I wanted to know if al Hassan's first theatrical experience left a lasting impact on him. With Bulbul sitting in between interpreting, I asked al Hassan, with time away from the theatre, what does he think about it. In his usual poetic rhetorical style, al Hassan answered:

> This project for me, this is exactly like a bridge [...] day after day this bridge is being built and we are like columns of this bridge. We are souls but during the rehearsals we became like one soul climbing this bridge. Before the building of this bridge I am outside of this group, and later I am inside of the group […] All of us together built this bridge and after, all of us are walking on this bridge (Al Hassan).

The production process in *Love Boat* connected al Hassan to something beyond the disillusioned isolation of displacement in an urban center such as Amman. In al Hassan's

own words, “Before the project in general I didn’t know anyone,” but after, “This group for me, this is the first family for me, my real family” (ibid.). Theatre gave al Hassan a community with whom he could imagine life beyond the shadowy existence of refugees in Jordan.

The role theatre plays in creating and reinvigorating hope stems from its ability to bind people together in flights of fantasy. Theatre’s imaginative properties allows it to transport people from a desert camp in northern Jordan to England in the middle ages, to Denmark, or even to home in Syria beyond the war and destruction. Theatre, as a pantopia, “recognizes an unexplored space, absent all maps, lacking an atlas, with no voyager to describe it” (Serres 24). Through its limitless capacity, theatre explodes possibility. For performers and spectators, embodying or witnessing infinite potential disrupts the space and time of displacement and authorizes, if only temporary, an imagined nomadic citizenship. Each site or character we encounter in our journey alters slightly our trajectory, for “we have all become wanderers with the harlequin’s spirit, taking on and mixing with the spirits of the places we passed, for good or evil” (64). The dynamism inherent in theatrical performance is also an essential enabler of hope. The absence of movement is stagnation, a site of death, hopelessness.

In her acclaimed work *Utopia in Performance* (2005), scholar and feminist critic Jill Dolan outlines a belief in live performance’s ability to form a community, even if temporarily, “to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (2). The subtitle of Dolan’s work, “Finding Hope at the Theatre,” foregrounds theatrical performance as a prophetic site

because it has the capacity to deliberate on better futures. Like al Hassan's experience in *Love Boat* (2016), theatre fashions new worlds exploding with possibilities for something, anything better. Whether through the narrative of the play or intimacy of the rehearsals, theatre is able to build bridges, connect people, and deliver them to new paths. Even in its ephemerality, theatre never disappears completely from the imaginations of those who practice it either as performers or spectators. Theatre's creative potential remaps the "real" pointing the way towards hope.

I situate this chapter in the same arena regarding hope and its relation to theatre as Dolan, only I alter slightly the semiotic construction. Rather than the word "utopia," for reasons discussed in the following section, I borrow French philosopher Michel Serres' term "pantopia." Drawing from the classical Greek words "*pan*" (every or all) and "topos" (place), Serres defines pantopia as, "all places in every place and every place in all places, centers and circumference, global conversation" (130-31). The genesis of this term is the increasingly connected world that compresses and intertwines "real" and "virtual" spaces into an unidentifiable third space. In this respect it is similar to Victor Turner's liminal space. For this dissertation, I adjust pantopia to include the "imaginary" space, which like the virtual, exists simultaneously with the "real" and yet is not real. Theatre's pantopic characteristics, I argue, cultivate a fertile ground for hope because it opens a world of possibilities in an infinite conversation. Theatre, with its imagined access to every place or all places, briefly captures both performers and spectators and transports them spiritually to a mimetic plane where narratives play out and meanings form. Theatre is prophetic, not in a divine sense, but in that it sees and negotiates a future.

I recognize the risk involved in offering criticism to such a pivotal and profound work as Dolan's *Utopia in Performance* (2005). While I understand that no work should stand outside of critical engagement, I want to acknowledge how instrumental Dolan's writings in this arena—as in many others—have been to my consideration of affect when both participating and researching the work in this dissertation. As mentioned previously, I share the view of performance as, "a hopeful process that continually writes a different, better future" (Dolan 13). The future put forward by theatre, as Dolan notes, is not a concrete or static future, but the possibility of multiple futures better than the contemporary moment. Visualizing better circumstances, especially in moments of uncertainty or despair, can produce and maintain hope. My belief in theatre's generative powers, similar to Dolan's, are rooted in the early days of my theatrical experiences. Seeing the transformation of a bare stage into a fantastical world and then back to a bare stage spoke to my teenage mind that saw multiple, even unlimited potentialities. Indeed, I continue returning to theatre when the future is opaque, such as it is in the current political climate.

While I continue to be inspired by Dolan's work in so many ways, I find myself increasingly questioning the word "utopia" itself. Most of my difficulty with the application of the word "utopia" stems from its origin in Thomas More's socio-political satire, *Utopia* (1516). In his description of the fantastical land Utopia, More envisions a perfect society, "where every man has a right to everything" (142). Acknowledging the gendered nature of Moore's writing generally, this statement implies an openness to the fictional land that Moore's subsequent description does not support. Throughout the

remainder of *Utopia*, Moore prescribes a series of rules by which the Utopians live. In his annunciation of Utopia, Moore exalts one variation of citizenship foreclosing all other possibilities. Secondarily, Moore's satirical construction of the word utopia to describe this mythical world of perfection acknowledges that such a state will never exist. While arguing against the very real economic and social ills of his day, Moore simultaneously crystalizes his solutions in an imaginary and fantastical world. While I understand that Dolan was in no way suggesting that the utopia pursued in theatre bares any resemblance to the utopia Moore constructed, impossibility is an indelible marker of the word. Furthermore, utopia, as originally put forward by originator, calls forth and ideal world, which begs the question, whose ideal?

Despite finding the term "utopia" complicated and contradictory to the generative beauty in Dolan's description of theatrical practice, her focus on hope as an essential affect, points to expanding possible futures. "Hope," for Dolan, "represents an opening up, rather than closing down, of consciousness of the past and the future in the present" (141). In other words, hope does not prescribe a specific future, but recognizes the inequities of the past and projects a future where, in some manner, these are changed for the better. Similarly, humanist philosopher Erich Fromm defines hope as an awareness of the future(s) that might be rather than ought to be. Drawing on the connections between hope and faith, Fromm posits both are, "not prediction[s] of the future; […but] the vision of the present in a state of pregnancy" (CH. 2). Hope exists in the present with an active attentiveness towards the possibilities of building a more socially just future. Dolan also speaks of the interconnected relationship between hope and faith noting that, "hope relies

on the active doings of faith," and that both, "demand continual reaffirmation" (141). Dolan and Fromm resonate in unison the belief that hope must be active and transformational. Likewise, I situate the nexus of theatre and citizenship in the dynamic metamorphosis intrinsic to hope.

Moving beyond passive waiting, according to Fromm and Dolan, is essential to the existence of hope. As Fromm argues, however, the active nature of hope requires that the object of hope must be obtainable. "There is no sense," Fromm writes, "in hoping for that which already exists or for that which cannot be" (CH. 2). And yet, the origin of utopia's concept traces back to a land that More never believed would exist. Moreover, when considering the skeptical attitude often aimed at utopian concepts, I cannot help but feel that "utopia" betrays the very real possibilities present in and because of theatrical performance. "No place," negates ontology and forecloses on possibilities. "Every place" or "all places," on the other hand, explodes the realm of possibility into an infinite space. Utopia is the black whole left after the explosion of a massive star, full of futures that will never escape. Pantopia is the big bang, containing the world of possibilities ever expanding. Pantopia exchanges utopia's "ideal" for the infinite. It does not predict the future, but allows for multiple futures. Pantopia is hope continually renewed.

The theatrical moments I discuss in the following pages elude to a belief in better futures while simultaneously recognizing that the path forward is long and uncertain. Often this careful optimism is coupled with reflections of the past and present. When viewed as part of a larger narrative structure, these moments of hope appear as a necessary step in the formation of new citizenship identities that do not exist in

relationship to national borders. First, I discuss the internationally known theatre project *The Syrian Trojan Women*. This play, which was funded largely by British producers featured Syrian women delivering monologues about the difficult moments in their lives immediately before, during, and after the revolution began. Rather than focus on the content of the play itself, I chose to examine the birth and life of *Syrian Trojan Women*. For many of performers this was both their first time on stage and enacting politics outside of their home. Additionally, the production toured internationally, which allowed some of the performers to imagine life beyond their refugee existence in Amman. Indeed, a few carried the possibility a step further by leaving the company while on tour in countries such as Great Britain.

Following the *Syrian Trojan Women*, I return to the performance of *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*. My discussion in this section focuses on the performance itself as I examine two specific moments that not only offer a hope for the future of the performers, but also defy the overly simplified belief that children displaced and/or wounded by war violence are fragile. One moment in the play concerns a staged combat scene featuring Romeo, played by a thirteen year old Ibrahim[27] who irreparably injured his leg escaping an explosion. Although the entire experience helped to reform his view of the future, I argue that the physical nature of this scene played the largest role. The other moment in the play is the changed ending when, rather than committing suicide as the original eponymous characters do, Romeo and Juliet in this adaptation refuse to

[27] Normally I would choose to use a synonym in order to safeguard the identity of a minor, but this actor participate in a documentary about the production and his name has become a matter of public record.

swallow the poison and vow to continue living. This alteration in the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is a literal and metaphorical rejection of hopelessness performed for the sake of the actors, the audience, and the international media attending the show.

I close out the chapter on hope with a return to the production *Love Boat*. This time, I counter balance the use of nostalgia—as discussed in chapter two—with the dominant story of hope at play in this show. The structure of the show imagines a nomadic journey throughout Europe without any of the travel restrictions currently placed on those seeking refuge. The uninhibited movement from country to country by the actors in *Love Boat*, while pretend, imagines a future where every person flows as effortlessly through national borders as digital information or corporate money. Even in death, the characters in *Love Boat* leave open the possibility for nomadic citizenship.

As a pantopia, theatre provides a fertile ground for cultivating hope. Whether through imagining the future as a citizen of a new nation, every nation, or simply demonstrating resilience in the face of uncertainty, the performances discussed in this chapter look towards a better tomorrow. More notably, the actors in these performances actively choose to live despite the trauma—physical and psychological—they endured as a result of the war in Syria. Theatrical performances such as those in this chapter, are part of the deliberative process from which a collective can choose to move forward, laterally, retreat. These performances deliberate about a future, not the future. To deliberate is to believe that a future is still possible, to believe that life is still possible.

FELICITOUS CONNECTIONS

In filmmaker Yasmin Fedda's documentary film, *Queens of Syria* (2014), Maha[28], who fled from Syria after the start of the war, summarizes her displacement experience saying, "We're not living now. I mean we live day by day, but no more. This isn't our home or our country. I live on a floor with two foam mattresses. What can I dream about?" (Fedda). Cutting between images of Maha standing outside against the concreted hills of Amman and her spartan apartment with sleeping pads lining the walls, Fedda's documentary glimpses the banality of Maha's life in exile. The intimate quotidian moments of Maha making yerba mate while helping her young children add urgency to the project at the heart of *Queens of Syria*.

In 2013, a group of sixty Syrian women living in Amman, Jordan entered a seven week workshop to build and rehearse a production based on Euripides' *The Trojan Women*. This play, which has gone by the names *Syrian Trojan Women* and *Queens of Syria*, opened a space for the subaltern voices of displaced women living in the sprawling urban landscape of Amman to make their stories known. Under the direction of Syrian applied theatre artist, Omar Abu Saada and with actor training by Syrian actress, Nanda Mohammad, and scenographer Bissane al Charif these Syrian women merged their individual power to generate a collective spirit capable of altering, even briefly, conversations around war trauma, displacement, and global migration.

[28] For all participants in *Syrian Trojan Women* I use first because last names were not included in the archived footage or subsequent documentary.

The scaffolding of applied theatre activities in the context of a production rehearsal transformed the initial public nature of the rehearsal space into an intimate private space capable of establishing familial bonds between the performers. In his analysis of *The Syrian Trojan Woman*, Syrian theatre scholar Edward Ziter offers the performance as a "reformulation of the idea of the public [sphere] itself" (178). Working from Nancy Fraser's call for a "post-bourgeois model of the public sphere," Ziter argues that the women's performance explodes the boundaries between the phallocentric private and the public spheres. Ziter suggests that by creating space for the women to explore their personal tragedies through the structure of Euripides' text and then superseding the classical work with their ensuing stories, *The Syrian Trojan Women* made public issues that patriarchal tradition deems private. I would like to add that before this "testimonial theatre" moved from the private to the public, the private had to be reconstructed. Moreover, it was the function of Abu Saada, Mohammad, and al Charif's applied practice that made the private's expansion possible.

Like Maha, all who began the rehearsal process were displaced forcibly from their homes in Syria and had registered as refugees in Jordan. Unlike the hyper-visible populations living in one of the refugee camps, all of the women in *Syrian Trojan Women* and their families lived in the shadows of Amman. As untenable as life inside refugee camps can be, it is often far more difficult in unregulated spaces such as the city. Amman's large area and dense population mean that family and friends are often forced to live far apart from each other. Also, the two Syrian camps in Jordan are populated only by Syrians where the cities contain a diverse and unfamiliar population. Finally, support

services through NGOs are easier to access in the camps as opposed to the city. Often, those displaced families choosing to live in the city are left with little or no international or state support. These factors can lead to extreme isolation and poverty for those choosing to live in the city.

Creating a theatrical production in Amman with displaced Syrians is both challenging and necessary. Executive producer Charlotte Eagar noted that her organization, Refuge Productions, had intended to work with women in Za'atari, but access to the camp was an issue. UNHCR spokesperson, Peter Kessler informed Eagar in a conversation about the project that, "Urban refugees are often more isolated and depressed than people in the camps" (Eagar "Syrian Refugees Stage Euripides' the Trojan Women" 2). Additionally, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, far more displaced people live in the urban areas than in the camps. Refuge Productions, therefore, decided to work with Syrians living in Amman. Locating enough people to act, however, posed a significant challenge, Eagar noted. Citing the difficulty of finding participants, Eagar wrote, "We've spent the past month tracking down Syrian women who we hope might want to take part" ("Syrian Refugees Stage Euripides' the Trojan Women" 1). After they "trawled the UNHCR registration centre (*sic*) and hung out at the Queen Zein Institute" ("Syrian Refugees Stage Euripides' the Trojan Women" 2), Refuge Productions managed to recruit enough women. According to Eagar, the first day twenty women showed up, by but the third day they needed to turn women away because they simply did not have enough space ("Syrian Refugees Stage Euripides' the Trojan Women" 2).

The first week of rehearsals, like most theatrical productions, focused on getting the women to see each other as part of a community. While this moment is essential to the success of any multi-actor performance, the synthesizing of personalities were made more significant and delicate against the backdrop of the Syrian war and displacement. The recruitment of these women did not factor in politics, class structures, religious identities, or social beliefs. The goal as Abu Saada defined it was to, "work together to produce a performance, regardless of our allegiances or our political opinions" (Fedda). At the same time, Eagar recognized that all of the women in the play had economically stable lives in Syria. While there was a slight difference in class distinction between groups of actors in *Syrian Trojan Women*, they "were a mix of feisty working class and middle class people" (Eagar "Interview"). The relative homogenous class structure in the cast likely meant that the divergence in political opinions, particularly regarding Assad, was somewhat narrow. Additionally, as seen in the documentary, all participants wore at least a hijab, which suggests that there is at least some agreement on the level of religious and cultural adherence to tradition (Fedda). Never the less, the production team needed to overcome the subtle differences in class, politics, and religion in order to create a safe space for the difficult exploration these women attempted. In other words, to realize Abu Saada's aim, rehearsals would have to transform from a public to a private space through carefully crafted felicitous connections.

In considering theatre's democratic role in ancient Greek society, drama scholar Phillip Zapkin appropriates post-Marxist philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's term "felicitous encounters." Zapkin argues that theatrical production allows us

to share in these moments because "performance […] brings people together in a public space to experience an event collectively" (23). While neither Zapkin nor Hardt and Negri formally define "felicitous encounters," they do credit it with synthesizing hybrid forms of productive knowledge by bringing multiple cultural views into contact. While I am quite taken by the thought—and sound—of felicitous encounters, I am uncomfortable with the use of the word encounters in describing the *Syrian Trojan Women* production. For one, encounter, especially as Negri and Hardt use it, presupposes an element of chance. Taking the word from rationalist philosopher Baruch Spinoza, Negri and Hardt consider encounter as an action that occurs within the all-inclusive "multitude"[29] (43). The encounter in a multitude is open to collisions with all other bodies. In theatrical productions, the meeting between bodies is intentional and exclusive. Rehearsals are closed meetings between performers and production team members, mostly the director, stage managers, and in this case, and acting coach. Even in performance, the audience knowingly chooses to attend and signals so by purchasing tickets and travelling to the performance space. Secondly, the etymological construction of encounter indicates the potential for physical (or at least psychological) violence. Encounter is the combination of the Latin *in* (in) and *contra* (against). Historically it has been employed as a way to signify a meeting between adversaries. While Negri and Hardt counter this by prefacing "encounter" with "felicitous" or "joyous," these words indicate an outcome, but still assume an adversarial beginning. While some audience—and even performers—may

[29] Negri and Hardt define multitude as, "an inclusive body in the sense that it is open to encounters with all other bodies, and its political life depends on the qualities of these encounters, whether they are joyful and compose more powerful bodies or whether they are sad and decompose into less powerful ones" (43)

enter a theatrical space with an adversarial position, for the health of the production, one would hope this is not the default. In describing human interaction in a theatrical setting, I find "encounter" to be inadequate, if not counter to the ethos of the creative process.

To describe the default exchange that occurs as part of a theatrical production, I replace "felicitous encounters" with "felicitous connections." I maintain the description felicitous because it speaks to the joyous and hopeful affect Dolan refers to in her writing. Through personal experience and observation I have witnessed theatre's ability to deliver joy to performers involved. Breathing life into even the most melancholic stories can unleash moments of ecstatic joy. Connection better describes the interactions of those involved in theatre because it infers an intentional bonding. Indeed, the Latin root for "connect" is *con* (together) and *nectere* (bind). Essential to the art of theatrical performance is the ability to connect, whether it is with other performers, the audience, or with the self.

In effort to nurture felicitous connections amongst the cast of *Syrian Trojan Women,* Abu Saada and Mohammad privileged support and agency in the rehearsal space. At the same time, the team searched for moments of levity and joy. Considering that none of the women had performed on a theatrical stage previously, Mohammad helped them to push pass feelings of self-consciousness by beginning with simple group improvisational exercises. For example, in one scene of Fedda's documentary Mohammad instructs the group to play a version of "Yes Let's" where everyone walks through the space performing single actions as they are called out by any member of the group. Mohammad starts the exercise by saying, "Let's wave," which instructs everyone

to wave. Then she moves to “Let’s write,” which is followed by each women mimicking a writing action, some in the air and some into their hands. The exercise continues with, “Let’s talk on our mobiles,” then “Let’s tickle each other,” before another women interrupts with “stand still,” and another with “Let’s draw.” Obviously, some of the effects of this exercise are to encourage the women to use their imagination in pretending to write or draw, and also to become comfortable with giving and receiving direction. But perhaps the most important point of “Yes Let’s” in this situation is the cover that it provides to perform imitative and even silly actions because the collective is also performing them. The women, many of whom are mothers and wives, allow themselves to break out of the expected decorum of a proper Muslim woman, by behaving as children would. The joy of this moment is apparent throughout. Of course, there is laughter when they tickle each other. But even later, when someone instructs the group to cry, shoot each other, and die, there is still an overwhelming sense of enjoyment. Mohammad even increases the laughter through sarcasm such as asking the group why they are still talking if they are dead (Fedda). As insignificant or banal as these exercises may seem to seasoned theatrical performers, authorizing even prescribing laughter for women whose recent lives have been occupied by the task of maintaining a family in crisis disrupts, temporarily, the barriers of desperation displacement constructed. Furthermore, to create these fleeting moments of joy as part of a collective builds a positive association with those involved. Felicitous connections can develop even amongst the most minute and transient moments of laughter.

Joyfulness, however, does not exist only in instances of laughter. Empathy is equally as powerful in the formation of felicitous connections. Knowing that someone shares similar experiences and feelings as you is at the core of belonging. Building on this knowledge, Abu Saada scaffolded several activities to elicit empathy from the group of performers. To begin, rather than read *The Trojan Women* in a large group, as one would in a typical theatrical rehearsal, Abu Saada randomly placed the women into reading groups. He then encouraged them not to simply read through the text, but to discuss the events and characters as they related to each personally. The small groups insured that everyone had an opportunity to hear and be heard by someone else because it cut down the competition to speak that plagues discussions in larger groups. At the same time, by forging smaller groups and stepping back, Abu Saada decentered his and Mohammad's authority as professional theatre practitioners which allowed the women to consider complexities in Euripides' script without feeling intimidated by "expertise" (Fedda).

In the weeks following the initial group readings, Abu Saada built poster dialogues into the group's activities in order to emphasize empathy and openness. One activity asked the women to imagine themselves as existing in a different place with different societal roles. First each performer had time to think and draw on their own. They could only use images to convey their imagined alternative selves. After a while those who wished to share their drawings could post their pictures on the easel and invite the rest of the group to guess and comment on it. One woman, Fatima, drew herself as a princess and as an airline passenger server. When explaining her choice to draw herself

as a princess, Fatima explained, "It's not arrogance. I just have belief in myself" (Fedda). In a different poster dialogue exercise, al Charif asked the women to draw a diagram of their journey from their homes in Syria to their current living area in Amman. This difficult activity required each participant to remember traumatic moments where their homes were destroyed and family members were arrested or killed. Despite the obvious sadness and pain of this discussion, knowing that the others in the room endured similar tragedies generated new spaces of empathetic connection.

By sharing their individual stories first with each other and then with international audiences, the Queens of Syria as they called themselves used felicitous connections to transform the public space of rehearsal into a private space of therapeutic sharing. The group then asserted agency over what information would appear in public encounters with either live audiences or through the mediation of Fedda's documentary. In the wake of losing control over their homes and futures as Syrian citizens, the formation of this performance community helped them regain a sense of belonging and empowered many of the women to proclaim self-determination. In other words, the chrysalis of theatre provided the necessary support and nourishment for the development of hope.

SUBVERTING THE "FRAGILE REFUGEE" NARRATIVE THROUGH HOPE

During the internal review board certification (IRB) process prior to my field research period, I encountered a familiar narrative regarding people who have been displaced. My research prospectus included a plan to observe and interview displaced children who participated in theatrical productions or projects. As anyone with

knowledge of the (IRB) process knows, children are considered a sensitive population, particularly children who have experienced a trauma such as war and displacement. The logic for this view is quite sound and necessary. Protecting those who are most vulnerable should be a priority in any research concerning human subjects regardless of whether it is in the sciences, humanities, or arts. There are numerous historical examples of marginalized populations being studied in suspect or highly unethical ways. It did not surprise me then when the IRB refused to grant my approval with the inclusion of interviews with displaced minors. This process did, however, illuminate the extent to which the "fragile refugee" narrative circulates through intellectual and popular media spaces. In her work *In Permanent Crisis* (2015), European studies scholar Ipek Celik critiques the polar identities European society imposes on migrants. Liberal states, Celik argues, vacillate between the affects of fear and pity when confronted by the image of the refugee. While fear operates in the realm of "control and punish[ment]" and pity operates in paternalistic compassion, both "strip these populations of their status as social beings with political rights to "bare life" who need to be contained or aided" (Celik 129). The liberal need to "save" the refugee and the concomitant imposition of victimhood on displaced people often undermines subjectivity and denies conference of citizenship. While I am certainly not accusing the IRB at the University of Texas of acting in a manner that disenfranchises those who have been displaced, I would like to examine and perhaps push back a little on this trope of fragility that defines and flattens migrants and asylees, particularly children.

One building block in the victimhood narrative is the image of damaged child refugee bodies. The news media is awash with photos of children either in the immediate aftermath of a bombing or living amongst the squalor of a refugee camp like Za'atari. Perhaps the most iconic example in the Syrian revolution is the image of young Omran Daqneesh whose blood and soot covered body exploded across the internet and news media in 2016. Another image that spread rapidly through the internet and media showed the body of Aylan Kurdi after he had washed up onto a beach in Bodrum, Turkey in 2015. The refugee voyeurism that media and Western "spectators" traffic in authorizes a view of displaced people, particularly women and children, that casts them as delicate objects of our own colonialist guilt. We can scroll through these images on our feeds, perhaps repost them with some platitude about how horrible these atrocities are, and then purge ourselves of the sadness secure in the knowledge that we did our duty as human beings. The viral dissemination of these images inform us more about ourselves than they do the subjects of the photo. At the same time, the feelings of pity and fear bind themselves to the bodies in the image and our own mental reconstructions. The fragile refugee, over time comes to signify all Syrian women and children.

As a counter to this overdetermined image of displaced women and children, Nawar Bulbul's version of *Romeo and Juliet*—discussed in chapter three—places both damaged and vulnerable children in physically and emotionally challenging moments on stage. As mentioned previously, Ibrahim, the eleven year old boy playing Romeo, lost the use of his right leg in a bombing incident near his home in Syria. While he struggles occasionally to relearn the mobility of his body, Ibrahim's determination and resilience

constructs a different narrative about both actors with mobility challenges and the fragility of Syrian children.

Outside on the street near his family's home on the out skirts of Damascus, Ibrahim and some friends played soccer in the streets. The war had started at this point, but Ibrahim and his family had not yet decided to leave Syria or move from their neighborhood. In the middle of their game regime planes flew over and dropped a barrage of barrel bombs. Ibrahim and his friends were able to miss the immediate impact of the explosives, but shrapnel buried into his leg and the concussion of the bomb threw him against some concrete rubble lying in the street. Ibrahim's leg broke in several places leaving him unable to walk without assistance. To make matters worse, Ibrahim's mother was killed in the same barrage. After his wounds were stabilized, Ibrahim's father decided immediately to transport him to Jordan so that they could find a doctor to repair his leg. By the time that Ibrahim began rehearsals for *Romeo and Juliet*, he had been living at the Souriyat treatment facility for over a year and was using hand crutches to walk.

Even with a year of rehabilitation, Ibrahim's movement was still limited. He was able to walk from one room to another and negotiate stairs with assistance, but for an eleven year old boy, he spent most of his time sitting. In videos of early rehearsals, Ibrahim would enter the activity room in Souriyat for rehearsals using two crutches and walk directly to the couch. While many of the children without mobility challenges would walk around, leave the room and return, Ibrahim stayed on the couch in the same spot for the entire rehearsal. Two weeks into rehearsals, however, Bulbul began pulling

Ibrahim off of the couch to work on blocking and moving. During one rehearsal, Bulbul instructed Ibrahim to work with only one crutch because he would need to use his other hand to perform an action in the scene. This is the moment in *Romeo and Juliet* where Romeo is outside of Juliet's window. Ibrahim held a rock in his hand that he would begin to throw at the window. Only before he could release the rock Juliet appeared forcing Ibrahim to stop his throw. As simple an action as this may seem, the force required for Ibrahim to stop the forward motion of his arm created balance issues. Ibrahim could not place any weight on his right leg due to his injury, and the crutch had to be in his left hand because he was throwing with his right. That placed his balance completely on the stage left side of Ibrahim's body. To compensate, Bulbul and Ibrahim worked with weight distribution between Ibrahim's leg and the crutch as well as distance between the two balance points. Bulbul also helped Ibrahim work on posture during the throw, so that a fair amount of the energy was directed up as opposed to out (Romeo Ibrahim Example 2). This allowed Ibrahim to control the forward momentum of his body while also creating a dramatic readable action.

During another moment in the play, Bulbul attempted to create an image of resilience by directing Ibrahim to discard his crutches completely and exit stage under his own power. In this scene the priest, Father France initially denied young Romeo because he knew the families would not accept the marriage. After persistent urging from Romeo, the priest conceded and even believed the marriage could bring the Montagues and Capulets together and end the violence. Upon receiving France's blessing, Ibrahim tosses his crutches to the side, turns and hops away on his left leg, looking back sporadically to

thank the priest. This small moment in the context of the play was a defining point in the relationship between Ibrahim as an actor and Bulbul as a director. Initially, Ibrahim was timid and self-conscious about attempting to move without his crutches. With Bulbul spotting him initially, Ibrahim released his left crutch and then his right. Bulbul coached him patiently on the turn and then walked next to him as Ibrahim hopped towards upstage. As he reached the wall, Bulbul shouted with excitement and congratulated Ibrahim with a hug (Romeo Ibrahim Example 4). Ibrahim continued to work this moment, growing confident in the ability of his body to accomplish the task. As his belief in himself grew, so too did his trust in Bulbul.

Successfully pushing his physical limitations helped Ibrahim begin to see himself beyond the injury he suffered in the war. Following this rehearsal Ibrahim's desire to move changed drastically. Bulbul had choreographed a fight between two other boys who did not have any mobility challenges. Although Romeo normally would be included in this fight against Tybalt, Ibrahim initially did not think he could participate because of his leg injury. After the movement rehearsal with Bulbul, Ibrahim asked to be inserted into the fight. In this case, Bulbul, rather than having Ibrahim fight without his crutches, choreographed a scene that allowed Ibrahim to use the crutches like swords. While the fight is relatively simplistic in its choreography, finding a way for Ibrahim to transform the his crutches into weapons helped him think about his abilities in a different manner (Romeo Ibrahim 5). The instruments that reminded him daily of his wounds, the war, and all of the activities he would not be able to do now represented alternate ways for him to participate in physical activities. Furthermore, since the fight concluded with Romeo

disarming Tybalt, Ibrahim could experience the feeling of victory at a time when it was needed.

The decision to highlight the many ways that injured children could still participate in physical activities was essential to the ethos of Bulbul's work with displaced actors. On one hand by challenging these actors to reach beyond the limitations they saw for themselves, Bulbul helped them discover an unknown strength in themselves which established new extended boundaries of ability. The movement in *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* was by no means an attempt to erase Ibrahim's disability or to help him "pass" as able-bodied. I contend instead that this movement helped Ibrahim embrace his movement as a new alternative to able-bodied movement. He began to understand that he did not need to move in the same manner as an able-bodied person in order to complete difficult physical tasks. Two years after this play, the confidence Ibrahim gained to perform tasks in the way that best suited his body could be seen in Facebook videos of him playing soccer with his father after their relocation to Canada. Ibrahim used a combination of his left leg and his crutches to control the ball. Perhaps he would have reached this point without the intervention of theatre, but there is little doubt that his participation in *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* and the mentorship Bulbul provided assisted Ibrahim in reforming his identity following his injury.

While building confidence in young war-wounded Syrians was an enormous element of Bulbul's work, especially in *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*, the other purpose was to subvert audience expectations regarding these children. Upending

expected norms is a consistent thread through much of Bulbul's work prior to and following the war in Syria. As mentioned throughout this dissertation, Bulbul often chose projects or actions because he knew the reaction it would cause with the audience or the media. From his decision to direct Shakespeare with displaced children in Za'atari to his criticism of the beloved revolution in *Love Boat*, Bulbul believed no one should grow complacent in their understanding about the conditions of human existence. This certainly was at play when he chose to cast Ibrahim as Romeo. Of all the boys involved in the play, Ibrahim was the youngest, the shortest, and the only one with a visible disability. Yet, he was placed in the romantic lead male role. Because of his injured leg, Ibrahim had to use crutches to move, yet he glided rapidly around the stage with and without assistance and fought as a combatant in choreographed skirmish. Such theatre, "can act as an exercise in precarity by firstly exposing the precariousness, or the vulnerability and insecurity, of the disabled body, and secondly by disrupting and subverting subtle forms of ableist discourse" (Chinyowa and Chivandikwa 51). The presence of Ibrahim's injured body at the beginning of the show calls to the surface the insecurity that able-bodied spectators feel at the sight of his disability. The performance of his body under the physical demands of the role undermines both the functioning of an injured body and the necessity of able-bodiedness to perform physically exhausting tasks.

Through the performance of strenuous physical action, Ibrahim demonstrated resilience that can only exist as a product of hope. Erich Fromm argues that the paradox of hope is a balanced tension between faith in a better future and an urgent movement toward action. Faith alone cannot be considered hope because by itself faith is passive

waiting. Hope must be active in the creation of its own future. At the same time, action without faith is aimless. Hopeful action needs an object that exists en route to a better future. This is not to say the action must be active. Fromm suggests that sometimes a hopeful action is waiting, but not passively waiting, resigned to one's fate. Active waiting means knowing that there will be a time for movement and that one must be ready when that moment arrives (Fromm). In *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*, Ibrahim had faith, not just in his body's ability to accomplish difficult physical tasks, but generally a faith in a better future that had yet to be realized. As a child he had little control over larger actions such as seeking asylum, but he could control his daily actions. To Ibrahim, a better future meant one where his injury would not prevent him from playing and enjoying what was left of his childhood. His willingness to accept every challenge Bulbul placed in front of him was an active movement forward towards hope.

While Ibrahim's personal journey in *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* speaks of an individual hope, the play itself ended in a collective message of resilience that started as a scripted moment, but transferred through the live act of proclamation to both actors and spectators. Similar to the original version of *Romeo and Juliet*, the young lovers could not convince their families to except the marriage. The Friar conceived a plan to have Juliet drink a "hypnotic toxin" that would put her to sleep causing her family to think she had died. Of course, in Shakespeare's version, Romeo hears only that Juliet had died and rushes to her tomb with a bottle of poison that he consumes. Juliet wakes up to find her beloved dead and uses his dagger to commit suicide. Rather than reinforce the ideas of death, Bulbul alters the death scene. The narrators open this scene laying out the

path Shakespeare chose for the play. When the narrator in Amman explains that Juliet took the bottle, drank it and slept, Juliet grabs the vile from the narrator in Homs and throws it to the ground while accusing the narrators of lying:

> Narrator: The good monk France described what he wanted them to do. (Revealing her hand) His great idea was to give Juliet a bottle of sleeping potion that would make it seem as if she was dead. Then before her wedding night, Juliet took the potion and slept.
>
> Juliet: Not true! I will not take the sleeping potion (takes the bottle from the narrator's hand and breaks it). And you Romeo, break the bottle in your hand. We young people have had enough death! (Bulbul "R & J at War" 13)

Following Juliet's instructions, Romeo threw his bottle to the ground and both children proclaimed their love for life and their love for each other. The rest of the characters filter in, each with their own cries for an end to the violence.

While this last scene in *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* is rather simplistic and unnuanced, the alteration of Shakespeare's text was not made for aesthetic or dramatic reasons. Instead I contend that Bulbul had a dual purpose in mind. First, by having the children of Syria reaffirm their desire to live in front of an audience of mostly Syrian adults, many of whom were injured fighting in the war, Bulbul created a moment of heightened affect that united the audience through a felicitous connection. The Syrians attending the show, especially for the first performance, were from a variety of social and political backgrounds. Souriyat Across Borders was known for treating any Syrian who

came to them injured. So under the same roof there were civilians, members of the Free Syrian Army, members of different Islamic militias such as Jabat al Nusra and Ahrar al Sham, and it was even believed that there were a few former members of ISIS. Despite the gulf of differences between these individuals, hearing the children's determination sparked a spontaneous joyful reaction. When Romeo threw his poison to the ground and shouted his commitment to live, the audience erupted in applause. This energy carried through the last few lines of the play and continued afterwards in the form of group chants. It was a moment of *spontaneous communitas*, to use Victor Turner's words. The Syrian audience set aside age, politics, religious dogma, and other existing hierarchies in the space during this moment. While those points of division would return again, likely as soon as the audience left the performance space, the brief feeling of togetherness fueled Bulbul's hope that that more permanent connections were possible. Likewise, the children, who witnessed their country tearing itself apart, could feel hope that one day it may be reassembled.

As important as the affective connection at the end of the performance was, I also see this final moment as Bulbul once again showing the West that the people of Syria are not to be dismissed as merely victims. Ever aware of media's power, Bulbul worked to recruit the global reach of international news outlets. Although not covered quite as well as *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* still managed to attract international media such as *The Guardian* and Agence France-Presse. Additionally, ARTE-TV in France edited a twenty minute documentary about the production that aired in France on April 27, 2015. Additionally, several Arabic language media outlets

reported on the performance. For example, in *Al Araby*, a news organization located in the United Kingdom, Bulbul stressed, "I wanted this show to be a warning bell that sounded the alarm, to love each other again" ("Seeks Love"). Perhaps the most powerful evidence that Bulbul wished to speak to the West comes through the passionate plea of Juliet's Nurse when she pleads, "Enough killing! Enough blood! Why are you killing us? We want to live like the rest of the world!" (Bulbul "R & J at War"). This admonition was not only aimed at the Assad regime, but, according to Bulbul it was a message to the rest of the world.

The hope sparked through the performance of *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* speaks to two essential aspects of creating a new community. In setting aside his personal doubts and working to overcome fears about his physical abilities, Ibrahim laid the groundwork for his own psychological recovery and reconstructed notion of a future built on hope. At the same time, he demonstrated for the other disabled Syrians watching the performance that their bodies have more potential than they may realize. As a young boy, Ibrahim performed the role of hope so that others in the audience could glimpse a common future to his. At the same time, the entire cast, with the words of Bulbul, rejected despair in an enormously visible setting. Pledging to follow the path of life and love, the children in *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* challenged both the adults in the room and the leaders throughout the world to imagine a better future without the violence, displacement and death currently plaguing their home country. While it would be naïve to think that this message penetrated policy makers in the United States, Russia, or even Syria for that matter, according to the reaction of the adults in the audience it

impacted them even if only for a moment. As wonderful as it would be for a show such as *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* to affect the world in a hopeful direction, perhaps it is enough that this performance added an element of hope to the children in the play and the adults watching.

FINDING HOPE IN NOMADIC CITIZENSHIP

National identity, for a person who has been displaced from their home country, is unstable and often elusive. As performance studies scholar, May Joseph notes from her own experience, "For those displaced by these seismic changes, the correlation between national identity and country of citizenship has been shattered irrevocably" (69). This rupture is visible in every place of refuge through the constant struggles of displaced people to construct new lives under foreign terms. The task of integrating with a new national culture is difficult enough when a dislocated person has obtained legal citizenship. While there is legitimation regarding the letter of the law, the same can often not be said about cultural acceptance. Even in cases where a person is accepted by the community for resettlement, the onus for cultural acceptance is placed squarely on the refugee. The emphasis both in action and discourse is on assimilation rather than accommodation.

Using the condition of continual transnational forced migration, Bulbul's 2016 production of *Love Boat* brings questions about negotiated cultural citizenship to bear on the current Syrian refugee crisis. Both in its story and in the lives of its creators, *Love Boat* maps cultural citizenship and identity as the characters flow from space to space

across borders. In each location the characters of *Love Boat* rewrite their identities with aspects of new cultural experiences. Like a palimpsest, however, no matter how thoroughly they write over their previous identities, traces remain. Simultaneously, the company of actors leave behind a mark of their cultural identity which slightly alters the landscape over which they pass. The sustained transposition of performed citizenship due to recurrent migration is a practice that Joseph refers to as "nomadic citizenship." For Joseph, nomadic citizenship "fractures coherent categories of belonging, offering instead the incomplete, ambivalent, and uneasy spaces of everyday life through which migrant communities must forge affiliations with majority constituencies" (17). With each new movement and resettlement, migrants self-knowledge fragments and reconstitutes according to the logics of their new terrain.

Love Boat was a hopeful imagining of nomadic citizenship, rather than for refugee resettlement. In other words, one of the primary goals of this production was not to argue for migrancy, but rather to imagine a complete erasure of national demarcation altogether. The de-territorializing movement described in *Love Boat*, to use Deleuze and Guatarri, is rhizomatic in its structure. By this I mean that rather than rooting themselves in one marked or enclosed space, the actors temporarily attach to a cultural location, propagate their hybridized version of artistic citizenship, and then take flight for the next area. The difference between a search for refuge and hope in nomadic citizenship is seen in Deleuze and Guatarri's explanation of striated and smooth spaces. In striated spaces the line exists between two points and serves only as a conduit from one end to the other. Conversely, in smooth spaces a point exists only as a transition plateau between two

lines. Striated spaces are dimensional and measured, or in other words, closed. Smooth spaces are directional, unlimited, and open. To put this in terms that relate to *Love Boat*, the journey of the actors in the boat occurs in a smooth space, while the existing international system of the nation-state constitutes a striated space.

Love Boat tells the story of six actors who managed to escape from Syria following the start of the revolution in 2011. The actors who were part of a theatrical troupe in Damascus reunited five years later, on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Having given up hope on a quick resolution to the war in Syria, and deciding that life as a refugee in Jordan was no longer possible, the group of actors decided to set sail in a boat destined for Europe. They hoped to reach the shores of Greece where they could reform as a theatre company and travel through Europe performing shows in every country. From beginning to end the audience sees the journey of the actors as they sail unsuccessfully to Europe. During their journey on the boat the fated crew decided to pass the time by rehearsing scenes from the plays they wished to perform at each stop along their journey. They only chose to perform western canonical pieces written by a playwright from the nation where they will perform it: Aristophanes (Greece); Goldoni (Italy); Cervantes (Spain); Moliere (France); and Goethe(Germany). Between each play rehearsal there are interludes in which the characters play music and recount for each other what happened during their time apart after the group disbanded in Syria. These intervening moments usually focus on one character's trials and adventures. Bulbul also uses these liminal episodes to memorialize Syrian artists who were part of the revolution, but now are either dead or missing. Then, when it is time for the next rehearsal scene, the

crew, led by Mahmoud (played by Mahmoud Saddiqa) run from corner to corner with a broken compass pretending to determine which country they will sail to next and which play they will perform there.

Love Boat can best be described as a play-within-a-play-within-a-play. Bulbul's appearance as a hakawati, or story-teller, at the top of the performance establishes that the tale unfolding, while containing elements of truth, was conceived in an individual's mind, possibly the hakawati himself or some historical poet. Bulbul clarifies the story structure further by opening his monologue with "*Kan ya ma kan fee qadeem az-zeman*" (There was a place a long time ago) ("April 5, 2017" 1). According to Bulbul this phrase, much like "once upon a time" for many children in the U.S., prefaced most childhood stories in Syria ("March 11, 2016"). It is an incantation of sorts, summoning the imagination of those within earshot to travel along with the words of the hakawati. Bulbul's opening monologue also operates in a similar manner to the prologues of Greek Tragedy by setting the background and the topic of the work which the audience will witness. He recalls for the audience that the actors had been together as a theatre company in Damascus when the "Great Syrian Revolution against the most savage, most despotic, most barbaric, most pitiful dictatorship known to humanity," began ("April 5, 2017" 1). After of his monologue, Bulbul clapped three times to signal the beginning of the action. All six actors rush in from different sides of the room greeting each other with the laughter and tears that built up over five years ("Love Boat "). From this point forward the story lives inside of the characters' reality. The hakawati does not officially reenter the action to close the story or narrate any action during the play. The actors, as

mentioned previously, spend the entire play jumping between their reality, which is itself imagined, and the twice imagined world of the canonical works.

Essential to the idea building nomadic citizenship is the ease of movement from the boat to each imagined location and back. By pretending to arrive in a country, the actors figuratively cross the border where they announce themselves as members of the public by staging, not only a play, but a play by a notable writer from that country. It is possible to view this public display as an attempted act of assimilation, whereby the actors are proving to the country's citizens and government that they can produce a work of nationalistic pride. So, for example, when the group imagines themselves in Germany, they perform *Faust* from Goethe. Considering that the worldwide cultural center for Germany is called the Goethe Institute, there is little doubt that Goethe is a symbol of national pride. Therefore, performing a play written by the playwright for whom German national culture is dedicated is a public act of citizenship. Going back to Bhabha then, the actors in the boat attempt to understand themselves as potential German citizens by placing themselves in Germany performing a story from one of Germany's most famous citizens.

Extruding this scenario out to each nation they pretend to visit, therefore, invents the notion that this group is performing citizenship across several European countries to gain favor and possibly refuge. But I suggest a different reading of this flow across borders. Instead of understanding *Love Boat* as a plea for resettlement, I view it as a return to nomadism. The structure of *Love Boat* transports the actors, and therefore the audience, from the sea across a national border and then back to the sea again. The sea is

a liminal site which stands in between citizenship lost and citizenship gained. When the actors first step on the boat they are already without national citizenship. Each time they perform a scene from one of the canonical works, the actors figuratively transport themselves into that play's nation of origin. They perform imagined cultural citizenship through veneration of the nation's theatrical genius. Then the actors return to the real world of the boat, where once again they are without citizenship.

The actors' movements from one place to the next, unlike that which drove them from Syria, is voluntary. The choreographed routine the actors conduct prior to performing each scene is an exercise of agency. By using the compass to determine their next direction of travel, the actors make a choice as to where they wish to land. Unlike the reality of most refugee's current situation, there is no external barrier regulating the group's entry into a nation. They do not encounter fences or armed militias as obstacles to their passage. No one is waiting at the port of entry to force them on a boat returning across the sea. Likewise, it is the actors who decide the length of their stay. They are not subject to visa's or deportations. They do not need to register with UNHCR and they are not waiting for "resettlement." The group's imagined movement in and out of regulated national spaces is entirely under their control, subject only to their imaginations.

The writing and direction opens the imaginative possibility that these displaced bodies are transgressing border lines without the harsh regulations currently imposed on refugees in European states. It is easy to imagine the crew disembarking from the boat, setting their scant props and scenery up on the beach, performing a play, celebrating the success of the play, and then leaving to find the next audience on a new shore. In essence,

each play-within-the-play is a surrogate for the actual country that play represented. When the actors set up and perform scenes from *Tartuffe*, a canonical French work, they are also imagining being in France. This de-territorializing and unregulated movement figuratively erased regulated political borders in the minds of the actors. It gave them hope that because of their theatrical gifts, European nations would grant them free movement.

To say that *Love Boat* deterritorializes the spaces through which it travels is to suggest that rather than seeking a place of migrancy, this work intends to reconfigure the notion of space altogether. Deterritorialization, according to Deleuze and Guatarri, is the function of nomadic life, but counter to the role of a migrant who, "goes principally from one point to another, even if the second point is uncertain, unforeseen, or not well localized" (p. 380) The purpose of movement for the migrant is ultimately to find a home or to make a new claim on property from which they may root and grow. Of course, the migrant may need to travel through several points before reaching this space, but nevertheless, the journey, the line of flight is subservient to the point of destination. The migrant reterritorializes space. The nomad, unlike the migrant, does not wish to hold land or possess a property, but travels, "from point to point only as a consequence and as a factual necessity." Nomad's move trajectorially through space using points only as "relays" which exist in subordination to the line of flight. The nomadic trajectory, "*distributes people…in an open space,* one that is indefinite and noncommunicating" (ibid.). The deleuzian nomad is "deterritorialized par excellence…precisely because there is no reterritorialization afterward" (p. 381). The actors in the boat are not looking for an

anchor point. They have no desire to reterritorialize any space. They are not migrants or refugees. The actors are nomads.

What Deleuze and Guatarri's nomadology explains and what *Love Boat* imagines is a smooth and open space where the distribution of people and culture is unencumbered by limits or borders. The actors, the boat on the sea, and the performances of several different cultures represents a dismantling of the limits. The actors deterritorialize as they imaginatively move into new points or relays and then literally pack up for the next trajectory. While there are certainly traces of their existence at each stop, mainly new considerations on culture and language, there is no attempt to settle or create limits. Although *Love Boat* is guided decidedly by its reliance on geographical contexts, the play adopts an intersectional view that moves beyond the concept of national location to explore the interstices of religion, gender, culture, and economics. Bulbul casts power and authority as villains who organize space panoptically in service of sustaining highly regulated systems. His curatorial appropriation of canonical European texts is a launching pad for approaching discussions that are normally restricted in the conservative Jordanian society. Furthermore, specific performative moments that occurred both as part of the play and as part of the production process created opportunities for highlighting commonalities in different cultural representations of power. Both the text and these performative moments work to deterritorialize spaces where citizenship is marked and limited by conservative tradition, autocratic rule, and imagined notions of Western values such as liberty. Through *Love Boat* Bulbul presents not only an argument for nomadic citizenship, but he also attempts to describe the ethos of such an existence.

One value that *Love Boat* centers as pivotal in nomadic citizenship is beauty. In moments of deprivation from conditions such as war and displacement beauty is an elusive yet highly sought human need. At the same time, authoritarian regimes exert control over beauty, reserving for access only to an elite few. To undermine the hoarding of beauty, Bulbul included excerpts from *Don Quixote* that deal with criminalization of aesthetics. This scene in *Love Boat* is, in a sense, as declaration of war against those who seek to regulate beauty.

Using an excerpt from chapter XXII in Cervantes' novel, Bulbul appropriates Don Quixote's meeting with the prisoners and restructures it to celebrate beauty and its impact on community. At the same time, this scene critiques the panoptic instrument of morality policing over common citizens by regulating the affective actions of love and music. In this respect, it diverges significantly from the original text. In Cervantes' novel, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza cross paths with prisoners who are chained together. Upon observing two men on horseback with muskets leading a dozen men on foot chained together, Don Quixote determines that he must fulfill his position by liberating these men who were held against their will. Prior to attacking the guards, however, Don Quixote asks each of the men why they were chained as prisoners. One man was chained for being a procurer and a sorcerer and another was chained for having sexual relationships with multiple women, including two cousins. But it was the first two prisoners that Bulbul chose to include in *Love Boat*. The first prisoner explains to Don Quixote that he was guilty of love, but then continues to explain that he loved a basket of clothes so much that he refused to let it go. In other words, he stole clothes, but was caught in the act and,

therefore sentenced to the galleys. In *Love Boat*, Haya Matar playing the chained prisoner does not say anything about stealing. She simply tells Don Quixote, played by Mustafa Murad, “My crime is love,” to which he replies, “What are you saying? If love is a sin, then I am the greatest criminal” (Bulbul "Love Boat " 10). There is no mention of any other offense and no suggestion that Matar’s admission was a metaphor for something more nefarious. Matar’s delivery leaves the audience to believe that, indeed she is in chains simply for the action of loving.

The second prisoner in Cervantes’ text claims that he is a singer. When Don Quixote inquires why that is a crime one of the guards informs him that, “to sing under duress, means to confess under the water torture” (Cervantes Saavedra 147). Once again, in *Love Boat*’s version the actual crime the prisoner committed is deleted, and the scene focuses only on the original description. When Murad asks the music criminals, played by Mohammed Kabbour and Adnan Rejjal, about their crime, Kabbour responds by declaring, “Your Lordship… My friend Marion and I are both accused of the same crime: music” (Bulbul "Love Boat " 10). Rejjal quickly agrees, “yes, yes…music is our crime.” The absurdity of music and love being considered crimes amused Murad who laughs at the thought. As he questions jokingly, “Love and music are crimes?” the remainder of the actors laugh with him. Capitalizing on this feeling of happiness, Adnan and the rest of the actors perform a brief but gleeful rendition of Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* The group celebrates by dancing hand in hand while bellowing out the cheerful chorus (Bulbul "Love Boat").

The strategic choice to omit the real crimes from Cervantes' text sets the ground for Bulbul to attack the use of morality as an authoritarian tool. In this case, however, he was not necessarily referring to the ruling powers of Jordan or Syria. There are isolated examples of moral policing in both countries such as the arrest of writer Nahed Hattar for posting a cartoon to his Facebook account showing a Jihadist in bed with two women while Allah waits like a servant on him. Unfortunately, Hatter was murdered in front of the court in Amman on the way to his trial (Sanchez and Williams). Nevertheless, Jordan and Syria do include religious freedom in their constitutions, so long as a person's behavior accords with public decency and morality. Instead, Bulbul wished to criticize both the official states that currently employ religious policing such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the unofficial organizations vying for power in Syria such as ISIS and al-Nusra Front. The state authorities in these two countries, the organizational leadership in ISIS and al-Nusra, and the many others like them use morality laws as a means of ordering those citizens under their control and suppressing insurgency. For example, in 2014 ISIS issued four proclamations in the streets of Raqqa, Syria. One proclamation banned music and photographs, one banned smoking, one required women to wear a full-face veil and abaya to cover the entire body, and one ordered shops to close 10 minutes before prayer time. Failure to follow these proclamations results in severe punishments including public beatings, crucifixion, and possibly death ("Isis Bans Music"). In another more recent story, Saudi police arrested the famous pop star, Abdallah Al-Shaharani, in August for dabbing on stage during his concert. According to an article in *Newsweek*, this dance move was specifically outlawed

by Saudi moral authorities because it originated in American Hip-Hop and promotes poor morality in youth (Riotta). It is these kinds of laws and the mentality behind them that Bulbul attempts to undermine when he distills Cervantes' epic work down to this seemingly insignificant moment.

The prisoner scene in *Love Boat* calls into being one of the obstacles Bulbul perceives as an impediment to socially liberal progress in the Arab world. First, the alleged crimes sound intentionally ludicrous in a post-enlightenment world. Bulbul intended for people in the audience to recognize the absurdity in the illegality of love and music. Additionally, there is no guard present in this scene. Bulbul could have staged the action with only two prisoners and appointed the third as a guard, or he could have instructed Al-Shayab to quickly change her costume. Instead he left the character out of the moment or invisible. The guards are clearly present in Cervantes text, and do most of the talking for the prisoners. So why does Bulbul choose not to physically or vocally represent them in this scene? Maybe the audience is supposed to imagine the guards just out of view, but within reach of the prisoners. But then why would they allow Murad to simply lift the chains off the prisoners, liberating them. Could it be that the guard has left his post and threatened to torture anyone who attempts escape? Perhaps there is nowhere for any of them to run even if they broke free. Or is it that the guard is not a person at all but a spectre of power, a panoptic ghost residing in the conditioned mind of the prisoners who have witnessed generations of violence committed in the name of morality? Whatever the reason, Bulbul provides an easy, if not utopic, solution to this crisis by staging Murad to laugh and then simply remove the chains which were never actually

locked. If the lack of a guard is read as a culturally constructed apparition or some form of religious bogeyman, then *Love Boat* commands the people in the Arab world who are oppressed by religious authority to cast the chains from their necks and help their neighbors do the same. As motivation, the imagined society these actors create exchanges captivity for dancing and sorrow for joy. This collective metamorphosis is the group's hope and regardless of how quixotic it may be, they pledge to fight for its realization (Bulbul "Bulbul Messenger 8/26/2017").

In the imagined world of *Love Boat* striated spaces were made smooth and new possibilities of belonging brought into existence. At the end of the play, the actors in the boat drown as the boat slowly sinks to the bottom of the sea. And yet, despite the tragic nature of this play's turn, the characters continue to live through the beauty they brought into the world. Their properties and costumes float to the water's surface signaling hope that their imagined world will find its way into someone else's boat and in turn, those people will use them to perform. As a final gift to the audience Al-Shayab's voice drifts ethereally from the sea floor. As the sound becomes clear the audience recognizes a departing, question, "where to now." These final words do not speak to the fear of being lost, but rather a celebration of never being found.

LOVE OF LIFE

The ability to travel unencumbered throughout the world, as imagined in *Love Boat*, is currently a possibility only for the elite capitalist class. A larger, but still economically privileged class can travel with only slight inconvenience—obtaining visas

and negotiating check points--through most borders. My ability to travel multiple times to Jordan for this research is proof that I am part of this second class. But for a majority of the world, particularly for those who live in the so called "global south," access to nations outside of their immediate region is limited. Some European countries such as Hungary and Romania are following the Israeli model of building walls along the entire length of their borders. Others such as Great Britain and France treat migrants as produce that they are picking out of the market—a single blemish and back into the basket they go. And the United States recently enacted a several policies aimed at cutting off movement into the country through the infamous Muslim ban and by severely restricting the number of visas and asylum requests issued, not to mention the continued battle over deportations, dividing families, and Trump's wall.

Despite these restrictions, several participants from the productions discussed in this chapter have found cracks in the wall. While on their tours to Great Britain and Switzerland, a few of the actors in *Syrian Trojan Women* used the opportunity to claim asylum. Ibrahim from *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* was accepted for resettlement into Canada. Haya Matar from *Love Boat* was granted resettlement in France. Nawar Bulbul was able to secure French citizenship through his marriage to Vanessa Gueno. These few instances are certainly exceptions, but nevertheless they do indicate an existence of hope that movement into closed spaces is possible.

Perhaps more important than the ability to move, however, is the community built through the hope embodied in these productions. For Fromm, hope, "is a matter of […] coming out of a darkness […] which may be the darkness of illness, of separation, exile

or slavery" (Fromm). More than that, hope according to Fromm is a will and desire to live. It is a love of life. The decision all of these actors made to participate in their various performances was an active choice to create, to live. The synergetic potential of theatre, both in rehearsals and through the liveness of performance with and audience bound these groups together. Each person contributed not only their time and talent, but also their energy and their love to the act of creating a space of hope and possibility. In their willingness to share, to act, to move, the participants in these productions committed a selfless act of pantopic citizenship. Even if their physical bodies could not travel to "every place in all places," the love of life central to the shows of these displaced actors could permeate even the most restrictive of borders. Rather than drinking from the poison vials and sleeping forever in the sepulcher of despair, every participant made an intentional choice to shatter the glass against the ground and shout aloud "We want to live."

Illustration 11: Still from *Queens of Syria* documentary by Yasmin Fedda. Used with permission.

Illustration 12: Ibrahim rehearsing stage combat for *Romeo and Juliet Separated by War*, 2015. Video filmed by Nawar Bulbul. Used with permission.

Illustration 13: Mohammed Kabour in Don Quixote scene from *Love Boat*, 2016. Photograph by Agnes Montanari. Used with permission.

Chapter Five: Moving From Nostalgia, Desire, and Hope to Citizenship

While the plays discussed in this dissertation are not limited to the affects I assigned them, the specific moments I chose to represent do speak to an interplay within the affective registers of nostalgia, desire, and hope. It would be irresponsible to suggest that one of the shows or participants I write about here experience only nostalgia or desire or hope. Indeed, all three circulate in various ways through every person I worked with, interviewed or observed. At the same time, viewing each affect in its discrete setting allows for a more nuanced understanding of their contribution to the actors identities and subject formation in the aftermath of displacement. This is not to say that by understanding nostalgia, desire, and hope we can formulate the identity of any one displaced individual. Instead, this work continues the conversation for understanding how nostalgia, desire, and hope inform identity, particularly regarding citizenship.

As seen through the works in chapter 2, nostalgia can be a powerful tool for maintaining unity within a displaced community, particularly as those who hold personal memories of the traumatic event seed (or cede) their memories to their children. Whether through repeated performances of revolutionary songs or culturally specific dances, nostalgia's ability to graft memories of one generation onto the next, creating postmemories keeps selective cultural bedrocks in place and provides a lifelong tether back to a place of origin. At the same time, nostalgia can be used to make powerful critiques against one's own culture. The juxtaposition of sentimental or commemorative memories with shameful memories in a mildly homogeneous cultural group potentially heightens the audiences' receptivity to critique.

Perhaps, most interesting is the juxtaposition is between the different purposes of nostalgia's deployment by displaced artists through these theatrical settings and how it speaks to the future Syria they envision. During the production process surrounding *Shakespeare in Za'atari* the adults involved offered a nostalgia that reinforced revolutionary ideals with a nationalistic tone countering the Assad regime's view of Syrian-ness. On the other end, *Love Boat* envisioned more fundamental changes to Syria, not just in the politics, but in the culture and society as well. *Love Boat* goes as far as to suggest an end to borders all together. During *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, adults taught the child actors to venerate the revolution and mythologized Free Syrian Army fighters through song. In *Love Boat,* while the actors memorialized specific revolutionary artists who sacrificed themselves to the cause, they also called into question the legitimacy of a revolution that would repeat the same oppressive mechanisms as those the revolution sought to replace.

While the players between the two productions were almost entirely different, Bulbul, as the writer and director of both shows is the common thread. On the one hand, this suggests that a reading of nostalgia between these two plays is more indicative of a shift in Bulbul's understanding of citizenship rather than any of the other participants. At the same time, audience reaction to *Love Boat* and to *Mawlana,* a recent monodrama Bulbul performed for multiple displaced audience in Turkey, Germany, France, the United States, and the Netherlands hints at a possible movement towards a desire to reform Syria by altering, even if slightly, several oppressions within the larger Syrian society. *Mawlana,* like *Love Boat* tackles the delicate subject of religion and its role in

creating inequality in Syria. Both productions played to conservative and secular Syrian audiences with surprising reactions. Often, the most vocally supportive audiences were women from rural areas of Syria such as Dara'a. While I am not idealistic enough to suggest that this portends a dramatic social or religious shift in the most traditionalist populations of Syria, I would argue that the positive reactions these two shows received reflect an undercurrent that was flowing, however slowly, through the society prior to the start of the revolution and is now, in these extreme circumstances, gaining traction. This is perhaps a question that will bare more revelations in the future.

On the other end of nostalgia is the corrosive impact it has when utilized, consciously or not, by organizations that represent international neoliberal order. NICCOD's psychosocial work with the children in Za'atari is not exclusively driven by the goal to reinstitute nationalistic fervor in the displaced Syrians it serves. In fact, NICCOD may not even recognize that it is doing that work at all. But in the production I observed in 2016, reconciliation and national pride were undoubtedly key components. As a former member of the propaganda arm of the United States Army, I have been complicit in similar efforts to weaponize nostalgia. While I would not accuse NICCOD of the same nefarious intentions that grounded my work in psychological operations, there was an underlying element of propaganda within the dramatic action of NICCOD's production. Beyond simply attempting to help the children in their program cope with trauma and change, NICCOD's production aimed to alter the behavior of the primarily adult audience by appealing to their nostalgic memories of a simpler time back in Syria. So while nostalgia worked as a way to reconsider citizenship when utilized by the strictly

Syrian performances, NICCOD's nostalgic message sought to return Syrians to the mode of citizenship from which they fled.

Nostalgia's reliance on the past in the creation of partially imagined memories also feeds and is fed by the present urgency of desire. If desire is a human drive that produces and is produced through interactions between the body and its surroundings, then nostalgia, which is a function of the body helps to form mold the transformation of desire from one moment to the next. In *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, Bulbul's desire for global media coverage came into being partially as a result of the nostalgic memories connected to the protests in Syria. On one hand the pervasive local media coverage allowed support of the protests to spread rapidly across the country. On the other hand, lack of international coverage, in Bulbul's memory, prevented the United States and European nations from committing to action in the same way they did in Libya. Bulbul's desire to bring international attention to the current situation of children in Za'atari drove his choice to direct *King Lear* in the camp and to court the most influential international media outlets. Bulbul's nostalgia for the protests drove his desire to work in Za'atari and his work in Za'atari created new nostalgic memories which then drove his desire to work with the children in Souriyat Across Borders.

While nostalgia is often an important element in desire production, opportunity can also give rise to desires that lay dormant. For Zabeida, opportunity came through displacement. Forced to marry at age fourteen and commit her life to being a mother in the conservative rural area of Dara'a, Zabeida, who always loved English literature, returned to teaching because of her new life in Azraq. Seeing the increase in child

marriages related to displacement, as well as the increase in physical and sexual violence against young girls in the camp environment, Zabeida seized the opportunity to combine her love of literature and theatre with lessons that explored the rights of women internationally. Zabeida's desire to work with teenage Syrian girls was both a product of the memories she carried from lived experience and the interaction of these memories with the current moment. Her desire to teach this subject matter, in turn, produced other desires, such as independence from her husband, a larger role in developing curriculum, and a theatre program that would open up her ability to work with the teenage population in Azraq. Zabeida also developed hope from the circulation of these desires, particularly, a hope that over time, the students with whom she worked would demand fair treatment from the men in their culture. Zabeida's work is indicative of desire production that intersects with both nostalgia and hope, leading to a new consideration of citizenship.

The last instance of desire discussed in this dissertation was both informed by nostalgia and a need to imagine something beyond war and trauma. *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War* opened an imagined space flowing between Syria and Jordan where children still living amongst the daily violence in Homs could play with children who were displaced across the border to Amman. Even with the sound of barrel bombs carving up the Homsian landscape or the injuries that children such as Ibrahim suffered, these young actors, for a few hours per day, could remember what it was like to laugh, play, and live as kids. The desire to leave the real world of destruction and enter a fantastical realm where forbidden love flourished and injured bodies performed in ways previously thought impossible, gave impetus to risk personal safety and overcome newly formed

insecurities. For both the children still living in Homs and those living in Amman, the desire to rehearse and perform this play reaffirmed their love for life. The hopeful moment when Juliet and Romeo destroy the poison that would kill, further reinforced the need to continue living in the Syrian spectators present.

Intertwined with the affective registers of nostalgia and desire, as seen throughout the productions in this dissertation, hope influences the future of who we, both as individuals and collectives will become. As a function of hope, citizenship is profoundly shaped by our abilities to project ourselves into the future in tandem with others in such a way that insures mutual survivability. Reciprocally, hope is a function of citizenship in that membership authorizes us to project ourselves into the future according to the terms of the organization to which we belong. Looking back at *Romeo and Juliet Separated by War,* Ibrahim's role as Romeo not only allowed him to project a future self as able to accomplish physically strenuous activities, but it also placed him in the community of the play with other children, some of whom had physical challenges and some of whom did not. Rather than create a "special" place where Ibrahim could exist, Bulbul cast him in a role that both challenged and accepted Ibrahim's limitations. Most importantly, Ibrahim's war injury was not placed on display as an object for the audience to admire. Ibrahim the boy was placed on stage to be seen as an actor in relation to all of the actors.

Similar to *Romeo and Juliet Separated by War,* the women who participated in *Syrian Trojan Woman* began to see themselves both as members of the production family and also as citizens of Syria with the right to voice their stories. Echoing similar viewpoints expressed by members of the cast, Faten, who was twenty-five years old

during the production said, “The play has made me stronger. I can face life […] I love working with my new friends in the play—it’s like we are one big, happy family” (Eagar "Syrian Refugees Stage Euripides' the Trojan Women" 4). This idea of family resonated throughout the pieces discussed in this dissertation, but occupied a particularly powerful role in *Syrian Trojan Women.* Many of the participants lost the men who spoke for or controlled them in Syria and needed to find their own agency. This production gave the women a strong support network and enabled them to see value in themselves beyond being a mother and wife. I would argue that the leadership of Nanda Mohammed and Bisane al Charif, as strong Syrian female artists, even modeled political independence for the women of *Syrian Trojan Women*. The women in this company, who prior to the war would have deferred to their husbands, fathers, or brothers to speak publicly, began to see their own voices as integral in reforming citizenship, whether in Syria, Jordan, or elsewhere. *Syrian Trojan Women* helped them turn from being lost in nostalgia to seeing themselves in the future as potent members of the world.

Moving from the personal dimension of citizenship as exhibited in *Syrian Trojan Women* to the spatial, *Love Boat* imagined a world absent of borders and the restrictions they enforce. By scripting the characters to follow the journey of many displaced Syrians over the last seven years, Bulbul ties the politics of citizenship to the countless tragedies that befell those attempting to cross the sea in search of safety and stability. At the same time, the continued movement of the characters in *Love Boat*, undermines the oft held belief that immigrants just want to take advantage of the “generosity” of western nations by settling in countries that are “better” than theirs. In the fictional world of *Love Boat*,

the characters imagine entering a country and performing a play from a cultural icon in that country. While this could be read as an attempt to assimilate with the intention of settling, the actors simply move on to the next place. In this constant movement through borders, the actors aboard this boat devalue the ideas of national citizenship in hope of nomadic citizenship.

While the form of movement in *Love Boat* may seem impossible in real life and thus counter to Fromm's insistence that hope be achievable, the hope demonstrated in this play has, in many ways, already been achieved. Several of the people involved in the productions discussed in this dissertation have moved from their original place of refuge. Bulbul, who originally went to France, eventually traveled to Jordan, back to France, and now is able to tour shows to Germany, Turkey, the Netherlands, and even the United States. Along with Bulbul and Haya Matar from *Love Boat*, several of the children from *Romeo and Juliet Separated By War*, Subhi Holemi from *Shakespeare in Za'atari*, and several other Syrians who helped these and the other shows now live in France. As mentioned previously, some of the women in the *Syrian Trojan Women* now live in Great Britain or Switzerland. Finally, Ibrahim from *Romeo and Juliet* lives in Canada with his father. While several of the participants in the productions discussed throughout still live as registered refugees in Jordan--some in camps and some not—most are connected through the digital space with their theatre families. Additionally, their interactions with each other in the play and following expanded beyond just the play environment to include other people within this new network of artists. For example, when making my second trip to Jordan in 2017, I stopped briefly in Paris to meet with playwright Wael

Qadour who lived and worked in Amman for three years immediately following the start of the war. He knew and worked with several of the people present in this dissertation. We had never met before this day, but spoke at length about plays and people I researched. Qadour is just one person from many who I met outside of Jordan who were intimately familiar with this transnationally expanding network. As cliché and oversimplified as it may be, the internet and social networks have not only allowed the theatre families to maintain contact, but it has also connected those one discrete families and attached themselves to other transnational networks. In my pantopic world, I hope the digital flow someday forces a similar opening in the physical flow of all human beings.

Outside of the larger geopolitical questions of defining citizenship absent of national borders, all of the people involved in the plays I discussed, whether consciously or not, worked at redefining what it means to be Syrian. Far from the 2011 chants of "God, Freedom and Syria," the artists involved in creating these shows looked backwards, forwards and in the present to understand what was happening to them and where they could go? The productions, and more notably the people involved, engaged in radical acts of citizenship that sought to lift each other out of despair and generate pathways to hope. When arguing for the importance of theatre, which is for me the most essential charge of scholarly practice in this field, the answer is grounded in the beautiful and idealistic call to care. Theatre's importance is not found in ethereal questioning or intellectual practice that appeals to a select group of academics. Nor is it in the feeling of cultural superiority it gives to an elite crowd who cannot recognize their own privilege,

and yet view themselves as the vanguard of liberalism. It is the very real questions of violence and oppression that continue to go unanswered. When the Queens of Syria calmly spoke through tears to tell the world their stories; when the actors of *Love Boat* continually pondered the question “where to now;” when the children of Za’atari wondered through the crowd repeating "to be or not to be" in Arabic and English, they were not doing it hoping that some middle aged white man would one day write a treatise about theatre with displaced Syrians. They were doing it because their lives depended on it. They shouted those lines repeatedly because at that moment, and still, the question of survival was urgent. They were pleading for someone, anyone, to listen and help. In this regard, those of us in the position to listen have failed.

Illustration 14: “Akoon ow la akoon! To be or not to be!” from *Shakespeare in Za’atari*, 2014. Photograph by Agnes Montanari. Used with permission.

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