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《七個猶太小孩》的論述與戲劇奇觀

Discursive and Theatrical Spectacle of *Seven Jewish Children*

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摘要

本論文旨在研究卡瑞•邱琪兒(Caryl Churchill)的劇作《七個猶太小孩》與其引發的爭議。邱琪兒將此劇的搬演視為一政治事件，意圖平衡英國國家廣播公司(BBC)在 2009 年加薩戰爭期間的報導，同時也表態支持遭受以色列軍方轟炸的巴勒斯坦人民。此劇的倫敦首演引來強烈批評，控訴邱琪兒與其劇散播反猶太思想。我挪用奇觀的概念作為論文的框架，先將劇本的爭議放在論述奇觀的架構中檢視，進而指出此一文本分析產生的論述困境。而後我回到劇場與表演的空間，在戲劇奇觀的脈絡下探討劇本演出的可能性，試圖為此劇平反。

本篇論文主要分為四個部分。序論作為對《七個猶太小孩》背景的初步介紹，提供以巴衝突的歷史脈絡和劇本的概觀，並從劇評中整理出其爭議點。第一章分析劇本中的涉及反猶太爭議的題材，而後探討反猶太論戰中隱含的問題。第二章從亞陶、布萊希特與波瓦的戲劇理論切入，將此劇放回表演的脈絡，藉此反抗劇本文本的單一詮釋。觀察不同版本的演出，我主張此劇能展現各種觀點並跳脫反猶太爭議的限制，指出戲劇展演對抗媒體奇觀的可能性。最後，我藉由引介其他為解決以巴衝突所作的發聲，肯定邱琪兒以戲劇創作對不安、無常的生命所表達的關懷。

關鍵字: 《七個猶太小孩》、以巴衝突、反猶太主義、奇觀、戲劇研究

Abstract

My thesis concerns itself with Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* and the controversy surrounding it. Viewing the play as a political event, Churchill wrote it in an attempt to balance the news coverage by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and to support the Palestinians in the midst of the ongoing Gaza bombardment. The London premiere caused accusations against Churchill of being hostile toward Israel in an anti-Semitic manner. I apply the framework that circumscribes the play's text, controversy, and performance under the rubric of discursive and theatrical spectacle. Examining the discourses generated in the play's script and the criticisms of the play that reveal various critical standpoints, I suggest that the textual analysis of the play results in an impasse. I aim to introduce the play's multi-faceted perspectives to the understanding of the Israel/Palestine question through the exploration of theater practices.

This thesis is divided into four parts. The Prologue serves as an introduction which provides an overview of the play's background, script, and the problem in narrating Israeli/Palestinian history. In Chapter One, I delve into the controversial references in the playtext which have received critical attacks based on an anti-Semitic reading and point out the problem inherent in the criticisms of the play. Chapter Two discusses the play's theatrical value in the context of Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, and Augusto Boal. Through the examination of different adaptations, I maintain the play's ability to present manifold viewpoints that divests the play of an anti-Semitic interpretation. Therefore, I draw attention to the possibilities of theater spectacle that can counteract the images produced by media dissemination. In the Epilogue, introducing the activists promoting critical thought through their engagement in the Israel/Palestine question, I conclude the thesis with the concerns

about the precarious life that Churchill's play aims at.

Key words: *Seven Jewish Children*, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, anti-Semitism, spectacle, theater studies

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Prologue

Caryl Churchill's plays are best known for experimental forms of performance which provoke the audience to react to several contemporary political events. Writing short radio dramas at the beginning of her career, Churchill has been delving into human crises in modern, capitalized society in her works since the early 70s. Later on, after having become a resident dramatist in Royal Court Theatre, Churchill has attracted critical attention after the staging of some significant plays. A notable example of her early success is *Cloud Nine* in 1979, a play juggling with power relations in terms of gender politics. Not confined to a commonly touted position as a feminist writer, Churchill confronts various themes, including financial disaster, human cloning, international relations, and other serious issues. For example, Churchill's socialist concerns are revealed in *Serious Money* in which she examines the problem of capitalistic society through the portrayal of the stock market.

In plays like *Mad Forest*, *Far Away*, and *A Number*, presenting the degradation of humanity in wars and conflicts, Churchill can always find "potent theatrical equivalents for dread and violence" (Colleran 108). Gradually abandoning realistic representations of the subjects, she applies minimalist and abstract styles to "test the boundaries of theatre" (Tycer 12). In plays like *A Mouthful of Birds* and *The Striker*, dance and music in performance "expand her theatrical means of breaking through the limits of representation" (Reinelt 189). Churchill's various styles realized in theatrical space can transgress the conventions of theater. To this end, her experiments of theatrical language "allow for various interpretations" and "induce her audience to make their own connections" with the political issues (Tycer 12).

In 2009, Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* raised debates among critics soon after its London premiere partly due to her political intention to support the Palestinians in the midst of Israel's Gaza bombardment. The playwright never tried to conceal the purpose of the play. Finishing the play script within one month, Churchill was in a quest for balancing the unfair news coverage of the Gaza-Israel conflict by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).[1] Avoiding the "highly sensitive political issue," the BBC refused to report on the need for humanitarian aid appealed by Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) for Palestinians during the Israeli military strike on Gaza (qtd. in Malone 492). Such a decision made by the prestigious national broadcast surprised the charities and triggered public anger. The playwright, who is famous for her feminist, socialist concerns vis-à-vis current political issues, wrote the play in response to the situation in Gaza.

Viewing the play as a political event,[2] Churchill made the performance a form of activism. A collection of voluntary contributions was held for Medical Aid for Palestinians during the performance of the play in Royal Court Theatre. However, the performance was followed by a series of criticisms accusing the playwright of biased representation of Israeli history which is tantamount to anti-Semitism. In the meantime, the defense against the claims of the anti-Semitic elements in the play emerged to side with Churchill and support her viewpoint on the Conflict. This thesis thereby takes up the examination of the play and its controversy contextualized in the controversial Israel/Palestine question.

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[1] *The Guardian* reported that the play goes "from pen to performance on a London stage in under a month" (Brown 2008).

[2] "It's only a small play, but it came out of feeling strongly about what's happening in Gaza. It's a way of helping the people there. Everyone knows about Gaza, everyone is upset about it, and this play is something they could come to. It's a political event, not just a theater event" (qtd. in Rocamora).

The History of the Israel/Palestine Conflict

For a further understanding of the critical concerns of the play, I provide a historical review of the Israel/Palestine conflict in this section. According to Benny Morris, an Israeli historian, the conflict between the Jewish people and the Arabs started when the Zionist project was initiated for the European Jews emigrating to Palestine. The early encounters began in the 1880s which were followed by the British Mandate in the early 20th century. With the decline of the imperialist powers, the colonies in the Middle East went through great transformation in the rise of national movements. In 1947, considering the problem of the Holocaust survivors and the refugees in Europe on the rise, Britain terminated the Mandate in Palestine for the return of the Jews in the land. Buttressed by the great powers, treaties and negotiations, including the partition plan, were put forward in order to solve the Arabs and Jews problem.[3]

Consequently, the Arabian coalition against the partition plan of Palestine failed; the State of Israel became a reality.[4] It turned out that the partition plan as a solution to the colonial problem has in no way achieved post-war peace in the Middle East. Instead, the homecoming of the Jews back to Zion led to the First Arab–Israeli War in 1948. Wars, riots, and skirmishes continue between the Arabs and Israel, including the significant Six-Day War in 1967, the Second Intifada, and finally the Israel/Palestine conflict continuing at the present time. The Six-Day War was the decisive battle for Israel to take control of the Gaza Strip and other Arabian territories. In this respect, the conflict is not limited to the perspective of Israel/Palestine problem but extended to Israel in contention with the Arab nations.

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[3] The Partition divided Palestine into Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank.

[4] The War of Independence for Israel in 1948, also known as First Arab–Israeli War. The Arab League includes Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

Notably, this overview of the history on account of the materials selected could always be criticized for the oversimplification and misrepresentation of the events and the protagonists involved.[5] A historical narration can always give rise to the problem of taking sides with certain groups of people, i.e., the pro-Israel side or the pro-Arab, Palestinian side. "There are number of different ways of presenting the past 130 years of this conflict, none of which is a neutral recounting of mere facts or a simple chronology of event" (Caplan 222). Given the highly controversial nature of the issue which evokes different responses from person to person, the academic studies may not suffice for understanding the past and the present of territorial feuds. Therefore, the examination of the emotions and memories affecting people from different communities should also be taken into account. As suggested by Matthew M. Silver, the author of *Our Exodus: Leon Uris and the Americanization of Israel's Founding Story*: "…the time has come for historical research to concentrate on narrative perceptions that continually give color and ethical meaning to the bare facts of Israel's founding and its subsequent history"(4). Therefore, attention should be given to the wide readership and spectatorship without academic background in analyzing the controversy of the Israeli-Palestinian narratives.

Different works offer different insights to understand the Israel/Palestine conflict; various ideologies also emerge against each other when a narration reaches its readers in a variety of ways. I argue that Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children*, presenting the modern Jewish history as its main plots, also falls within the debate over a preferable approach in narrating the Conflict.

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[5] Benny Morris and some other prominent Israeli academics like Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé are called "New Historians" whose historical insights on the Conflict come under criticisms for their "post-Zionist" thoughts which is critical of Zionism and Israeli military policies (Jangid 173).

An Overview of *Seven Jewish Children* and Its Controversy

Written in response to the Gaza situation, the script of *Seven Jewish Children* unfolds the historical understanding of the Israel/Palestine conflict from the viewpoint of Jewish/Israeli people. The short script contains seven scenes; each scene represents a pivotal event or period in modern Jewish history. The first scene starts with:

> Tell her it's a game
>
> Tell her it's serious
>
> But don't frighten her
>
> Don't tell her they'll kill her

It is noteworthy that "the text is performed on the basis of this dialogic tension, "tell/don't tell" (Emberley 160). Yet, the stage direction provides that the script can be performed by any number of actors.[6] The first section of the play is mostly read as the plight of European Jews facing the genocide program initiated by Nazi Germany during World War II. It implies arguments among the speakers about whether they should tell the child the truth of the Holocaust. The audience or the readers[7] can relate these lines to the ghettoized, threatened Jews who did not know how to explain the extreme situation to a child—to the silent "her" invisible on stage. This seemingly dialogical style of"tell her/ don't tell her" in the following scenes is used to unfold the establishment of Israel and the current geopolitical situations.

In the opening lines "Tell her this is a photograph of her grandmother, her uncles and me/Tell her her uncles died/Don't tell her they were killed," a retrospective narration of Holocaust memories is presented in Scene 2. The rest of the lines seems

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[6] The stage direction: No children appear in the play. The speakers are adults (parents)…The lines can be shared out in any way you like among those characters. (Churchill).

[7] The script can be downloaded for free on *the Guardian* and can be read or performed anywhere by any number of people, providing that "no admission fee is charged and that a collection is taken at each performance for Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)", see Churchill.

to depict an argument among the parents which particularizes the cause of the Holocaust tragedy, that is, "… there were people who hated Jews." The memorization of the "clever grandmother" who died in the tragedy is followed by the contemplation on Jewish identity in "tell her there are still people who hate Jews/Tell her there are people who love Jews." Scene 3 and 4 contain direct references to the Zionist-Jewish history of Israel. The text gives explanations to the Zionist claims for a homeland along with the description of the encounter with "the other" in Palestine:

> Tell her they live in tents
>
> Tell her this wasn't their home
>
> Don't tell her home, not home, tell her they're going away
>
> Don't tell her they don't like her
>
> Tell her to be careful.
>
> Don't tell her who used to live in this house
>
> No but don't tell her her great great grandfather used to live in this house.
>
> No but don't tell her Arabs used to sleep in her bedroom.

From Scene 1 to Scene 4, the playwright outlines the linear development of modern Jewish history, its geopolitical shift from Europe to the Middle East, and the competition for the legitimacy of the land.

Scene 5, the shortest section among the seven, briefly characterizes the victory of the Jewish state in battlefields:

> Tell her we won
>
> Tell her her brother's a hero
>
> Tell her how big their armies are
>
> Tell her we turned them back

Tell her we're fighters

Tell her we've got new land.

These lines account for the valor of Israeli army and the consequences of the wars; references may be made to, for example, the 1948 Arab–Israeli War or the decisive battle for Israel to take control of the Gaza Strip and other Arabian territories in 1967. In Scene 6, the argument among the actors leads to the fluctuation between "tell" and "don't tell" about the violence caused during Israel/Arab territorial feuds. Direct allusions to the concepts of lands and possessions are as follows:

Tell her it's not the water for their fields

Don't tell her anything about water.

Don't tell her about the bulldozer

Don't tell her not to look at the bulldozer

Don't tell her it was knocking the house down

Tell her it's a building site.[*sic*][8]

The fear of exposing the clash between peoples and nations to the child is presented in "don't frighten her" and the avoidance of telling about "bombs in café." Furthermore, the lines "Tell her they don't understand anything except violence/Tell her we want peace" seem to portray the other side, that is, the Arabs and Palestinians as bloodthirsty radicals.

The dialogical form makes repose in Scene 7 after pointing out the imperative role of media dissemination: "Tell her she can't watch the news/Tell her she can watch cartoons/Tell her she can stay up late and watch *Friends*" and "Tell her you can't believe what you see on television." Later on, the paragraph near the end of the script purports a cause-effect explanation of the disasters in Gaza. Not distracted by the

[8] The use of periods is not regular in the script.

cacophony of other adults in the previous scenes, the monologue candidly expresses the speaker's thoughts:

> […]tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out, the world would hate us is the only thing, tell her I don't care if the world hates us, tell her we're better haters, tell her we're chosen people, tell her I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? tell[*sic*] her all I feel is happy it's not her.[9]

By starting with the Holocaust and ending with the current military conflicts, the play script draws a trajectory of the creation and development of Israel through presenting the struggle with recounting certain events or moments in modern Jewish history.

Focusing on the portrayal of Israeli people and the historiography, several British Jews express their strong condemnation of the play. Some critics claim that the setting and plot development make a comparison between the Gaza War and the Holocaust. For them, such a comparison or connection is viewed as an example of anti-Semitism. In his article titled "Let's See the 'Criticism' of Israel for What it Really is," Howard Jacobson, the British Jewish writer who won the 2010 Man Booker Prize, points out the conspicuous use of such an equivalent:

> It begins with the Holocaust, partly to establish the playwright's sympathetic bona fides ("Tell her not to come out even if she hears shouting"), partly to explain what has befallen Palestine, because no sooner are the Jews out of the hell of Hitler's Europe than they are constructing a parallel hell for Palestinians.

The following are more accusations charging the playwright of Jew hatred through her characterization of the Israeli mentality. British columnist Melanie Phillips writes:

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[9] In the script, the sentences are not all commenced with a capital letter.

> This is an open vilification of the Jewish people, not merely repeatedly perpetrating incendiary lies about Israel but demonstrably and openly drawing upon an atavistic hatred of the Jews. It is sickening and dreadful beyond measure that the Royal Court is staging this. It is not a contribution to a necessarily polarised and emotional debate. It is open incitement to hatred.

Several articles on *The Jewish Chronicle* website also provide the approaches to understand the play as anti-Semitic and in many ways directed to be explicit Jew-hatred.[10] On another US-based commentary website *PJ Media*, Carol Gould provides the obverse of Churchill's narratives of the situation in Gaza. Following the reviewers on *The Jewish Chronicle*, she criticizes that "the family of an Arab sniper, suicide bomber, Hezbollah Katyusha rocket-launcher, Hamas missile-maker, or car-bomber whose mother, wives, sisters, and daughters might also have some thoughts about the deeds of their menfolk" are deliberately not presented in Churchill's geopolitical scenes. Refuting the facts about the Conflict in the play, she maintains that "Caryl Churchill obviously does not engage with the Jewish narrative" (Gould).

Commentators like Gould are concerned about the fair proportion in narrating the situation in Gaza and therefore demand a balanced viewpoint on the Conflict. Namely, they insist the playwright should also present the violence caused by the other side. As the attack on the connection between Israel and Nazi crimes shows, the way Churchill presents the history of Israel leads to the debates on the negative representation of Israel. For these critics and commentators, the play advocating for Palestine becomes a new style of anti-Semitism disguised in the criticism of Israel or

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[10] *The Jewish Chronicle* is a Jewish newspaper published in the United Kingdom. On the website, several reviews of the play attacking the play for its ideologies can be found, please see Dysch, Nathan, and Symons, just to list a few.

Israeli military policies. Furthermore, Andrew Balcombe, chairman of the Zionist Federation, states: "Caryl Churchill is a patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. We hope the play is fair and balanced and not just a demonisation of Israel" (qtd. in Dysch). Balcombe's statement brings the question of one's identity and political stance to the examination of his/her legitimacy in presenting the Israel/Palestine conflict.

In contrast, not viewing *Seven Jewish Children* as "a ten-minute blood-libel" or an anti-Semitic propaganda, some other reviewers also claim their voices. In the Royal Court Theatre premiere, the director and the cast are mostly British Jews. Ben Caplan, one of the British Jewish actors who took part in the performance, remarks that "I never believed it was anti-Semitic" (qtd. in Ghert-Zand). American playwright Tony Kushner and Alisa Solomon, the professor in Columbia Journalism School, also provide different insights on the play:

> […] a number of prominent British Jews denounced it as anti-Semitic. Some even accused Churchill of blood libel, of perpetrating in *Seven Jewish Children* the centuries-old lie, used to incite homicidal anti-Jewish violence, that Jews ritually murder non-Jewish children…We emphatically disagree.

Kushner and Solomon therefore propose that "Churchill's play should be seen and discussed as widely as possible."

They further designate an approach other than the subjective interpretations within the textual controversies:

> Surely it's essential to understanding *Seven Jewish Children* that against the specifics of the script, the playwright, relinquishing nearly all traditional authorial control, engineers a far-greater-than-usual slippage among text and performance and audience reception, producing an unusually large amount

of room for variant readings.

Critics like Kushner and Solomon, from another point of view, suggest that the play can be understood in various ways other than anti-Semitism for the gap created between text and performance. On the other hand, except for the comments and debates circulated around the commentary websites, direct theatrical responses to Churchill are also provoked in the pursuit of balancing effects. Richard Stirling's *Seven Other Children*, Israel Horowitz's *What Strong Fences Make*, Deb Margolin's *Seven Palestinian Children*, Robbie Gringas's *The Eighth Child* and Iris Bahr's *Seven English Children* all seek to achieve counterbalancing or reciprocal effects in the narrative arena of the Israel/Palestine conflict.

In the reading of the criticisms and responses above, it is noteworthy that some distinct political, ethical, and literary concerns are revealed. What becomes worth studying is the controversy the play elicits which is similar to those of the narratives about Israeli history. Significantly, the play, from the viewpoint of some critics, still provides different approaches to the Israel/Palestine conflict other than simply anti-Semitic attacks on Israel. Proposing to examine the play and its controversy in this thesis, I am especially interested in the following questions: what causes the controversies in narrating the Israel/Palestine conflict? What do the controversies signify? If the play is not anti-Israel or anti-Semitic as some critics maintain, how does it enable multi-perspective approaches to understand and respond to the Israel/Palestine conflict?

Methodology

I analyze *Seven Jewish Children* along with the comparable events through approaches of cultural studies and performance theories, premised upon the play's

creation of discursive and theatrical spectacle. The term spectacle has been deployed in various ways and redefined in different contexts and research fields. In sociology and media studies, the term spectacle "unifies and explains a great diversity of apparent phenomena" since Guy Debord's coinage of the "society of the spectacle" (qtd. in Kellner 24). Criticizing the capitalist society dominated by the "packaging, promotion, and display of commodities and the production and effects of all media," Debord views spectacle as a tool of "pacification and depoliticization" (Kellner 25). Based on Debord's conceptualization, Douglas Kellner further circumscribes the characterization of spectacle in media events which "invad[e] every field of experience from the economy, to culture and everyday life, to politics and war" (31).

In the meantime, from the viewpoint of archaeology and anthropology, a spectacle can be referred to as a "public performance and public theatrical event," "a showing and a looking," and "a means to constitute political subjects" (Inomata and Coben 5). The meaning of spectacle could be exerted to the extent as long as one finds it appropriate as suggested by Takeshi Inomata and Lawrence S. Coben in their scrutiny of performances in the pre-modern contexts (5). I hereby draw on the idea that the meaning of spectacle can be fluid in an attempt to scrutinize the related events around *Seven Jewish Children* to a fuller extent. In doing so, I analyze the play as a phenomenon that summons up "showing and looking" as well as problematizes various political subjects regarding the complex issue of Israel and Palestine.

In the case of *Seven Jewish Children*, I suggest that the creation of spectacle, however it is defined, is contingent on the powers involved and discourses exposed. Pining down some essential subject-matters based on textual references in the play and its criticisms as "discursive spectacle," I appropriate spectacle as "a means to constitute political subjects." In this framework, I interpret and diagnose the playtext

and its controversy in view of the political discourses embedded within. Historical approaches, political theories, literary criticisms, and media studies are all applied in the scrutiny of this discursive spectacle.

After that, I apply theater and performance theories to examine the play under the banner of "theatrical spectacle." I exploit the term theatrical/theatricality in a wider sense to refer it to theoretical approaches to the play's performance as well as the effects brought out from it that are extended beyond theater walls. To deconstruct the textual reading that leads to a quite dominant interpretation of the play as an anti-Semitic propaganda, I use the ideas of Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, and Augusto Boal to justify the controversial outcomes of the play. The theatrical spectacle of the play is analyzed within the context of Artaudian double, Brechtian alienation, and Boalian theater's political function.

This methodology, exploring the elements and effects of *Seven Jewish Children* synthesized as a spectacle, attempts to show that the spectacle of a theater piece can counteract media spectacle that affects people's comprehension of Israel/Palestine issue.

The Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into four parts. The introductory Prologue provides an overview of the play's script and the controversy in narrating the Israel/Palestine conflict which proposes to further examine the play based on the spectacle created through the explosion of discourses and theatrical involvements. In Chapter One, I probe further into the discourses with regard to the play's historiography and its criticisms. I observe that the linear development of history along with the portrayal of Jewish/Israeli adults in the play is central to the debates among critics. Given this

characterization of the controversy, I start by scrutinizing the political discourses in the play as discursive spectacle, providing a review of the controversial textual descriptions focusing on the Holocaust, Jewish heroism, and Jewcentricity. In addition to the historical lens, Churchill also introduces an important factor in the formation of a discourse in the Palestine/Israel narration, that is, the denotation of female children in the script. The use of female children has created certain discursive meaning initiated from the title of the play and lasting throughout the script. I thereby examine the deployment of child figures in view of the silent, invisible "her" in each scene witnessing the argument among the adults.

Later on, I want to comb the ideologies hidden in the criticisms of the play. Introducing some books that study the origin and the development of the Israel/Palestine conflict, I point out how various perceptions are generated when readers confront works by different historians. In this regard, I argue that the disapproval of Churchill's historiography, as well as the portrayal of Israelis, corresponds to the problem of narrating facts versus perceptions. Different perceptions of the right to the land and the issue of justice with military matters are exposed in view of the critics' concerns about unbiased representations of Jews/Israelis. In this context, it is also noteworthy that the criticisms against a narration of the Conflict are often developed to a tripartite differentiation between anti-Semitism, anti-Israelism, and anti-Zionism. Therefore, I explore these three ideas and analyze the hidden meaning in the accusation of anti-Semitism.

I also tackle with the issue of legitimacy of the actors who are involved in the narrating conflict. Churchill's pro-Palestine stance as a British playwright circumscribes a scope of literary reviews. That is, the production of the play is questioned for its authenticity of representing Israel and Palestine. In this sense, a

person's engagement with Israeli/Palestinian political realities seems to be examined according to his or her cultural background. To underline this tendency, I provide two more examples of the discursive spectacle in Israeli-related events. German writer Günter Grass's writing of the poem "Was gesagt werden muss"(What must be said) and British actress Vanessa Redgrave's role as a Holocaust survivor in the film *Playing for Time* both have led to attacks on their political stances as well as their ethnic backgrounds. I observe that the similar controversies are derived from the criticism of the Israeli military policies and personal involvement with the comparable issues about Israeli history.

I draw special attention to the polemic within the Jewish community. In the debates about Israel, individuals' distinct political standpoints are examined along with their connections to the State of Israel. Howard Jacobson and Jacqueline Rose as British Jewish intellectuals serve as imperative figures in my analysis of this phenomenon. Their arguments over the Israeli politics lead to an allusion to the notion of "self-hating Jews," who seem deprived of certain legitimacy in showing critical stances toward Israel. Ultimately, the controversy over a balanced viewpoint on Israeli history always draws the connection between the agencies of peoples and their ethnic backgrounds coupled with political inclinations, censoring: who has the legitimacy to speak or write about the warring factions? I employ this question as a tentative conclusion to the play's controversy to imply that Churchill is disqualified from writing about Israel because of her milieu. To this end, I suggest that the discursive spectacle foregrounded on the textual subjects is confined to an anti-Semitic reading and therefore signals an impasse of narration. .

In Chapter Two, drawing on Tony Kushner's suggestion that the play can be understood in various ways for its "slippage among text and performance and

audience reception," my approaches focus on the theatricality generated by its dramaturgical forms. I use the theories of Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, and Augusto Boal to reveal the play's theatrical possibilities. Considering the playwright does not require specific directorial visions, I argue that the play allows authorial freedom for directors to explore different dramaturgical strategies. Therefore, to put it in an Artaudian context could divest it of the controversial textual references. In the meantime, given the lack of characterization of the characters in the play, I suggest that it allows a Brechtian distanciation which can subvert the play's textual reading. Based on this technique, I maintain that the audience can raise the political or moral consciousness about Israel/Palestine dilemma without losing the power of reason. Also, observing the after-show debates and dramatic "writing back," I examine how the play enables the theoretical approaches of Augustus Boal in light of the theatrical connection and tension created between the actor and the spectator. It is in this relationship between actor and spectator that theater's political role is vitalized. In part, I argue that Artaud, Brecht, and Boal can be applied in a complementary rather than contradictory way within the play's framework.

Adaptations of the play on account of the different designs and effects created will be introduced. I review different adaptations of the play available on the Internet. The play with its short (originally within 10 minutes), adaptable (no specific setting or stage directions) script allows performances in any form. The first version is the dramatic reading by Jennie Stoller. The second is the ROOMS Productions in Chicago directed by Andrew Manley. Student productions include one at Warwick University and the other at Lebanese American University. After the analysis of these adaptations, I shift the lens to the "writing back" from some directors and playwrights that imitates Churchill's theatrical framework to manifest their political intentions.

One of the direct theatrical responses to Churchill is Richard Stirling's *Seven Other Children*. Another theater piece staged in response to Churchill's play is from Israel Horovitz, who displays his posture as a Jewish American dramatist.

Another "writing back" is Deb Margolin's *Seven Palestinian Children* (including a reading of The Eighth Child by Robbie Gringras). Writing from the perspective of the Palestinians, Margolon attempts to balance Churchill's descriptions interpreted as the portrayal of Israeli mentalities. In this regard, I suggest that whether they oppose or support Churchill's ideologies, these dramatic pieces of writing back correspond a lot to the struggles for a favored approach to the Conflict as analyzed in Chapter One. The last two adaptations are produced in Taiwan with one distinct dramaturgy different from the previous versions: to make a female child present on stage in each scene. In view of these productions, I maintain the play's ability to present various Israel/Palestine narratives according to different theater practitioners' intentions. Finally, I synthesize the play and its after-show events as a discursive and theatrical spectacle based on its provocative nature which can challenge the images of war and conflict created by media events.

Overall, this thesis is an attempt to examine the discourses and theatricalities in representing the Palestine/Israel conflict on the basis of the spectacle that a play like *Seven Jewish Children* creates. I argue that the play's production should not be limited to the subject-matters in the script. What the play clamors for is a multi-perspective understanding of the conflict as well as the radical engagement by the activated spectators.

Chapter One

Discursive Spectacle of *Seven Jewish Children*

Distilling a great amount of information, each scene in *Seven Jewish Children* creates discourses for the conceptualization of Israeli political realities. The audience can approach the Israel/Palestine conflict through the prism of Caryl Churchill's vision. Nevertheless, the background knowledge of the events concerning the conflict could be too tremendous to be presented thoroughly within the framework of the play's textual content and thereby leads to dissatisfactions of individual audience. As the premiere of the play shows, the play conceals an ideological system not welcome to many Jewish critics. This chapter thereby launches an examination of the discourses related to the play's discursive spectacle which are mainly deemed as hostility toward the State of Israel or Jewish people. After that, criticisms of the play are brought into discussion on account of the parallel spectacle of counter-discourses that the critics construct. I analyze the play and its controversy under the rubric of discursive spectacle that exemplifies the difficulties in narrating the Israel/Palestine question.

1.1 The Discursive Spectacle Created by the Playwright

1.1.1 The Holocaust

Churchill's script provides a condensed version of the events happening around Jews and Israelis. Even though she does not specify the time, geography, and the actors in the historical spectacle, readers with a basic understanding of the history of Jewish diaspora could tease out the important references in each scene and relate them to certain events. According to Churchill's suggestion to Ari Roth, a Jewish American

director who planned to stage the play in *Theater J* after the London premiere,[11] the beginning of the play could be the Holocaust experience in Germany in the 1930s or the anti-Jewish pogroms in the nineteenth-century Russia (Kritzer 613). What I choose for thematic discussion is the setting of the Royal Court premiere in which the first scene portrays the Holocaust period.

From the opening line "Tell her it's a game", presumably the adults in the scene pretend that it is just a hide and seek game they play with the child. According to Stef Craps, the scene can be compared to the plight in Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*[12] and the story of hiding in a secret space told in Anne Frank's diary. In this regard, the lines "tell her they're bad in the game/tell her it's a story/tell her they'll go away/tell her she can make them go away if she keeps still" can be alluded to a precarious moment in a hiding place which could be invaded by the Gestapo at any time. I further suggest that the lines "Tell her she'll have cake if she's good" remind the audience of the irony of Nazi death camps. The lie about the cake is not only for the interlocutors in the scene to placate the child in the despairing situation. Moreover, it also indicates a dark mockery of the "Arbeit macht frei (Work Brings Freedom, or Work Set You Free)" slogan,[13] which signifies nothing but a false promise to the hopeless victims of the concentration camp (Roth 78).

Pointing to the iconic image of Auschwitz that work did not set the Jews free, the first scene of *Seven Jewish Children* presents a moment of Jews being hunted, caught, and finally perished in the death camp. Wavering between telling the fact that she may be killed and "don't frighten her," the argument among the speakers in this respect is

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[11] *Theater J* features drama works of Jewish culture and legacy.
[12] Roberto Benigni's 1997 film *Life is Beautiful* is "built on the same conceit of a Jewish parent trying to protect his child from the Holocaust by pretending that it is just a game" (Craps 189).
[13] According to Victoria Nesfield, the "Arbeit Macht Frei" slogan above the gates of Auschwitz concentration camp symbolizes Nazi brutality (44).

about whether they should tell the child about the cruelty of life and their destiny as Jews. Nevertheless, can the unimaginable horrors of Nazi crimes and the great tragedy of Jewish people be simplified within a few words in a scene merely showing the hiding Jews? Arguably, the Holocaust scene alone could effectively show how the Jewish community being persecuted in the desperate situation even without mentioning the keywords like Nazi, death camps, and genocide. Capturing the terror that the Jews suffer through the unspeakable facts concealed by the adults, the scene highlights the inexpressible cruelty of the Holocaust atrocity caused by the unthinkable, ineffable evil. However, it should be noted that the reference to the Holocaust can always be questioned for its purpose and often criticized as a misuse or an abuse of the traumatic experiences and struggling memories of the Jewish people.

Lawrence L. Langer has criticized the comedic concealment of the Holocaust realities in Benigni's film. In *Using and Abusing the Holocaust*, he argues that the course of the concealment in *Life is Beautiful* seems to propose that the personal will of the protagonist, a loving Italian Jewish father, can triumph the extreme situation like death camps by virtue of the father's understanding of Schopenhauerian philosophy. That is, "Schopenhauer says with will power you can do everything" (qtd. in Langer 33). From this viewpoint, Langer demonstrates that Benigni replaces the historical accuracy of the Holocaust with paternal love in an attempt to protect his son's childhood innocence, ignoring the fact that "the freedom to choose" is deprived in death camps (32). Sacrificing the truth of imminent danger of death threats, the concealment projects an illusion of a hopeful future (Langer 39-40). Accordingly, this futility could also be found in the "tell/don't tell" device in the first scene of *Seven Jewish Children* for it exposes a similar illusion as if the adults have choices and the free will to, for instance, "tell her she'll have cake if she's good" and ask the other not

to “frighten her.” After all, the threat to the child cannot be annihilated by the verbal deceit of the adults; hence I suggest the Holocaust reminiscence is from some viewpoints misused in the first part of Churchill’s play.

Furthermore, regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict on a realistic political level, the Holocaust has been employed in part to buttress the legitimacy of the existence of the State of Israel and to support Israeli policies including settlement in the West Bank (Melson 468). However, as the State of Israel overpowers the neighboring Arab nations, this historiography could otherwise be used for delegitimizing the return of the Jews in the Eretz Yisrael.[14] One form of the delegitimazation is from the deniers of the Holocaust who assert that Jews employ the Holocaust to gain the land and political power. The delegitimization could be followed by the demonization of Jews and Israel and consequently a comparison of Israelis and Nazis. Based on the definition of the misuse of Holocaust imagery in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*:

> some misuses reflect a conscious, informed attempt to attack and de-legitimize a specifically Jewish target. For example, a cartoon image equating the Gaza Strip with the Warsaw Ghetto is an explicit effort to demonize Israeli policies and close off reasonable debate by equating the policies with Nazi genocidal ones. (“Misuse of Holocaust Imagery Today”)

Holocaust imagery is therefore linked to the Israeli military policies as an accusation of Jewish conspiracy. In this sense, the misuse of the Holocaust could be a gesture of anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism or will mobilize persons who are not anti-Semitic to oppose the State of Israel.

From this viewpoint, presenting the imagery of the Holocaust for the purpose of

[14] Land of Israel, biblically undefined territories, including the Land of Canaan, the Promised Land, the Holy Land, and Palestine.

supporting Palestinians, Churchill's script becomes an example of misused Jewish tragedy. According to Churchill, the play's goal is to present the persecution of human beings: "It shows people being persecuted, some of them going to a homeland (where others have been displaced) and the defensiveness of their threatened position, leading to further violence"("Letters: Jacobson on Gaza"). The reference to the victimized Jews, nevertheless, leads to controversy over anti-Semitism due to the sequential development of the historical spectacle makes the former persecuted the persecutor at the present time. Churchill did notice the problems of this historical brevity: "It covers many years in 10 minutes and is, of course, an incomplete history. It leaves out a great deal that is favourable to Israel and a great deal that is unfavourable" ("Letters: Jacobson on Gaza"). However, what may be favorable to Israelis or the Jewish community, namely, the attestation of the Holocaust in memorial of the calamity befalling Jews, backfires the Jewish community and dismantles the rectitude of Israel. The minimalistic representation of the Jewish past can be read as a sheer sarcasm of the State of Israel. Hence I suggest that Churchill's writing to an extent presents hostility toward the State of Israel and insinuates the Jewish community as a whole.

Overall, Holocaust spectacle in *Seven Jewish Children* in a way consolidates the instrumentality of the tragic event exerted in current power struggles. Gil Hochberg states that "the success of instrumentalization of Holocaust memory in the service of a Zionist agenda is helped by the tendency among some Palestinians and other Arabs to "deny[] or minimiz[e] the gravity of recent Jewish suffering"(qtd. in Craps). The Holocaust in this respect becomes an instrument so as to challenge Israel's founding story through which the focus of human suffering is shifted to the "second Holocaust"— the violence caused to Palestinians. It implies that Nazi crimes and Israeli military exploitation are identical in violating human rights. Therefore,

although it is appropriate to depict Jewish suffering caused by the Nazis in the first scene, I argue that the historical sequence of the play undermines the significance of the "Jewish" Holocaust and to a certain degree fits anti-Semitic caricatures. In this regard, even though I attempt to justify Churchill's writing, I cannot deny that certain rhetoric in the script may result in an intended or unintended violation of anti-Semitic taboos and therefore risks condemnation from the Jewish community.

1.1.2 Jewish Heroism

The empowerment of the Jewish identity through the victories of wars in the script is another controversial subject. Scene 5 shows an affirmative tone of the adults who are not hesitant to tell about the triumph over the adversities in narrating the history of Israel:

> Tell her we won
>
> Tell her her brother's a hero
>
> Tell her how big their armies are
>
> Tell her we turned them back
>
> Tell her we're fighters
>
> Tell her we've got new land.

To create an image of the powerful Jews is a strategy for Jewish people to regain confidence and reclaim identity. Before the founding of Israel, the wandering Jews represent a frail, victimized group of people whose identity as the powerless reaches its darkest moment during the Holocaust. As Neil R. Davidson points out, *fin de siècle* anti-Semitic narrative characterizes racial and religious assumptions of Jewish effeminacy, inferiority, and weakness (5). Therefore, the victory of the Jews after the shift from Europe to the Middle East, namely, to defeat the enemies and to build the

country, can reverse the inferior, feminized image of Jewish male body and strengthens the Jewish valor.

In view of Israeli history, the glorification of militant figures serves not only as the memorization of heroes but also the making of Israeli collective memory. In *Perfect Heroes*, Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz traces the heroism back to the seven parachutists who were deployed on the Zionist mission to contact the European Jews during World War II. "For as soon as the parachutist died, the hero was created, and as soon as the person dies, the symbol is born" (Baumel-Schwartz 44). Baumel-Schwartz further explains the significance of commemoration:

> Commemoration is a very important mechanism in strengthening and cementing every society's identity. It is even more crucial in a nascent society, which uses the rituals of commemoration to shape its self-image and sketch the contours of its national consciousness-in-formation. (46)

Thus, political parties in Israel and the Jewish community worldwide seek legitimacy in the image of war heroes. The symbol of heroes serves to counteract the anti-Zionist discourses created by the adversaries, i.e., the long persecution of the Jews in Europe and the Arab hostility toward Israel. The commemoration of heroes is therefore perpetuated in Israeli society for it heralds the conquest of the Arabs, the possession of the land, and the hardship of building a country. After all, despite the fact that the Jewish state has already become a reality, the legitimacy of the nation is still questioned in anti-Israel stream of discussions.

However, in the context of the military invasion, the heroism of Jewish people runs in tandem with the violence caused to the other side—the neighboring nations and the Palestinians. The Jewish heroism seems always followed by the delegitimization of the Israeli narratives in view of the violence caused and the

continuous conflicts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Therefore, the image of the perfect heroes as Jewish empowerment is dual when it also crystalizes Israeli nationalist, right-wing agenda of Zionism in a spirit of self-justification. In *Exodus*, the 1958 historical novel written by Jewish American novelist Leon Uris, Zionist heroism solidifies and glorifies the State of Israel after the devastation of the Holocaust. The novel achieved great success and, according to the late Edward Said, has been a dominant narrative for Americans to think of the State of Israel and the Middle East issues.

Significantly, what lacks in the story of heroes conquering difficulties in establishing a country is the Palestinian narrative. As Matthew M. Silver observes, the coexistence of "Other Exodus" is neglected by Leon Uris, the like-minded readers, and Israel supporters (6). As a result, "Other Exodus," signifying the transfer of Palestinians, discredits the rectitude of "Our Exodus" for the unfair proportion in depicting the tragedy of the other side. From this viewpoint, Churchill's script presents a sort of forthright criticism of Israel—the Jewish claim of Promised Land led to the displacement of Palestinians and other conflicts in the area. The script in this sense uses the heroic image of Jews to reveal the self-serving mentality of the Israeli people. The Jewish heroism, conveying the only affirmative message in the play's script to tell the child about "that we won" and "we've got new land," is used to delegitimize the State of Israel due to the pernicious results of conflicts. Furthermore, showing the Israeli adults' argument about telling or hiding the truth about "the bulldozer knocking the house down, bombs in café" in the following scene, the heroic narrative is transformed to a post-war reflection. The tone of uncertainty followed by the heroic victory indicates that the Israeli adults in the scene are conscious of the inglorious chapter of encroachment.

As a result, the valor of Jewish people embodied in the building of the State of Israel is deconstructed because of the ongoing complex territorial feuds. As Silver points out, in the progress of Jewish empowerment, the images of superhuman Israeli soldiers become morally problematic in narratives showing affirmative tone to assert the legitimacy of the land. Moreover, highlighting military heroism and impregnable nationalist agenda to claim the land, the narrative could otherwise reveal the innate weakness and insecurity of Israelis. It ultimately makes the heroes defeatable. As the protagonist of Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* demonstrates,[15] "they[Jews] are saying the opposite and unwittingly expressing their fundamental insecurity" when asserting their attachment to the land through narratives like *Exodus* (qtd. in Silver 184). Israelis, when celebrating Jewish courage, are like the Palestinians with the traumatized experiences of expulsive transfer, behave with uncertainties because of "the psychological effects of powerlessness" (Silver 214). In this respect, Churchill's reference to the powerful Jewish soldiers in wars disarms the Jewish heroes and invalidates the commemoration of Israeli military exploitation.

1.1.3 Jewcentricity

Starting from the shift to the Middle East, the triumph over the Arabs, the settlement project, and the current military conflicts, the play runs in line with the unfolding of Jewcentricity. In Scene 6, lines like "Tell her we're making new farms in the desert/don't tell her about the olive trees/Tell her we're building new towns in the wilderness/don't tell her they throw stones/Tell her they're not much good against tanks" write about the construction on the land. The expansion of settlement on the territories pertains to the economic prosperity of Israel. It signals the celebration of

[15] Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* tells about Palestinian displacement after 1948.

the military exploits as the previous scene implies. Nevertheless, it also discloses the development of modern technologies bringing economic, capitalist development on the soil while jeopardizing the daily life of the residents in the incessant wars in the other aspect. The lines "tell her they don't understand anything except violence/tell her we want peace" present an attempt to cover a rather impartial fact so as to view the Palestinians as primitive, pugnacious radicals. In this respective, Israel's conflict with Palestine is presented as a one-sided violence, serving to demonize the other side—the Palestinians. Reviewing the events from the viewpoint of the Israeli people, the narration could otherwise be alienated from the Israelis. This narration seems to consciously expose unfavorable attributes of Israelis and designate the negative characteristic of a Jew-centered point of view regarding the long-standing conflict. This approach to the script again leads to a condemnation of the founding of Israel, if not a challenge about the legitimacy of Israel, by revealing its occupation, deprivation, and casualty of the Other.

The monologue in the last scene therefore makes a conclusion of the previous presentation of Israeli self-serving mentality, showing that the Israelis exterminate the other without any sympathy. It is worthy of quoting in full:

> Tell her, tell her about the army, tell her to be proud of the army.
> Tell her about the family of dead girls, tell her their names why
> not, tell her the whole world knows why shouldn't she know? tell
> her there's dead babies, did she see babies? tell her she's got
> nothing to be ashamed of. Tell her they did it to themselves. Tell
> her they want their children killed to make people sorry for them,
> tell her I'm not sorry for them, tell her not to be sorry for them,
> tell her we're the ones to be sorry for, tell her they can't talk

> suffering to us. Tell her we're the iron fist now, tell her it's the fog of war, tell her we won't stop killing them till we're safe, tell her I laughed when I saw the dead policemen, tell her they're animals living in rubble now, tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out, the world would hate us is the only thing, tell her I don't care if the world hates us, tell her we're better haters, tell her we're chosen people, tell her I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? tell her all I feel is happy it's not her.

This long statement explicitly shows the critique of Israel through exposing the mind of an unreservedly self-interest Israeli. The Jewish-centered conceptualization seems converged on the trope of "chosen people." To this end, it constructs an ideology that the Israelis exert power to persecute the Palestinians because Jews are "the chosen one."

Adam Garfinkle, a Jewish American political scientist, proposes that anti-Semitism as form of Jewcentricity intertwined with the concept of chosenness can be divided into three major stages of development. The original Jewcentricity was the Jewish self-perception in philosophical and religious sense which was replaced by the second one with racial tropes, that is, "the modern anti-Semitism of the sort that gave rise to the Holocaust" (Garfinkle 63). The postmodern one, he argues, is the current focus on the Jewish material and political power, designating an "ideological selectivity" that associates Jews, Jewish nationalism, and Israel with racism (Garfinkle 64). The establishment of Israel as an achievement of Zionism is thereby blamed for its racism against the other ethnic groups, mainly the Palestinians.

To understand the use of the "chosen people" rhetoric in this way, Churchill's script, weaving together the historical lens on Jewish/Israeli voice, could be elided

into what Kushner and Solomon called “misunderstanding of Judaism and obliviousness to the stereotyping of Jews” (qtd. in Kritzer 615-16). The “chosen one” as an idea of difference is easily blended into presumptions of snobbery and supremacy (Garfinkle 11). Accordingly, the “we/they” phrasing as a viewpoint of differentiating self from the other in the script presupposes that the Israelis are insensitive toward Palestinian suffering as an extreme expression of self-perceiving chosenness. The final speech in the script, underlying the survival of the Israeli child, explains the Israeli Jewcentricity which dehumanizes the Palestinians. It consequently suffuses the whole play with condemnation of the chosen people mentality which is interpreted as an anti-Semitic connotation. As Howard Jacobson argues, “once you venture on ‘chosen people’ territory, an ancient prejudice tantamount to a blood-libel of Jews,” you perform hatred toward Jews as a whole (qtd. in Kritzer 615).

As an exemplification of Jewcentricity, the idea of “chosen people” could inevitably be read as a negative signifier that is predisposed to the controversy over anti-Semitism. The use of the chosen people rhetoric even disturbs Tony Kushner and Alisa Solomon who justify and praise Churchill’s writing of the play. Even though Kushner and Solomon still hold that this reference does not amount to anti-Semitism since what the characters say does not stand for the playwright’s ideology, the “chosen one” trope still bears the weight of the history of discriminative violence and could always confront challenges from Jewish critics like Jacobson et al. Consequently, appealing to protest against Israel’s military policy and drawing public attention to Gaza crisis in the spectacle of Jewcentricity, Churchill otherwise makes the play vulnerable to the Jewcentric investigation of anti-Semitism in terms of the content of the playtext.

1.1.4 The Jewish Children

The function of the Jewish child figure in the play remains fluid. The phrasing "Jewish Children" viewed as evidence of Jew-hatred can be found in some critics' analysis of the play. "…the title of her ten-minute playlet is not *Seven Israeli Children*, but *Seven Jewish Children*" (Harrison 36). Paul Bogdanor provides a similar observation to Harrison that "The play is, after all, entitled 'Seven Jewish Children' and not 'Seven Israeli Children'" (Bogdanor 83). Following the thread of Jew-centered ideology, the "Jewish Children" in the title of the play is understood as a kind of target that negates the Jewish community as a whole rather than a mere condemnation of the Israeli government. Reversely, Tony Kushner and Alisa Solomon have defended this use, seeking positive connotation in the Jewish children:

> Why does the title use "Jewish" rather than "Israeli"? Because all the children the play revolves around are Jewish, but not all are Israeli. And because not all Israelis are Jewish; a sizable minority is Arab. More important, because her play addresses the worldwide Jewish community. Our history of diaspora and persecution led to the founding of the State of Israel, which claims to act on behalf of all Jews. We have an impact upon its policies. Many Jews, including the two of us, feel profoundly connected to Israel and concerned for its fate….

In contrast to the comments from the previous critics, Kushner and Solomon's approach offers to read the Jewishness in the play as an appeal to Jews worldwide to face the current crisis together.

From time to time, the child seems to be given a real place on the stage as if a dialogue or a conversation virtually takes place in the presence of the Jewish children. As Kushner and Solomon's analysis shows, "Nothing is more intimate than

discussions between parents about what to tell their children; no act of speech is more carefully weighed or more fiercely protected. This is a family play, told from within the family. It concludes with love, and it concludes with fear." In the light of a family play, the image of well-intended adults in normal, daily conversational circumstances allows the audience to identify with the dilemma of telling or not telling. Still, the "children" play an important part in interpreting the political intention of the play for the specified "her" in each scene. In Churchill's previous play like *Far Away*, the child character plays an essential role to expose absurdity and violence inherent in a society.[16] From this viewpoint, Linda Dittmar and Joseph Entin's analysis of the play's politics directly qualifies the play's "powerful testimony to the horrifying effects of violence on both Jews and Palestinians, seen through children's eyes" (7).

This observation of the child subject can also be found in Amelia Howe Kritzer's "Women Playwrights Confronts the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" in which she explains how the symbolic meaning of the child is mobilized to arouse the audience's emotions. Kritzer describes the child as "a guiltless party" that reminds us of the cruelty of wars and the violence happening in the warring factions. In her article "A child Is Testifying," Julia Emberley focuses on the "fragility and vulnerablilty" of the "gendered female child to whom ostensible instructions are directed "(378). She also argues in "Can the Child Testify" that "the child as testifier is being deployed in contemporary testimonial practices for purposes related to the meaning and even the loss of childhood in a world of genocidal atrocities" (160). She observes that a female recipient of messages, for its vulnerablility in confrontation of war and violence, makes the agency more powerful to audience in the politicization of the child

[16] In the first part of *Far Away*, Churchill's 2000 play, the aunt Harper attempts to hide things from the niece Joan whose questions gradually expose the violence happening around.

(Emberley 160).

However, Emberley still casts doubt on the use of the child being politicized as a subject in narratives "when the child is launched as the figure of truth, authenticity, and power in contemporary political struggles" (164). Such kind of politicization could otherwise give an account of the miseducation carried out by the adults. As Paul Bogdanor and Michael Billington argue, the child figure bears the inculcating words from the parents regarding the conflict between peoples and the understanding of the other. "Churchill's play shows us how *Jewish* children are bred to believe in the 'otherness of Palestinians' (emphases added)" (Bogdanor 83). Bogdanor and Billington thereby view the child as a receiver of negative messages, aiming at a negative portrayal of the parents which eventually becomes a demonization of the Jews/Israelis. Consequently, the child is interpreted as an innocent agent that bears witness not only to the cruelty of violence but, remarkably, the cruelty of the parents.

For critics like Bogdanor and Billington who view the child simply as passive listener accepting certain knowledge that the adults attempt to inculcate with, the child's agency is a mere device for the playwright's political intention. The child agency therefore loses its ability to prove the authenticity of historical events. In this sense, the critical lens of the child is shifted from the function of bearing witness to what kind of truth or truths that the audience sees and is about to hold. As Emberley points out, "what becomes apparent in the oscillation between the sayable and the unsayable is that 'truth' is overdetermined in the sense that a regime of veridiction exists due not only to historical realities, but also to the fear of violence" (160). The child figure in the script serves not as a reliable agency to convince every audience of the violence but the concealment of the violence. It further brings out that truth is overdetermined, multilayered and therefore debated on due to the complex issue

behind her. To this end, the subjectivity of child is transferred to the audience whose interpretations give different political meanings to the truth or truths that the child witnesses. One of the common interpretations, as many criticisms of the play show, is the belief that the female children are silenced by the adults' words of distorting the Israeli history and demonizing the adults. Consequently, Churchill's deployment of child figure, just like the subject-matters previously analyzed, leads to a condemnation of the hostility toward the Jewish community.

1.2 The Discursive Spectacle Created by the Critics

I circumscribe the discursive spectacle of critics in view of "the number of column inches generated per page of playtext" and "the charge that the play was anti-Semitic vigorously debated back and forth across countless newspapers and websites" (Haydon 76). Focusing on the textual description of Jews in the play, many critics criticize its distortion in line with anti-Semitic propaganda. Notably, in addition to anti-Semitism, accusatory terms like anti-Zionism and anti-Israel are also exerted interchangeably in the criticisms of the play. Besides, some critics draw special attention to the political stance of the playwright as well as that of the other critics. Examining the meaning of these criticisms, I approach the after-show discussions about *Seven Jewish Children* as the discursive spectacle counteracting that of the playwright's.

1.2.1 The Competing Narrations of Israel/Palestine

Before examining the criticisms of the play, I want to review some examples of various narrations of the contested history from which debates over a neutral, balanced viewpoint on the Israel/Palestine conflict ensue. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim

has pointed out how he and other "New Historians" are attacked for their historiography of the Conflict.[17] Shabtai Teveth, one of the critics of Shlaim and other new historians, states that "the new historiography is politically motivated, pro-Palestinian, and aimed at delegitimizing Zionism and the State of Israel"(Shlaim 291). The following are more book resources about Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their reviews. Charles D. Smith's *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* attempts to give a thorough documentation of issues around Israel and Arab nations. The author's documentation is nonetheless questioned by an online reviewer who criticizes the book's very basic definition of Palestine as a "country." "Those who call themselves 'Palestinians' started this fraud only after 1967 after the Arabs lost another war, one of many when they tried to drive the Jews into the sea"(Shvartz). In the meantime, some other reviewers, obviously with a pro-Israel stance, define the documentation as one more "pro-Palestine book" for not providing balanced viewpoints on Israel. However, comments viewing the book as "heavily biased against Palestine" for it does not cover both sides' narrative in each story and problem can also be found on the website ("Heavily Biased").

In *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories*, Neil Caplan scrutinizes the initial conflict between the Jewish community and the Arab nations as well as the following development of contentions to this day. Similarly, despite underscoring the plural "histories" of the conflict, Caplan's narration is criticized by reviewers because he neglects to include all information about the Israeli side of things (Levi). In *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians*, Joseph A. Massad, discusses the ideas of anti-Semitism, colonialism, and racism in

[17] Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, Ilan Pappe's *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-516*, and Avi Shlaim's *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine* group them as "Israeli revisionists or the new historians" (Shlaim 288).

the framework of Israel/Palestine conflict from the standpoint as Palestinian-American academic. Due to Massad's critical insight on the State of Israel and the warring factions, he has been involved in many controversies and become a representative figure confronting hostility from certain Jewish/Israeli communities.[18]

Likewise, reexamining the Zionist ideology and Israel's policies in the settlement of Gaza in *Israeli Exceptionalism: The Destabilizing Logic of Zionism*, Muhammad Shahid Alam, a Pakistani social scientist at Northeastern University, also faces a challenge to his scholarship in view of his cultural background. For example, a polemic on *American Thinker,* a online magazine, addresses Alam as "historical hoaxer" and as "a native of a Muslim country, trained and employed in a field long disengaged from Middle Eastern, Islamic, or comparative religious studies, who presents himself as an expert on all things having to do with Middle Eastern history and society"(Schwartz). Michael A. Rydelnik's *Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict: What the Headlines Haven't Told You*, a book attributing the cause of the conflict to the Arab terrorists, also receives polarized reviews. That is, one praising the book's credibility helping people understand the Israel/Palestine conflict and the other disapproving it for its biased, slanted viewpoint against all Arab communities.[19]

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[18] For example, in 2005, Columbia University formed a committee to investigate faculty's anti-American/anti-Israeli sentiment. Massad was accused of classroom intimidation and also received a mail from a fellow faculty member, telling "Go back to Arab land where Jew hating is condoned. You are a disgrace and a pathetic typical Arab liar"(qtd. in Finn). In 2013, *Al Jazeera English* published an Op-Ed by Massad entitled "The Last of the Semites." It was followed by "numerous commentators - largely the ones who have spent years casually smearing as anti-semites those who criticize Israel - instantly and vehemently denounced Massad's arguments"(Greenwald).

[19] The following are the comments and reviews made: "If there's a reason that Dr. Rydelnik spends more time on the Israeli side, it's because it's very under-reported, distorted, or simply ignored by the media and literary world in general (see now the academic study of this pervasive anti-Israel bias in the article by H. I. Silverman, 'Reuters: Principles of Trust or Propaganda?'…"(Wechsleron); "This book gives the reader a good grasp on the history, development, and current state of the the land of Israel and the conflict with the Palestinians"(Bussell); "This book is one-sided. It is motivated by the author's unchallenged dispensational eschatology, which is a racist doctrine. The book is thoroughly pro-Israel" (Chan).

Overall, some books give an account of the history of the conflict with pro-Israel stance while some others provide analyses of the situation based on the criticism of Israel and Israeli diplomatic, military policies. Some works attempt to achieve a balanced viewpoint on the Conflict while they are still criticized for biased representations or interpretations with a presumable stance to take side with either Israel or Palestine/the Arabs. The books mentioned above only account for a small part of the narrations about Israel, the Middle East issues, and the Israel/Palestine conflict; nevertheless, these narrations have already designated a core issue in writing the Israel/Palestine conflict. That is, it seems impossible to narrate the political realities of the State of Israel, Israeli rivalries with the Arab nations, and the Gaza conflict without eliciting dissatisfactions of people with different perceptions. To write about the Israel/Palestine conflict becomes a kind of conflict when an all-encompassing historiography accepted by each side of people seems always fails. I argue that the script of *Seven Jewish Children* can be read as an example of this failure.

1.2.2 Accusation of Anti-Israel, Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism

In the large number of online comments and reviews of the play, the main focus is on the connotations of anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israelism. On the website of *The Telegraph*, fifty-nine leading British Jews signed a letter to claim the play to be "horrifically anti-Israel" for it reinforces false stereotypes (qtd. in Beckford). The unanimous voice from the Jewish-based online commentary websites, *Jewish Chronicle* and *PJ Media*, directly conclude that the play is anti-Semitic through depicting the Israeli adults who are "agonizing over the pros and cons of Zionism" in each scene (Gould). Stephen M. Flatow, writing to the readers on *New*

Jersey Jewish News as a "New Jersey attorney whose 20-year-old daughter Alisa was murdered in 1995 by Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza," asserts that "one only has to read it to see the anti-Semitism disguised within its anti-Zionism" and "the growing numbers of anti-Zionist cheerleaders will have a field day with *Seven Jewish Children*."

Howard Jacobson, one of the leading Jewish figures in the after-show debate of *Seven Jewish Children*, repeatedly satirizes the play: "Anti-Semitism? Absolutely not. It is 'criticism' of Israel, pure and simple." He further criticizes that the play exploits "Zionism as a political form given to a psychological condition—Jews visiting upon others the traumas suffered by themselves, with Israel figuring as the torture room in which they do it" (Jacobson). Significantly, in the course of criticism, the meaning of anti-Semitism is blurred. "People sometimes ask when does anti-Zionism become antisemitism. Here is a rule of thumb: when people describe Israel with the same language and imagery that antisemites use to talk about Jews, the difference between the two disappears" (Rich and Gardner). In contrast to the accusation of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, British-Jewish actor Ben Caplan, one of the participants in the premiere performance, points out that "I never believed it was anti-Semitic. It's a play that examines Israel, not Judaism as a whole. The two things got muddled" (qtd. in Ghert-Zand). Meanwhile, Royal Court spokesman explains that the play is critical of Israel but "there is no suggestion that this should be read as a criticism of Jewish people" and "it is possible to criticise the actions of Israel without being anti-Semitic" (qtd. in Beckford).

The abovementioned critiques and responses show that anti-Semitism is reflected on through different perspectives. Anti-Semitism is also connected to the establishment as well as the current political landscape of the State of Israel in which

Zionism plays an important part. In the following, I summarize some current perceptions of the relationship between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in order to analyze how these ideas are involved with the examination of the criticism of Israel. To this end, I intend to demonstrate how the accusation of anti-Semitism leads to problematic results. In *Issues in Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class: Selections From CQ Researcher*, Ben Cohen, a member of American Jewish Committee and Antony Lerman from Institute of Jewish policy, have different perspectives on the connection between anti-Semitism and ant-Zionism. Cohen asserts that anti-Zionism could be inseparable from or is a part of anti-Semitism because anti-Zionism is founded upon a caricature of Israel as the apartheid-like child of a colonial enterprise (131). To be an anti-Zionist now is to question the legitimacy of the State of Israel. In this context, Cohen believes that most of the criticisms of Israel and negative comments, which he views as demonization, are often stimulated by the thoughts of anti-Semitism.

Lerman, on the other hand, suggests that to equate anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism is to miscomprehend the meaning of anti-Semitism. He proposes that an anti-Semitic sentiment refers to certain "symbols of anti-Semitic figure," to coin "Jewish conspiracy," and to stigmatize Jewry as a whole; for example, the traditional belief that Jews created communism and control capitalism. Moreover, he traces back that Zionism was supported by a minority of Jews; hence anti-Zionism was and continues to be a respectable position to hold for many orthodox, secular, and left-liberal Jews in the past and today. In terms of this history of Zionism, Lerman indicates that statements linking anti-Zionism to anti-Semitism damage the real critique of anti-Semitism. He observes that advocates who define the criticism of Israeli policies and the denial of Israel's right to exist as "new anti-Semitism" seem to proscribe a view that to criticize Israel is illegitimate. Consequently, to equate anti-

Zionism and anti-Semitism "drains the word anti-Semitism of any useful meaning" (Lerman 131). The conclusion of the relationship between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism has not yet made, but it seems that Zionism, just like anti-Zionism, is often subsumed in the anti-Semitism discussion as a more encompassing and pervasive referent to the political, military situation of Israel.

In the controversy of *Seven Jewish Children*, the critics who disagree with Churchill's historiography have already targeted the core ideas of anti-Zionism in the play and crystalized the playtext's anti-Semitic perspective. Admittedly, the play could, as these critics assert, contain rhetoric and tropes that are problematic and disturbing to Jews/Israelis based on their interpretation and understanding of the intermingled terms. Nonetheless, to scrutinize the development of anti-Zionism intertwined with anti-Semitism and to pin down the play's anti-Semitic motif are not at issue in this section. What I try to draw attention to is the results of the debate on anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israel. I observe that the retaliation and defense centering on anti-Semitism continue, leading to no end. It is exemplified in the polemic between Howard Jacobson and Jacqueline Rose; the two British Jewish academics who held different attitudes toward the play respectively submit articles on the Internet to prove the other "is wrong" and "not right" about anti-Semitism.[20]

Jacqueline Rose as a British Jewish critic who justifies Churchill's writing, shows similar worries to Antony Lerman's in her *The Question of Zion*. She provides that it should be noted that there is "a resurgence of anti-Semitism in Arab countries as well as throughout Europe and "all the available information suggests a link between this resurgence and the policies of the Israeli government…anti-Semitism

[20] After Howard Jacobson's "Let's see the 'criticism' of Israel for what it really is" on *The Independent*, Jacqueline Rose wrote "Why Howard Jacobson is wrong" which was followed by Jacobson's "Why Jacqueline Rose is not right" on *The Guardian*.

can never be justified" (Rose xvii). Yet, Rose points out that the accusation of anti-Semitism can cause further problems. She first and foremost disagrees with what Ariel Sharon insists that "in sentiment voiced widely inside and outside Israel, that criticism of Israel is tantamount to anti-Semitism insofar as it denies the Jewish people's right to self-defense." She otherwise suggests that "anti-Semitism is not caused by Israel's policies, but without a clear critique of Israel today" (Rose xviii). Therefore, Rose further lays out the problem of lacking proper criticism of Israel which leads to the misunderstanding and misuse of Zionism:

> Recent critics of Israel's policies, faced with the charge of anti-Semitism, are quick to say that their target if not Jews but Zionism. This is not necessarily helpful. Not just because defenders of Israel's current policies will retort that the distinction is not viable if what is at stake is the right to self-defense of a Jewish nation. But more because, even where the distinction is accepted, Zionism ceases at the moment to be talked about. Or else, in an equally reductive, though largely unspoken, move, Zionism is presumed to be wholly represented by the worst activities of the state. (13-14)

In this regard, Zionism, confounded with a militant aggressive nationalist outlook of Israel, becomes representative of the Israeli policies against Palestinians. Moreover, a zero-sum mindset regarding the warring factions is developed in the abused Zionism: "Do you want ethics or do you want land" (qtd. in Rose 13)? Considering defenders of Israeli policies claiming that any criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic because it makes an unfair ethical demand on the Jew, Rose provides "as if hatred were always the foundation, and the only foundation, of critique"(134).

Rose concurs with the statements from some other Israelis who are critical of

Israeli political trajectory. For example, Daniel Ben-Simon asks "Who is the true friend of Israel, the loving critic or the unthinking patriot" (134)? Words from Gideon Levy, a *Ha'aretz* journalist on behalf of Palestinians provide,[21] "Is the true friend of Israel one who identifies with it automatically, or one who wants it to be just" (134)? What serves as rightful judgment of Israel and the Israeli military and foreign policies will still be issue at stake since Jews in and outside Israel are still asking about and debating on the different ideologies of the nation and the history. However, to conclude with words from Avner Azulay, director of the Rich Foundation in Tel Aviv: "What is happening in Israel is bad for the Jewish people in the long term"(qtd. in Rose 134).

In *Seven Jewish Children*'s after-show debates around anti-Semitism, I see the problem that Rose, Lerman and the abovementioned Israeli/Jewish people worry about. In the letters to the *Independent* in response to Jacobson's criticism of the play, readers provide "Like beauty, or so it seems, anti-Semitism lies in the eye of the beholder, and Howard Jacobson is determined to see it everywhere" and "So here is another reason to hate Israel: they cause anti-Semitism and then blame it on us" ("Letters: Jacobson on Gaza"). Rhetoric like "playing the antisemitism card against people that criticise Israel" is appropriated in a way to generalize anti-Semitism charge as an irrational, self-defensive response from Jewish critics like Jacobson and other pro-Israel commentators ("The Jacobson 'debate'").

As a result, the charge of anti-Semitism seems to lose its dynamic to differentiate between vicious Jew-hatred intent and any other comments on Israel or Jews-related situations since both of them are ultimately condemned as anti-Semitism. Moreover, as the debates continue, the authentic critique of Israel for its improvement on ethical

[21] *Ha'aretz*, Israeli daily newspaper, known for its liberal-left standpoint.

and humanitarian grounds, together with a profound judge of anti-Semitism is discarded and elided into a mere instrument to be played. As Lerman suggests, to charge the anti-Zionist of "new anti-Semitism" may make any valuable criticism of Israel illegitimate and real critique of anti-Semitism invalid. I observe that the problem with the accusation of anti-Semitism is drawn out from the discursive spectacle created by the critics of play. It forms a spectacle of the unending debates around anti-Semitism that generates an impasse which brings negative influence on Israel and the Jewish community.

1.2.3 Question of Legitimacy and Agency

In the dispute among the critics and that between different parties in the *Seven Jewish Children* event, it is noteworthy that an individual's socio-political milieu is often brought up. It results in an investigation on his/her rectitude of a statement or an argument with respect to Israel. In fact, the censure of one's critical position had already launched considering Churchill's supportive attitude to the Palestinians during Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip. Doubts about her legitimacy to generate and disseminate discourses are elicited; as claimed by Andrew Balcombe, chairman of the Zionist Federation: "Caryl Churchill is a patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. We hope the play is fair and balanced and not just a demonisation of Israel" (qtd. in Dysch).

In Bernard Harrison's analysis of the play, he comprehends the play as a piece of "encouragement of hostility to and attacks upon Jews in general" written by the "left-wing British playwright Caryl Churchil" (36). Harrison further uses Howard Jacobson's Man Booker Prize winning novel as an example to underscore Churchill's

responsibility of anti-Semitic consequences.[22] Harrison suggests that the play is a "political act carrying consequences in the public arena" and the playwright cannot avoid the ethical responsibility. This trajectory of correlating one's identities to authorship seems to play an essential part in the Israel/Palestine narrative and complicate the political question. In the following, I provide some cases similar to that of Churchill's controversy in which discursive positions of individuals involved are to a certain extent highlighted.

Similar to the maelstrom of disputes that Churchill and her play caused, an episode with quite striking parallels occurred in Germany. In 2012, Nobel laureate Günter Grass's poem "Was gesagt werden muss" (What Must Be Said) provoked controversies which were further aggravated in view of Grass's stance as an ethnic German who once was a member of Hitler Youth. In the poem, the late Grass expresses the regret for his belated denouncement of Israeli nuclear policies against Iran. The poem elicited tremendous outbursts: the author was accused of anti-Semitism concealed by the criticism of Israel. Many other intellectuals also show their concerns about the issue and accelerate the circulation of the debates. For example, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, describes the text as "absolute scandal" (qtd in Orłowski).

According to Stuart Taberner, in Grass's poem, Israel's defense policy in view of the possession of nuclear capability is a threat to world peace (524). Regarding "ich schweige nicht mehr, weil ich der Heuchelei des Westens überdrüssig bin (I've broken my silence because I'm sick of the West's hypocrisy)," he observes that Grass also

[22] The novel *The Finkler Question*, according to Harrison, satirizes "the minority of British Jews whose politics, where Israel is concerned, chime with those of Churchill's wing of the British intellectual Left" (36). One plot in the novel depicts a character's young grandson "being stabbed in the face and blinded by an Algerian man who had shouted 'God is great' in Arabic and 'Death to Jews'" (36). Harrison therefore provides that Jacobson criticizes *Seven Jewish Children* because the play encourages this kind of anti-Semitic violence.

implies that the West should also take the blame. Relating the author's personal silence to the German society's collusion with Israel, the poem directly criticizes the territorial violence in the Middle East connived by the diplomatic supporters of Israel.[23] Taberner further discusses that the constant debates on the anti-Semitism/Zionism and Israeli policies should be construed in the light of *littérature engagée*. Grass is a manifest socialist figure engaging in politics in Germany; what Grass believes is the responsibility of a literary person not afraid to confront difficult political issues. As Michael Earl points out, "Grass's poem is admittedly a mishmash of the tradition of engagé [sic] literature. Imagine "J'Accuse" drawn through the filter of Brechtian poetics. It's like Zola through the looking glass" (qtd. in Taberner 525). However, as a German writer, Grass cannot escape the question about his critical stance, soon to be related to the history of the German crimes during the Holocaust.

The literary engagement with issues concerning Israel seems always followed by the examination of one's identities from different aspects due to the history of Jewish persecution in Europe. It emerges as an irony in Grass's poem in light of "the need to keep silent considering Israel/Germany relation".[24] Therefore, Grass's manifestation in the poem, as Taberner puts it, raises the question on whether a critical stance of Israel should be allowed with regard to political correctness as a German and as the "significance of his[Grass] interventions as a public intellectual of long standing whose words carry weight" (526). Grass's perspective is concluded as an "unapologetically obsolescent, unreflectively Eurocentric, and self-assertively male" paradox within the hauntological structure of Nazi German history (Taberner 531).

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[23] English translation by Breon Mitchell(qtd. in Orłowski).

[24] English translation by Breon Mitchell: "Warum aber schwieg ich bislang? Weil ich meinte, meine Herkunft, die von nie zu tilgendem Makel behaftet ist, verbiete, diese Tatsache als ausgesprochene Wahrheit dem Land Israel, dem ich verbunden bin und bleiben will, zuzumuten. (But why have I kept silent till now? Because I thought my own origins, tarnished by a stain that can never be removed, meant I could not expect Israel, a land to which I am, and always will be, attached)" (qtd in Orłowski).

Consequently, the poem leads to the scrutiny of Grass's intellectual posture and casts a question on the legitimacy of German critics' refutation of Israeli policies. The German society seems to be deprived of the critical stance of Israel. As Hubert Orłowski observes, German politicians like Guido Westerwelle, the foreign minister of Germany, "indirectly touched upon the need to delegitimize all statements of German authors about Jews and Israel because of their past" ("Is Grass More Restricted").

Similar probing was also put into practice on a British actress, Vanessa Redgrave. In 1980, she was cast as the leading role in Arthur Miller's screenplay *Playing for Time.* Adapted from Fania Fénelon's autobiography depicting a survival story in a concentration camp, the film aimed to provide the witness's testimonial memories for Holocaust victims. Vanessa Redgrave's starring as the orchestra musician prisoned in Auschwitz, however, was decried by the autobiographer and protested by Jewish organizations due to Redgrave's supportive stance for an independent state of Palestine. As a member of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Redgrave serves as another example of the existing dilemma between the struggle against anti-Semitism and the support of Palestinian self-determination of a nation-state (qtd. in Marshall).

As British and German leftists, if not Left-wing anti-Israel activists, Churchill, Grass and Redgrave hold similar critical attitudes toward Israel. The controversy of Churchill, Grass, Redgrave and other public figures therefore formulates a basic ground of identity politics—that of the "Western leftists" vis-à-vis the Israelis/Jews.[25] This antithesis unavoidably consolidates a prerequisite that certain groups of people

[25] Various volumes have studied the phenomenon of Western Leftist responding to Israel/Palestine question in the context of globalization. See McCann, Mendes, Ackerman, and Farneti.

cannot be neutral when it comes to Israeli or Israel/Palestinian issues because of their ethnic and political identities. In fact, the controversy over a narrative legitimacy also occurs in the dispute among Jews. In *Our Exodus*, Matthew Silver has pointed out that to narrate the history of Israel would lead to a situation in which different parties raise questions against the narrator's authority. Leon Uris's popular novel *Exodus* elicits disapproval from "liberal American Jews, partisan Israeli veterans of the 1948 War of Independence, and pro-Palestinian writers" who have questioned whether Uris's Jewish American background could provide convincing legitimacy to write about the founding history of Israel (Silver 166).

As Uri Avneri, a leftist Israeli political figure who has been lobbying for the "peaceful accommodation with Palestinians," puts it, "It took infinite *chutz-pah*[26] for Uris to position himself as the one and only historian, the ultimate arbiter and sole interpreter of a period he knows nothing about, and of events in which he played no part"(qtd. in Silver 170). In this context, Silver observes that the real concern of Uri Avneri" appears to be "who had the right to talk about 1948" (170). This episode implies that Uris loses his credit in narrating Israel's history considering his Jewishness and diaspora experience being questioned by other Jewish people.

In the *Seven Jewish Children* event, I again draw on the debate between Jacqueline Rose and Howard Jacobson to bring to light the problem with legitimate agency within the Jewish community. In their responses to each other's articles about the play, Rose and Jacobson appropriate their personal experiences as British Jews as well as their reading of narratives from other prominent Jewish/Israeli figures to support their viewpoints on the Israel/Palestine conflict. In her article "Why Jacobson Is Wrong," Rose borrows words from Primo Levi, an Italian Jew who has become an

[26] chutz-pah, Hebrew word for describing audacity, circumscribing a characteristics of Jewish people.

important figure in anti-fascist movement as an Auschwitz survivor. On account of Levi's "Everybody is somebody's Jew, and today the Palestinians are the Jews of the Israelis," Rose points out that Jacobson is "out of tune with some of Israel's most revered writers who do not hesitate to make the link between the founding of Israel and past persecution of the Jews." She also mentions S. Yizhar's short story *Khirbet Khizeh* in which an Israeli soldier comes up with "the analogy between the Palestinian predicament and the exile of his forefathers in the process of evacuating an Arab village." Rose then concludes that "Israelis have always been happier to criticise their nation—in their case, the charge of antisemitism would be absurd – than those who claim to be supporters of Israel in the west."

In "Jacqueline Rose Is Not Right," Jacobson otherwise shows his disagreement with Rose's identification by listing other "most revered writers" like Yehoshua and Amos Oz. He therefore insists on a kind of solidarity with Israel which is coincided with "sharp criticism of his country's policies." Jacobson also proffers that "most English Jews of my acquaintance" take issue with Israeli policies while disapproving with some narratives from "historians who think Israel began with Hitler, with supporters of Hamas and Hezbollah who call for an end to Israel and death to Jews, or with theoreticians of Jewish malignancy." Remarkably, Jacobson denotes that "Many Jews hate Jews: we can't keep everything to ourselves" in his scrutiny of anti-Semitic rhetoric. In this, he seems to indicate that some people within the Jewish community are self-hating because they do not comply with certain standards in censuring anti-Semitism. This "self-hating Jew" label is to a certain extent targeted on liberal, leftist Jews who are critical of Israel.[27]

[27] For example, Marilyn Friedman in her "Jewish Self-Hatred, Moral Criticism, and Autonomy" has observed that in the 2000Masada website many Jewish people are categorized as "self-hating Jews and/or Israel-threatening Jews" who are "socialists, communists, anarchists and so-called 'human rights' junkies and 'peace and justice' activists" among whom Noam Chomsky is a prominent figure.

The controversy over Israeli politics ends up with a stalemate in which Jews challenge Western liberals/leftists, Israelis question the American Jews, and Israeli-Zionists disagree with secular Jews and so on. This phenomenon ultimately develops into a postulation that a play written by a British leftist Palestinian supporter like Churchill is fundamentally anti-Semitic. That is, Churchill is wrong in choosing the subject matter of writing since her agency does not privilege her to be just and impartial in the Israel/Palestine issue. Nevertheless, to read a narrative of Israel/Arab as ideologically problematic as possible is just one approach among many others. As Kushner and Solomon put it, "non-Israeli criticism of Israel" has formed "a now-rote hysteria" in which a single narrative is insisted on and thereupon a meaningful discussion prevented. The above analysis of the play's controversy and some other episodes attempts to show how this hysteria pervades in political and cultural sphere. To this end, I argue that the discursive spectacle of *Seven Jewish Children* is to a great extent confined to anti-Semitic discourses and censorship.

Nevertheless, this analysis has yet to draw into the theatrical practices of the play. In the following chapter, I examine the play in view of the theatrical elements to see how certain hegemonic discourses can be dismantled.

Chapter Two

Theatrical Spectacle of *Seven Jewish Children*

The play's spectacle signals more than an authoritative discourse of narrating the Israel/Palestine question. As Kushner and Solomon have it,

> *Seven Jewish Children* is a play. It must be read with an awareness of the incompleteness of plays on paper, destined as they are for collective rather than singular experience, for warm bodies speaking the lines, for empathy, for the variability of interpretation. All plays require that directors and actors make considered choices. Performance produces meaning.

Like Tony Kushner and Alisa Solomon, several critics disagree with an anti-Semitic reading of the play and shift the focus on the play from the textual interpretation to its theatrical representation. Joanne Tompkins suggests that performance can unleash the potential to "open up a space for dialogue about the conflict" for its variability which allows broader interpretation (156).

Rachel Clemens also proposes that *Seven Jewish Children* can break normative frames of discourses by "activating theatre's ability to present simultaneous and contradictory representations" (367). Drawing on Judith Butler's notion about the violence of language, Clemens suggests that the play designates potential in opening up discourses through the exploration of "relationships between adults and children, event and explanation, person and situation, individual and wider violence, discourse and understanding, performers and audience" (367). To reveal the theatrical spectacle of the play from different perspectives, I apply theater and performance theories to analyze the performances of *Seven Jewish Children* so as to dismantle the dead-end controversy as the previous chapter shows.

2.1 Theoretical Approaches

2.1.1 Artaudian Cruelty

I suggest that much emphasis should be put on the play's structure, the dramatic form, and theatricality. The play is not mere text; its framework of narration depends on other imperative factors used by directors in theatrical spaces, for example, the actors' vocal expression and physical *mis en scène*. To put the play back in the context of examining a theater piece rather than a written text, I approach it as an Artaudian theatrical spectacle where vocal delivery of spatial value takes precedence over predictable, normalized linguistic exchange.

First and foremost, except for the children unseen on the stage and the speaking Jewish/Israeli adult(s), Churchill does not provide specific staging directions. Hence, every director can set scenes, arrange actors, and explore verbal expressions to achieve certain theatricality at his or her command. This style of drama writing can also be found in Churchill's previous works like *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. Sean Carney has studied this "authorial openness" that "echo[es] the doubling of roles" and "leave[s] some of the meaning to emerge only in performance" (178). The supremacy of the author and the text can be shattered and therefore the focus of the textual content can shift to the language on stage. This observation corresponds to Artaud's notion that "we must get rid of our superstitious valuation of texts and written poetry" (78).

Taking up the question of theater language, I propose that an Artaudian "double" is created in the liberation of textual content. The language of the play can engender a dream-like double to familiarize the audience with indirect signs generated from vocal delivery. In the dreamlike double, the spectators "become implicated within the very

structure from which they initially seem so distanced" (Considine 47). Accordingly, the concept of cruelty is not directly presented to the audience; rather, it reaches the audience through the dream-structure freeing the signification of words from the text. With respect to cruelty, it is not the "cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, carving up our personal anatomies…" (Artaud 79). Rather, the cruelty refers to the "more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us" (Artaud 79). The audience encounters the imminent threat and the cruelty through the medium of theater. In the case of *Seven Jewish children*, its theatrical language revealed through the layering of the Artaudian double shows that "'the place'" or 'stage' of the Theater of Cruelty can never be simple or straightforward" (Weber 293). When one views the play's vocal delivery based on the textual content as simply anti-Semitic propaganda, the structure of the double is excluded from the theatrical experiences.

Abandoning the textual references, the play can therefore allow what Artaud calls "the tyranny of meaning supplanted by a language of signification: a language of gesture, intonation, attitude, and movement, but without a recognizable goal" (Weber 286). In this regard, an Artaudian spectacle that highlights physical objectives in which certain rhythms can be formed through "[c]ries, groans, apparitions, surprises, theatricalities of all kinds, magic beauty of costumes taken from certain ritual models; resplendent lighting, incantational beauty of voices, the charms of harmony, rare notes of music, colors of objects, physical rhythm of movements whose crescendo and decrescendo" (Artaud 93).

By having a group of actors or an actor alone on the stage whose verbal outbursts are not directed at any object in particular, the repetitive "Tell her/Don't tell her" could unleash a non-dialogical tension of communication between the characters.

That is, neglecting the content of the dialogue-like script while focusing on the *mis en scène*, the audience encounters the strangeness of a daily circumstance in which a rational conversation is prevented. During the performance, the actors or the actor could be directed to present:

> [the] rhythmic repetitions of syllables and particular modulations of the voice, swathing the precise sense of words, arouse swarms of images in the brain, producing a more or less hallucinatory state and impelling the sensibility and mind alike to a kind of organic alteration which helps to strip from the written poetry the gratuitousness that commonly characterizes it. (Artaud 120)

Thus, the actors would speak past each other on stage, or a single actor would stand alone on the stage taking on several roles representing a group of people. Consequently, this would not result in rendering judgment or engendering debates with respect to the Gaza bombardment or issues of Israeli history. The actors' verbal performance serves not as persuasive speech to convince the audience of what the characters, the actor, and the author believe. On the contrary, the broken pieces of non-dialogue can "arouse connotative responses in the individual members of the audience" (J. Martin 119). To this end, the arguments among the actors are devoid of a certain goal of real life communication, creating a dream spectacle in which the spectator "with eyes that no longer know their function and whose gaze is turned inward" (Artaud 11). The cruelty of the referenced historical moments presented through a noncommunicative situation is left for the spectator to perceive and to reflect on their own situation regarding the complex issue.

In this sense, the spectator, witnessing the futile communication among the characters in the play, could find himself or herself implicated in the double bind of

narrating. From that moment on, the audience can enter into a communication of sorts with the theater. The audience faces the disturbing fact inherent in the strangeness of the scenic action in which certain messages are disseminating, redressed, and negotiated through the *mis en scène*. I argue that the after-show controversy and the varied productions inspired by the original play can be understood as a pertinent reaction to this double-structure. The controversy shows how the audience reacts actively to the play due to the "intense and sudden shocks" (Artaud 86). That is, the audience is shocked, waken up, and prompted to reveal their unconscious fear regarding the conflicting realities of the Israel/Palestine question. Kushner and Solomon comment, "the play is disturbing." If the audience is not bothered or discomfited by a play about the Middle East, the Holocaust, or in a wider sense about current political struggles, the play fails to create a connection between the audience and the theater and therefore "misses the point"(Kushner and Solomon).

It is impossible to present complex issues like the Holocaust, the Jewish diaspora, and the Palestine/Israel conflict without elusiveness and contradictions. As Gene A, Plunka summarizes in *Holocaust drama*, "drama seems to be an ideal medium to represent eternal conflicts and dilemmas" (16). The play's disturbing virtualization of failed conversations reveal the difficulties of putting the Holocaust on stage, the diaspora story, and the current political struggles. In an Artaudian theater, performances will "flare up like fires" and keeps bringing influence on the Spectator (Artaud 97). The after-show counteractive production is predictable since the theater spectacle functioning as the medium successfully shocks and wakes up the audience.

2.1.2 Lessons from Brecht

I suggest that Brechtian approaches are applicable in view of *Seven Jewish Children*'s characters. According to the terse note of direction provided by Churchill, either a number of actors talk to each other or a single actor talks alone, with no particular direction as to how specific lines are to be delivered. Notwithstanding the grand historical narrative the script alludes to, the actors are not asked to bare their emotions in response to war and persecution. At the same time, although they are representing Israeli or Jewish adults, the actors are not marked in the sense of adulthood, Jewishness, and any other mimesis of identities as far as the directional notes are concerned. Accordingly, Brecht explains that characters should be presented "coldly, classically and objectively" to maintain the actor's duality (qtd. in Parker 230). The attention is therefore not be fixed on the characters' personal, psychological struggle but the struggle of telling versus not telling in a complicated historical framework. In this respective, I argue that the actors are "refrained from going over wholly into their role, remaining detached from the character they were playing and clearly inviting criticism of him"(Brecht 71).

As a result, despite the urgent subject-matters of the play, the audience could still remain calm and conscious of the characters' acting on the stage rather than resort to excessive emotions. It is as in Brecht's Epic Theater that should "appeal less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason" (Brecht 23). This is the distancing effect that a theater of political possibilities achieves. As in *Mother Courage*:

> in order to control any emotional identification with the characters…, Brecht did not allow his leading character undergo catharsis and his repeated use of projections renounced the dramatic elements of surprise and tension, so that nothing could interfere with the audience's reasoning power. (J. Martin 57)

Accordingly, despite the fact that *Seven Jewish Children* could apply a dialogical style through a number of actors, it is not directed in an Aristotelian sense aiming for catharsis in the context of the atrocities referenced such as the Holocaust or the Gaza War. Instead, it creates a distance through the depersonalized characters that allows "judgment to pass on to see what way society needed to be changed" (J. Martin 54-5). On account of the alienation effect, the audience can hold the power of reason because "the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism" (Brecht, "Short Description" 101).

In Brecht's aesthetics, the ideology or the gist of a play can be recognized by the spectator because "everything to do with emotions has to be externalized" and "becomes a gesture" ("Short Description" 101). In view of the ensuing controversy, the results of *Seven Jewish Children* needs a reexamination in terms of its *gestus*. The play does hold an ideology as in the Epic Theater which is defined by Walter Benjamin as a "gestic theater" in which "what is a device of the subtlest kind generally becomes an immediate purpose in the specific case" ("What Is Epic Theater?" 67). Despite the controversy centering on anti-Semitism, I suggest that the gestus of *Seven Jewish Children* is by no means an ideology of spreading discourses against Israel and the Jewish community. Considering the dramaturgy of adults and children, Carney compares the ideologeme of *Seven Jewish Children* to that of *Mother Courage* in which "a banal and tragic truth" is revealed: "this mother's child must thrive at the expense of other mother's children" (179).

In Carney's interpretation, *Seven Jewish Children* presents a vision of Lehrstück (learning-play) with no existing solution to the contradiction of shared humanity of children (179). Therefore, the monologue that says "Tell her I'm happy it's not her" at the end of the play, together with other portrayals of Jewish or Israeli adults, only

articulates a contradiction stemming from the cruel reality of war rather than from a demonization of Jews. As the staging of *Mother Courage* in 1949's East Berlin shows, Brecht admitted that the play failed to tell the audience "what the playwright was driving at" (qtd. in Pizzato 157). The audience saw only the mother's failure and suffering rather than her involvement in the war business. Understanding *Seven Jewish Children* in this context, the demonstration of the contradictory ideas about the survival of children could have showed what Brecht means by "war teaches people nothing" (qtd. in Pizzato 157). Still, the lesson may also fail to reach spectators who recognize the suffering of the characters as their own.

Significantly, the play actually ends in a gesture of political activity, that is, to donate to Palestinian charitable causes. This blatant instance of fund-raising during the intermission for Palestinian medical aid also creates a distancing effect. It serves as a technique keeping the audience from identifying with the domestic familiarity expressed by the actors as Israeli or Jewish family members gathering to (re)present certain historical materials. As Ernst Bloch puts it, the inhibition of the identification between the spectator and the character creates a "distancing mirror" so that the public can perceive the contradictions within "the familiar" (qtd. in Ezcurra). This device can also stage against the naturalistic theater opposed by Brecht for its "scientifically exact representations" ("A Short Organum" 179). The audience could therefore learn about the discrepancy between reality and the stage, that is, the "un-naturalness" on stage so as to reach an intellectual level of analyzing the political struggles of the different sides.

The problematic connotations of anti-Semitism could be redirected to a different trajectory in understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is, challenged by the spectacle of political struggle, the audience can take action, i.e. donate or write

against or for Churchill. That is, the audience is welcome to bring discussions and debates about the Israeli-Palestinian narrative and raise the awareness of different standpoints. As Benjamin analyzes, Epic Theater, as a gestic theater results in more gestures as the act of acting is more frequently interrupted ("What Is Epic Theater?" 67). In this regard, *Seven Jewish Children* is a play with a gesture that interrupts the audience with the distancing effect. Provoking the audience to react, the play could still maintain its revolutionary position to arouse audience's awareness of the social crisis at stake.

Therefore, "the destruction of stage illusion is not an end in itself" (Ezcurra). Rather, as Benjamin's reading of Brechtian theater denotes, "the stage is still elevated, but it no longer rises from an immeasurable depth; it has become a public platform" (qtd. in Sidnell 25). Brecht's development of theatrical dramaturgy ultimately aims at "work outside the theatre" in terms of "theatrical performance that could influence the thinking of all the people engaged in it" (*Measures Taken and Other Lehrstücke* 6). Put into theatrical practice, Churchill's writing rejects the identification of the characters and the assimilation of emotional experiences. Accordingly, the alienation created by the play may enable the audience to understand the plight of human beings intellectually and attempt to achieve political goals.

2.1.3 Theater as Politics

Given the spectacle of audiences activated in response to Churchill's writing through their public visibility as critics and commentators, I suggest that the role of the spectator and the actor can be further examined through Augusto Boal's insight on theater. After the premiere, not only did the original dramaturgy trigger debates among critics with different reviewing aspects, it has also inspired several authors to

create their own narrative niches in the Israel/Palestine question. In the meantime, except for the staging in theatrical spaces, the play featuring its short and adaptable (no specific setting or stage directions) script allows performances in any form. For example, a street rehearsal of the play as a different experimental performance to demonstrate political needs can be found on YouTube.[28] Exerting their discursive visibility, some spectators thereby propagate against the ideological systems they comprehend in the play. Others, using the framework of the play, display similar standpoints to Churchill's and further politicize the play. In this regard, I argue that the participation of different communities in the *Seven Jewish Children* after-show events presents the double roles of the spectator and actor as in Boal's Theater of the Oppressed.

"The Theatre of the Oppressed", as coined by Boal, "is theatre in this most archaic application of the word. In this usage, all human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!). They are Spect-Actors" (15). As some Jewish critics choose to display their opinions on the commentary websites as analyzed in the previous chapter, they circumscribes a scope of a community connecting each other to review a history of the past from which a new one is being made. Ultimately, the theatrical experiences invoke their communal traumatic experiences whether their knowledge of the holocaust is genealogically passed on them or not. I suggest that this formation of a community could be compared to what Yuyachkani (Peruvian theatre group) achieves in presenting the surviving struggle in atrocities:

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[28] The street play of *Seven Jewish Children* in Hebrew was directed by Samieh Jabbarin, an Arab-Israeli theater artist based in Jaffa. The video remarks that "Jabbarin was not in attendance" because he was under house arrest after protesting a right wing provocation at the Arab-Israeli town of Umm al-Fahm; *The Guardian* further reports that "he directed proceedings via phone and Skype" (Olinsky; Shabi).

> By partaking actively in workshop or street events, spectators could enter into dialogue with a historical trauma. The witness, like Boal's spect-actor, was able to accept the dangers and responsibilities "of seeing and of acting on what one has seen." In this way, such performances continue to reaffirm to these communities the collective subjectivity and communal memory. (Campbell and Kear 14)

Even though the follow-up dramas and debates provoked by *Seven Jewish Children* are not intentionally grouped in the form of official workshops, by trying to get involved in the original play, the audience creates a spectacle of theatrical participation from which different communities emerge. In this way, those who write dramatic texts to counteract Churchill's narrative embodies the active role of spectators.

The cacophonous voices from the critics and playwrights create dramatic meaning as well as action. As fulfilled in Boal's Forum Theater, the spect-actors attempt to see different outcomes when they intervene the original performance. In the course of participation, *Seven Jewish Children* develops into a theatrical practice through which it could reach its ultimate goal of gathering people together for real political action. As Randy Martin's reading of Boal suggests,

> Theatre is a means for drawing people together across time and space, and for representing this accomplishment once it has gotten them together by virtue of what is presented on stage. I have referred to this technology for gathering publics to reflect on their own capacity for assemblage, attention, and participation, made manifest in the theatre as the socialist ensemble (26).

A theater of politics aiming at certain social changes lies in the participation and intervention of spect-actors. For Tony Kushner and Alisa Solomon, who take part in the course of this theater-making, they understand the play as a medium to propel the participation of the Jewish community in a global sense: "…*Seven Jewish Children* is speaking to us." This appeal, foregrounding the ethics of spect-actors, proves that the responsive actions from the audience, be it supporting or disapproving, to be imperative.

Boal's theory presupposes that the position of onlooker is inherently oppressive. In an interview, Boal directly states that "'I want the spectator to act not watch. It is obscene for a human being who is fully capable of doing to merely watch'"(Mellgren). Amalia Gladhart has pointed out that "the nonintervening bystander, however, also facilitates oppression, allowing torture to continue unchecked, accepting spurious 'explanations' of disappearance and imprisonment" (qtd. in R. Martin 27). Therefore, "the audience must be whipped into shape" which "allows the political agency of theatre to be considered as part of a continuum of forces of violence beyond the stage" (qtd. in R. Martin 27). To this end, not limited to stage acting, Boal's theater reveals its possibility of transformation when the performance can always be rewritten elsewhere in public spaces. In his suggestion of dramaturgy, Boal explains that

> [t]he original solutions proposed by the protagonist (in the play shown to provoke the audience's interventions, 'the model') must contain at the very least one political or social 'error' which will be analysed during the forum session. These errors must be clearly expressed and carefully rehearsed, in well-defined situations….The original play—the model—must present a mistake, a failure, so that the spect-actors will be spurred into finding

> solutions and inventing new ways of confronting oppression. We pose good questions, but the audience must supply good answers. (242)

In the regard, the mistakes and failures in the original *Seven Jewish Children* have facilitated the following productions from spect-actors challenging the very problematic textual contents in the play.

Therefore, I maintain that *Seven Jewish Children* successfully rids the spectators of the role of onlookers, making the theater event a political practice. Moreover, Gladhart extends the idea of political practice through theater to a reckoning that "there is no neutral place in theatre or in politics" and "the theatre is not an innocent space of make believe but is part of a coercive economy through which state, capital, and popular opposition engage" (qtd. in R. Martin 27). The play's controversy elicited by reason of anti-Semitism debates poignantly proves that theater may not always be "neutral" and "innocent". In fact, to view it as a work deliberately created to be offensive could still shed lights on the possibilities of a political theater.

I suggest that the controversy of a theatrical production could be viewed as predictable, if not necessary, for creative freedom which aims at provocative thoughts. In the field of art, politically charged events lead to different viewpoints about the use of political correctness which tinges the term with mostly negative implication. In the observation of the controversy around Richard Bean's *England People Very Nice*,[29] Janelle Reinelt proposes to use the term political correctness in a rational and profounder way instead of eliding it into a derisive retaliation or censoring tool. Even though Reinelt holds that *England People Very Nice*, a play accused of racist stereotyping immigrants in Britain, may not be politically correct in depicting certain

[29] Accusing director Nick Hytner and playwright Richard Bean of racist elements in the play, Hussain Ismail, "a theatre director from Bethnal Green, the community depicted in the play, organized a campaign against the play with pickets at the theatre" (Reinelt 144).

groups of people, she would not rail against its performance because "the criticism it received is healthy in a democracy and raises appropriate questions about the value of the play"(Reinelt 145). She then appropriates Richard Bean's own dismissal of criticism about his play to point out the ambiguity of political correctness in different cases involved with individual political standpoints:

> Bean brushed aside this criticism as so much political correctness and countered that playwrights are too scared of causing offense: 'The problem with our playwrights is that they're all so polite. They daren't say anything about anybody, unless they're slagging off America.' He must not have read the plays of Mark Ravenhill, or noticed Caryl Churchill's play for Gaza, *Seven Jewish Children*…Of course he did notice Caryl Churchill's play. As John Bull has pointed out, Bean's pro-Israeli and anti-Palestinian sentiments are worked into the political fabric of his play…. (Reinelt 144-5)

Bean describes people living in Hampstead as "the Hampstead Hamas," ironizing them as pro-Palestinian, far-leftist chattering intellectuals (Reinelt 146). Bean speaks in defense of his ridicule of immigrants in his play under the banner of dismantling the "polite" political correctness in creating artistic work while holding his own solid stance regarding Israel/Palestine question.

It is also noteworthy that Bean's controversy is explained as "the charge of giving offence is being used more and more to stifle free expression" by Melanie Phillips, who firmly rivals against *Seven Jewish Children* in which she finds Churchill's "true prejudice against Israel and the Jews." Suggesting not to take seriously of Bean's caricatures and stereotyping like "the token Palestinian as consumed by a kind of geopolitical Tourette's Syndrome of unstoppable anti-Israel ranting," Phillips otherwise criticizes Churchill's writing by condemning it as

"inciting yet more frenzied hatred and true prejudice against Israel and the Jews" ("England People Very Confused"). In view of this contradictory judgment and definition about artistic freedom, the fine line between radical act against politeness and the violation of political correctness requires scrutiny and discussion instead of immediate censorship. What accounts for the "fitting and timely" appropriation of political correctness in cultural performance events remains the question at stake (Reinelt 145).

Yet one thing is certain—the after-show firestorm of *Seven Jewish Children* shows that the play successfully breaks the framework of politeness. The breakdown of polite barrier throws light on the connection of theater and spectator in a political context where particular communities gathered are activated in social arenas beyond stage performance. Boal's goal is to use theater's power to bring influence to society, that is, "Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society"(16). As Randy Martin summarizes: "Boal's work's is a most intriguing place to unpack this contradictory relation between theatre's call to presence and liveness on the one hand, and to ensemble and mediation, on the other" (26). To this end, "political theatre readily finds itself, through its very ambition, already compromised in its ability to bring all the elements together, onstage and off"(R. Martin 24).

Ultimately, I suggest that one can navigate different ideas of theater theorists so as to view *Seven Jewish Children* as an event that aspires to bring the audience members together to achieve political actions. I further argue that the different approaches of theatricality are not necessarily contradictory to each other and can actually be applied in a complementary manner. As noted by Peter Brook, "For Artaud theatre is fire; for Brecht, theatre is clear vision; for Stanislavski, theatre is humanity.

Why must we choose among them" (qtd. in J. Martin 81)? *Seven Jewish Children* therefore designates a further understanding and conflict converged in the theoretical approaches of Artaud, Brecht and Boal. The convergence of the theater theorists lies in the bonding of theater and audience, to be more precisely, the active spect-actors. As Siân Adiseshiah has it,

> the role of the audience as both spectator and participant in the writing of a political narrative of the Israel-Palestinian conflict strengthens *Seven Jewish Children*'s processes of subjectivization. Invited to consider if, or what, to tell children about the conflict and to deliberate the issues in post-show discussions, audiences are offered the opportunity to accept or decline their emergence as speaking subjects"(117).

The spectator in transformation exemplifies Peter Brook's attempt to "fight against 'deadly theatre'—'a theatre which exists on politeness, where people do not respond directly to one another and where the audience also reacts politely'" (qtd. in J. Martin 76). In this regard, Brook experiments with dramaturgy and explores the theatrical spaces. Likewise, *Seven Jewish Children* has invited theatrical experiments from active spectators based on which the theater of politics keeps evolving.

2.2 Adaptations and Theatrical Responses

In what follows, I examine different versions of *Seven Jewish Children* as well as the plays written in response to the subject matters problematized by Churchill. Due to the limited access to some live performances, I select the video recordings available on the Internet to evaluate the theatrical participation of the Israel/Palestine issue. The first official version to be analyzed is the dramatic reading by Jennie Stoller. Filmed by the *Guardian*, the goal of this recording, according to the note in the beginning of

the video, is to reach larger audience members. The referenced historical events are drawn out by Stoller's facial and vocal expression. In each scene, before Stoller's performance starts, a slide of picture is also offered to indicate the emotions in accord with the historical context. For example, a black-and-white photo showing piles of dead bodies and people standing behind them refers to the Holocaust experience in the opening scene.

The picture disappears and Stoller's voice comes out in an alarmed tone, speaking mostly about "tell her" something in a way to cover the holocaust cruelty. In this scene, the actress seems to portray an adult warning the listener and leaving the child with some other people before departing the scene in haste. In the following scenes, this one-persona dramatic reading displays the increasing inner struggles of an adult as the situation becomes increasingly complicated and the conflict aggravated. I argue that the anti-Semitic suspension could be dispelled because this dramatic form does not allow for the alleged caricatures of the Jewish/Israeli adults to be portrayed as / come across as totally selfish and cruel figures. Even in the context of the post-war immigration and exploitation where a new, hopeful life is beginning for the survivors of the atrocities, Stoller's joyful countenance in reading the lines like "tell her we're going home" seems always mixed with a degree of qualm or even fright. The dramaturgy of speaking the "tell" lines immediately followed by "don't tell" ones, a question or a cautious "don't frighten her" creates an indecisive and self-reflective posture on part of the adult.

During the performance, Stoller does not change her voice greatly or tries to act like a group of people talking in spite of the contradictory and polyphonic ideas presented. As Tompkins observes, "only in Scene 2 does she obviously change her accent but in each scene she clearly performs a new character" (157). All of the

dialogic lines are rather like the monologue in the last section of the script. This format makes the actress a speaking figure through which the audience members can focus on the hysterical and uncertain expression referring to the pictures of the last four scenes: a group of Muslims moving in the desert, some tanks and an army, a kid holding a stone in his or her hand, and finally the ruins of buildings after getting bombed. In the last section which has caused most of the controversy, the actress's voice rises in a state of emotional outburst as though a self-righteous person feeling the need to accuse the other and to justify her decision no matter how ruthless it may be.

Despite the fact that lines like "tell her we're the chosen people" can easily be taken as furthering the imagery of the brutal Jew or Israeli and transporting anti-Semitic rhetoric, my observation is that Stoller's reading makes this part simply a scene in which a wronged, long-discriminated person finally gives up fighting against the stereotypes. Moreover, this indignation from the need to spell out the struggling thoughts, when reaching its climax in "tell her I'm happy it's not her", oozes a sense of vulnerability and tenderness along with the actress's staring and seemingly lachrymose eyes. With a short pause, Stoller utters the last words of the play: "don't tell her that" and "tell her we love her", and "don't frighten her." Recovering from the fury, finally, Stoller brings out the ending note of the play: "don't frighten her". In this performance, I find a medium for audiences to be empathize with the speaker while remain alert to the conclusion she makes: a pleading attitude aiming not to frighten the children. Among different performances of the play, I suggest this is the least disturbing one in hiding the cruel facts from the children for Stoller's expression of genuine concerns and fear all crystalized in a character's struggling in each scene.

The second version is performed by the ROOMS Productions in Chicago directed by Andrew Manley in a gallery set with a long table. The introduction in the video shows the technique this staging uses: to make the play "a looping performance installation—inviting audience members to sit among the actors and experience the play multiple times." The connection of the audience to the theater-making progress is made clear at first by gestures. Also, as Tompkins suggests, the looping of the performance indicates "the looping of script for wide and repeated dissemination" (166). Starting with a man holding an old-fashioned telephone and talking to an unknown interlocutor, the scene presents a man issuing instructions about how to properly treat the child—to tell about or hide something from her in an urgent situation. The second scene features a woman speaking to a man who keeps writing something on the paper on the table. Therefore, the woman plays the role of suggesting something to tell or not to tell the Jewish child while constantly being dismissed by the man. The man seems not fully attentive with his eyes mostly avoiding the woman's. Only in the moments like "don't tell her what they did" and "tell her there are people who love Jews" are uttered does the man raise his head to reply in an argumentative tone to the woman.

Compared with the single actor speaking on the telephone in a harried tone, the second part features a couple sitting together showing how adults deal with the aftermath of the Holocaust. The man in the first scene is a parent separated from his child while the second presents a family genealogy passed upon a young couple. The separation of lines, from on actor speaking to a couple talking, outlines "an opposing (or at least variant) reaction" (166). The third scene depicts a young woman working on a typewriter with pauses in expressing what she is thinking. A man sitting next to her keeps leaning toward her with curious and cautious attitude toward what she

says/types while no real intervention is done. The woman looks rather lighthearted or even joyous when expressing her thoughts especially in “tell her she’ll have new friends” and “tell her she can take her toys.”

The fourth scene comes along with a man and a woman sitting opposite each other and a microphone set on the table for voice recording. Throughout the performance, the man keeps holding the microphone, exchanging his arguments with the woman with his eyes closed at certain points. According to the lines they speak, the pair of roles, though sometimes present self-contradictory ideas, the man’s standpoint is rather hostile to the other, that is, the Arabs. The unnatural situation of dialogue is set in this part when the man and the woman are de facto recording the argument and negotiation between them. It ends with the man turning off the recording machine. The fifth scene as the shortest one with the only affirmative tone in the script, however, is presented in a hesitant and sorrowful atmosphere. The man speaking on the phone (a rather modern one compared to that in the first scene) shows the aftermath of the war despite the victory. In this respective, the textual reading of a militant and aggressive Israeli figure in the script is dismantled.

The sixth scene displays two women and a laptop; one of them appears to key in the content of their discussion for writing to “her”. As their opinions become even diverged, one would replace the other of the action of typing. Just before one of the women finishes her last word, the last scene enters the theatrical space as the projector in the gallery is turned on for two another adults to be present. On the projector screen, a woman speaks first with upbeat voice in “tell her she can’t watch the news,” “tell her she can watch cartoons” and “tell her she can stay up late and watch *Friends*.” The man behind her then interrupts with the information about conflict and defense, making the woman step back gradually and heading toward the controversial

monologue. After that, the ending notions of "don't tell her that," "tell her we love her" and "don't frighten her" are retrieved by the woman. Before the video recording stops, all the actors around the table speak their lines and repeat their movement in the previous scenes concurrently in which only a few sentences can be recognized. Presented as a scene of disruptive polyphony, most of the time only the "tell her" and "don't tell her" notions can be grasped clearly. In the meantime, audience members who are invited to witness the performance leave the table.

It is noteworthy that this performance makes all the actors and settings present in the same place—around a table where different scenes are demarcated by the camera lens shifting from one corner to another and zooming in and out. Also, throughout the performance, a glass of red liquid, presumably red wine, is set in front of each actor and from time to time moved or drunk by them, making the scene realistic as well as surrealistic. For the realistic performance the actors show how they have to argue and discuss about the important or imminent issues.

Nevertheless, the historical contexts in which they are involved are intended simultaneously on a stage where all the scenes are connected together by the glasses of wine. As a result, a surrealistic absurdity is formed to remind the audience of a theatrical event happening instead of real confrontations and negotiations conducted by Jewish/Israeli adults. Most importantly, through the Jewish/Israeli adults talking about and sharing ideas by virtue of different applications like typewriter, computer and projector, a scene of significations is created so that the content of the script could be disregarded. This adaptation emphasizes how messages are disseminating in different ways, focusing on information being fragmented, edited, and transformed in the course of dissemination.

The following are some other student performances that apply different approaches to the play's script. Stating with a light-off stage in the first scene, the Warwick Student Drama production makes the holocaust context a place of darkness. This version also abandons most of props and stage design in which actors are circled around a lamp to create the dramatic structure from Scene 2 to Scene 4. The lamp light is a means to assemble actors on the center of the stage, sometimes along with the setting of chair or bed from which the narrating process emerges. In doing so, the three scenes bring about the meaning of family gathering for discussion. The discussion or argument all ends and starts with the light turned off and on by one of the present actors in these scenes. In the rest of scenes all the props are divested, leaving the theatrical space empty for actors' positioning with blurring locations and time.

In Scene 5, the shortest one about military triumph, an actor speaks alone with his back to the audience (camera lens), making swaggering and proud gestures in accord with the lines like "tell her how big their armies are" and "tell her we're fighters." However, these movements are conducted in an unnatural way with hesitation and reluctance. Scene 6 is made of an argument among four adults; the one in downstage center is back to the camera. This scene contains more characterizations of the adults by imparting lines to them dependent on their viewpoints about the borderline conflict. The one with her back towards tends to hide the cruel fact in "don't tell her about the bulldozer" and "tell her we want peace" while the woman on the stage left is aggressively recounting about the exploits like "tell her it's our water, we have the right" and "tell her we're building new towns in the wilderness" as well as violence and hostility from the other side like "tell her, tell her they set off bombs in cafes" and "tell her they want to drive us into the sea." The man standing next to

her is rather ambiguous in showing standpoint; he finally has his voice risen in suggesting “tell her we’re going swimming” to halt the argument and put an end to the scene. The woman standing on the right hand side otherwise changes her attitude from “don’t tell her anything she doesn’t ask” and “don’t frighten her” to “tell her that” and “tell her we’re entitled” after seemingly provoked by the hawkish statements from the woman on the left.

Before the performance leads up to the final scene, it should be noted that the space is full of whispering voices—of overlapping information and mostly “tell her” and “don’t tell her” in the introduction before the first line is uttered and when a scene shifts to the next in the darkness. Also, the distances between actors are extended as the exchange of ideas within family members who gather around the lamp in the previous scenes is shifted to public arguments in unrecognized locations. In the finale, three actors forms a triangle blocking in which one remains back to the camera. The three personae’s postures diverge in uncovering or concealing the information. The monologue by the woman on the stage right displays a total emotional arousal in exposing all the feelings and perceptions while the other two remain the attitude of refusal to the end. The scene creates a struggle of making known of the precarious reality while disclosing certain unwanted characteristics of the adults. The eruption of cruelty in the monologue gives no resolution to the telling or not telling dilemma for the last notion of the play is “don’t frighten her.”

Nevertheless, the filming continues when the stage turns dark and the whispering voices about “tell/don’t tell” looms again. The endless cacophony in the background signifies the public opinions that run after the formation of discourses. This adaptation could therefore designate how the privatization of information forms in tandem with the public surveillance of narrating progress. I suggest to find a binary structure in this

dramaturgy that reveals how Jewish/Israeli adults gradually possess performative visibility. However, they are always monitored or even suppressed within a community or in the public eye. It ultimately points out the fear and precariousness shared cross-culturally when a rational and meaningful dialogue is hard to achieve, hence the play created and the performance to be continued.

Another student adaptation has been produced at Lebanese American University. Directed by Fuad Halwani, this adaptation lasts about twenty minutes, applying a ritualistic and mystical approach to the play which makes the subject-matter of cruelty and violence explicit. The setting is distinct for the blocking of the musicians in the center with several shattered ladders on the ground while the speaker performs behind a white curtain on the upstage center. The audience can only see the shadow of the speaker moving behind the curtain till Scene 3. Disturbingly, another performer crawls around the stage with strokes and painful gestures, intermittently making noises with the horizontally-laid ladders when the lines are spoken. Also, the sound of breathing or sometime angry panting permeates the entire performance. The musicians play traditional instruments as well as modern string, making the music sometimes louder than the speaker's utterance.

Moreover, the music sounds sometimes upbeat compared with the speaker's urgent voice. The speaker comes out from the curtain near the end of Scene 3, walking toward the stage center to take the place of the musicians. Spotlighted, the speaker soon starts to dance after saying "tell her about Jerusalem." The interaction between the speaker and the performer begins and develops into confrontation and the battlefield from Scene 4 to Scene 5. The music also becomes even strident together with the noises coming from the ladder-juggling, reaching its climax in Scene 6 with strong beats of solo percussion.

In the meantime, the ladders are used as a means to express interruption, struggle, anger, and violence in response to the context the speaker refers to. In the final scene, the speaker climbs up and down the ladders when uttering her words. In the meanwhile, she faces the threat from the silent performer who pulls down the ladders one by one, punching the ground with interrupting sound. After all the ladders are laid down, the performer approaches the speaker with a ladder, raising it in an attempt to hit the speaker; yet, the movement ceases as the line "all I feel is happy it's not her" comes out. In the end, the speaker takes the ladder from the silent performer, leaving him to wander in the upstage area and closing the scene with the ladder standing and herself crouching on the downstage center.

This is a theater of signification that should be approached through the movements, gestures, setting, and sound delivery in the theatrical space. I suggest to understand this performance as an indignation toward the state of Israel. This performance focuses on the indigenous locality invaded by the speaker, who represents the post-war immigrant, i.e., the European Jews. The performer who shares no words during the performance represents a figure of agony and hopelessness. The setting therefore foregrounds the comparison between the newcomer and the oppressed indigenous people. With the dramaturgy of music, sound and movements submerging the speaker's utterance, the sequential development of the play heads for exposing the suffering of the other side, that is, the Palestinians. In this respective, most of the techniques the director uses bring disturbance to the speaker, to cut down her speech and to reveal the real suffering subject in the conflict. This performance is indeed a severe accusation of Israel which could contain anti-Israel thoughts when the director's response to the commentators on YouTube is also taken into

consideration.[30]

Yet, as far as the performance is concerned, I argue that it still does not amount to the anti-Semitic sentiments or a hostility to generalize all Jewish or Israeli people. It only foregrounds the suffering of the other side in the transformation of time and in the situation of displacement and decadence without making the speaker who represents Jewish/Israeli people a sole cause of all suffering, not to mention depicting the speaker as a Nazi-like murderer. In this regard, the juxtaposition of suffering and pain can be transformed to a subjectivization of local consciousness in which a resolution is cast about. As in the final scene, the cease of a violent act in the last moment sheds lights on the possibility of this starting point. In the meantime, in view of the shifting lens from Israeli to Palestinians, the gap between script and performance created in this staging exemplifies how different perspectives can be exposed simultaneously in a single theater performance.

In Amelia Howe Kritzer's analysis of works inspired by Churchill, there are two plays titled *Seven Palestinian Children* produced to "give Palestinian voices" and to balance *Seven Jewish Children*'s viewpoint (616-617). Writing from the perspective of the Palestinians, more issues about women as the victimized group are raised in the two plays. Furthermore, Deb Margolin's *Seven Palestinian Children* posited as "play for the other (included a reading of *The Eighth Child* by Robbie Gringras) is written in part due to her "distress over Churchill's generalizations about the Jewish community" (Kritzer 618). The two plays therefore complement the theatrical

[30] Replying to some comments from YouTube users like "How much longer do you Arabs think you can get away with lying to the world about who Israel belongs to I suggest all Arab countries and Iran and all of the so called Palestinians leave Israel alone, all 'Palestinian' children and adults leave Israel go to Jordan or go to America but go soon before we spill your blood all of your blood"(jason rich), the director clearly reveals his standpoint in "I won't say anything more than that you'll soon witness the time when justice is served and when Israeli Nazism is put to an end. Israel will not witness its 70th birthday" and "'Tell her I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? Tell her all I feel is happy it's not her' just shows how correct this script was in portraying your peaceful people. All you love is bloodshed!"(fuadhalwani).

intervention of Gaza situation with geo-political materials and facilitate more understanding about the Israeli/Palestinian question.

However, I suggest that this kind of approach to *Seven Jewish Children* somewhat neglects the fact that onstage dramaturgy already gives room to opposite voices and can always be directed to a different scenery of the other side as in the production of Fuad Halwani. On the other hand, as for works produced based on the belief that Churchill's play aims simply to demonize the Israeli/Jewish community, they reproduce the discursive competition as in the debates among the critics possessing different vantage positions. Richard Stirling's *Seven Other Children* and Israel Horovitz's *What Strong Fences Make* are produced in this sense. Writing *What Strong Fences Make*, Horovitz holds that "another voice needed to be heard" in the wake of Churchill's "offensive, distorted and manipulative" presentation. Based on the self-awareness of a Jewish American involved in Israeli dilemma, Horovitz proffers his critical stance:

> [I'm] well aware that I am an American, living thousands of miles away from the profound moral dilemma that Israelis must face each and every day of their lives. But, I am very much a Jew, and, as a writer who spends nearly as much time in Paris and London as I do in NYC, I am angered by the rise in anti-Semitism. It is possible to criticize Israel without being anti-Semitic, as it is possible to criticize Palestine without being anti-Arab. Those who criticize Jews in the name of criticizing Israel, as Ms. Churchill seems to have done in her play, step over an unacceptable boundary and must be taken to task.

Horovitz has performed an exemplar of the Jewish/Israeli critics rendering their own identity to challenge what they understand as anti-Semitism.

Similarly, Stirling replaces the "tell her/don't tell her" in Churchill's writing with "ask him" to outline the situation of Palestinian adults "fanning the flames of anti-Semitism among their children" (Felton-Dansky 160). However, John Nathan points out it is dangerous to hold "a mirror up to a work whose content you find offensive" because it may end up "replicating distortions." Nathan's concluding note to Stirling's attempt is emblematic of the observation in my previous chapter: "[I]f one of my complaints about Churchill's play was that the playwright, a non-Jew, implicated all Jews in her criticism of Israel, then the same point must surely apply to Stirling, a non-Palestinian whose play, it would appear, represents the attitudes of all Palestinians, even though Palestinians are conspicuously absent from his title."

I propose that these drama pieces finally become the discursive dilemma created by critics and commentators of *Seven Jewish Children*; the only difference is that these works take the form of playwriting. Antagonizing or supplementing Churchill's spectacle, these plays create theatrical value in the progress of counteracting each other's standpoint rather than the performance of their plays. If each play can only allow one comprehensive and overarching interpretation, I suggest these works be staged together, one by one after the performance of *Seven Jewish Children*. This dramaturgy could reach cultural performative level and make the political theater of participation and intervention more conspicuous if a debate is always predicated in narratives about Israel and Palestine.

The last ones are adaptations produced in Taiwan; one is performed in Mandarin Chinese and the other English. The performance of Taipei Seagull Theatre[31] is based on the Chinese translation of the script published as a poem in Taiwanese poetry

[31] 台北海鷗劇場 This performance is produced in the experimental theater of Taipei National University of the Arts as the first staging of *Seven Jewish Children* in Taiwan.

magazine.[32] This transformation corresponds to the critical praises of Churchill's "poetic and allusive" writing and "condensed poetic form" (Haydon; Billington). Nevertheless, the dramaturgy of the mandarin production is at odds with what Churchill's original notion of direction "no children appear in the play." Moreover, the setting of the scenes is fairly different from the Anglophone productions previously presented. During the mandarin performance that lasts more than thirty minutes, the children who are performed by the same actress are always present; props and stage designs are used to articulate the historical contexts and the adults remarkably characterized with manifest emotions and intense interactions—even with the supposedly invisible children.

The children acted out on stage are constantly interrupted and affected by the adults' arguments and actions, responding to the atrocities of the referenced events and cacophony of the adults with countenance terrified, perplexed or alienated from the events happening. The characterization of the roles also includes the portrayal of other side; for example, when the confrontation with the Arabs/Palestinians are alluded to from scene 4 to scene 6, the performers in Arabian costumes directly occupy the stage, acting in accord with the situation of deprivation and displacement. They even interact with the children on which a harmonious relationship between them is built. In short, this is a production of detailed textual realization with almost all the materials in the play script present on the stage.

However, this adaptation loses the dream-like vision of cruelty; in fact, the outright textual enactment of the narrative is easily elided into sentimentalism. In the presence of the children, the subtle relationship between the actors and the spectators

[32] Off the Roll, Poetry+ 13 《衛生紙詩刊+ 13》Chinese translation of S*even Jewish Children* by Hung Hung.

disappears and therefore the audience remains a passive role in the theater. Even though the sound effects and music to address plights, violence, and struggles are abundantly applied, this production makes scenes no longer an urgent appeal for actions. The threats embodied in direct actions from the actors and accurate setting of scenes could arouse audience's consciousness of the cruel reality while it turns out that no room is left for the reflection on structural and linguistic violence.

In contrast, the English adaptation by Taiwanese junior high school students seems to capture the theatrical meaning of textual realization despite the same dramaturgy it uses to make the children present. Produced for a drama competition where the theatrical space is limited, this student makes a simpler version of the mandarin production previously introduced, using a few props and centering the plot developments mostly on a portable wooden frame on the stage. With this wooden flat decorated with white curtain, the performers transform the family memory of the holocaust to an accident & emergency department, to a sad scene of glorious death, and to a window view in a room to glimpse the reality outside. In the course of the transformation, the performers do not make the props positioning and setting changing behind the scene; these movements become a part of the performance. By virtue of this disturbance, this version could somehow break the frame of siding with either Israelis or Palestinians whose suffering are measured according to the degree of pain acted out during performance.

Therefore, compared to the Taipei Seagull production that focuses much on the sentiments of confronting violence throughout the performance, the student production delves more into the intellectual level in alienating the audience from their dramatic action regarding Israeli history. Moreover, the adaptation's most distinct difference from the theater professionals is the performers' offstage identity as junior

high school students. They are probably about the age not much more than that of the "seven Jewish children" who are allowed to watch American TV series *Friends* by adults and precautious about arguments among adults behind their back whose absence originally designates the violence hidden in the war and the narrating conflict. In this way, the students bring a powerful enactment of this violence through their sometimes awkward and genuine portrayal of the Jewish/Israeli adults, creating affecting and moving moments that admonishes the real adults.

Interestingly, the Taiwanese productions seem to prefer the children present onstage and to actualize the scenery of the historical elements. This dramaturgy somehow gives prominence to an imagination of communities far away from Taiwan to facilitate audiences' understanding of the events and prompt emotional responses. However, the spatial dynamic that makes the audience "here" at this moment to take the place of the children witnessing the violence happening is lost. The detailed setting of events also designates crisis out "there" and mitigates the disturbance caused to the audience and therefore may not amount to the degree of political and activist engagement.

The play inspires different directional visions from theater practitioners, whether they hold the same intention as Churchill's, to make these adaptations or revisions their own ideological systems. That is, "Churchill ups the interpretive ante by leaving everything, beyond the lines themselves, to her interpreters" (Kushner and Solomon). In addition to the productions abovementioned, in order to discharge the play of anti-Semitic connotations, Kushner and Solomon provide that the most debated monologue could carry different meanings if it is "spoken by a grandmother with a Yiddish accent or by a young man in an Israeli army uniform. Or by, say Korean-American man or a Chicana." Also, vocal expressions varied according to intonation,

tone and accentuation can make a total opposite picture of the arguments among adults or the self-censor thinking progress:

> If an actor stresses "tell" in the line "Don't tell her that,' it might suggest, That's true, but don't let her know. But if "that" is emphasized, it might mean, [H]ow can you even think such an outrageous thing? And much will depend on how the actor strikes the first word, "Don't"—collegially or adversarially." (Kushner and Solomon)

As for the choices of *mise en scène*, the Rooms Production partly exemplifies what Kushner and Solomon suggest: "since the play is so short and could be watched three or four times in a row, with the lines spoken each time by different actors."

Above all, adaptations with different dramaturgies give the original text different meaning. The absence of the children signals the empathetic imagination from the audience and "[w]e have to conjure them" (Kushner and Solomon). Ideally, as the audience enters the theater, the theatrical imagination conjured up provokes ideas that lead to new ways of thinking in complexity. In this regard, I argue that Churchill's writing allows various approaches and opens up artistic possibilities to explore political subject-matters.

2.3 From Theatrical Spectacle to Media Spectacle

In the framework of spectacle that underlies the concepts of "public performance and public theatrical event," a showing and a looking," and "a means to constitute political subjects" (Inomata and Coben 5), I have wrapped up thematic discussions of *Seven Jewish Children*'s controversy and its theatrical experiments. I attempt to draw the attention to another core issue problematized in the course of the play's production and its circulation around the globe—the media dissemination of events, especially

war and conflict. Given the imperative role of media dissemination in the controversy surrounding the play, another important meaning of spectacle should be introduced. The term spectacle in the light of Debord is "the bad dream of modern society in chains, expressing nothing more than its wish for sleep. The spectacle is the guardian of that sleep" (qtd. in Escoda 54). This definition is grounded on the observation of a "diffuse spectacle" intertwined with "commodity abundance associated with the undisturbed development of modern capitalism"(qtd. in Colleran 40). Moreover, war images circulated via multi-media devices herald the age of "media spectacle" and "megaspectacles" as termed by Kellner for the analysis of "media events that distract the public from substantive understandings of public issues" (Colleran 16).

Since the 1991 Gulf War, media coverage has created a "total television" phenomenon in which events are recorded and disseminated repeatedly on the screen (Colleran 34). Due to advanced information technologies, "the semiotic field is even more complex and fluid since the procession of media events, megaspectacles, and total television overlap" (Colleran 35). In the amplified circuit of information for its accessibility enabled by new technologies, Henry Jenkins provides that information is always "annotated, forwarded, archived, or otherwise used" (qtd. in Colleran 35). Also, the line between real and the virtual is blurred as "information and technologies of simulation further complicate interpretation" (Colleran 35). As a result, the time and critical distance between an event and its media coverage is lost. It is an epoch of images that have already been "coded and part of a signifying chain" in the immediate reproduction of the events. In a world of "military-industrial-media-entertainment-network" as coined by James Der Derian, spectators are overwhelmed by "infinite choices" and mired in "a desert of judgment" when they "encounter the flux, speed, and recombinant possibilities of these boundary-blurring networks"(36). Furthermore,

buttressed by the development of information technology and Internet-based economy, “spectacle culture is moving into new domains of cyberspace that will help to generate future multimedia spectacle and networked infotainment societies”(Kellner 31).

Notably, media spectacle may “stupef[y] social subjects and distract[] them from the most urgent task of real life” as Debord’s critique of capitalist society predicts (Kellner 33). However, Kellner otherwise suggests to find “the contradictions and contestations of media spectacle within specific societies and to counter the notion that political spectacles are all-powerful and overwhelming” (33). Observing US-based media events, Kellner points out that research in British cultural studies has suggested the resisting power against excessive media exposure by affirming “the existence of an active audience that is not totally manipulated by the media”(33). Similarly, in her approaches to the plays dealing with wars and media images of wars, Colleran argues that “theatre can, against media hegemony, offer itself as a critical alternative, addressing issues and enacting perspectives that are otherwise unavailable”(10). As Peter Sellars comments, theater designates an “alternative information system that is able partially to humanize the denatured results of our vaunted and costly objectivity” (qtd. in Colleran 7) so that political and ethical critiques can still be enacted despite the media’s dominance in knowledge spreading. In dramatic works taking the form of documentary or verbatim theatre, playwrights reject “the government’s rhetoric and the media’s depthless coverage,” offering counter-responses in an attempt of “’doing history’ and creating and performing their own first-hand observations or enacting the testimonies based on interviews they had conducted”(Colleran 136-137).

In Colleran's observation, Churchill does not apply the technique of documentary theater through direct reference to events and testimonies. Rather, by creating "a combination of faux realism, spectacle, and enigma" (120), Churchill's dramaturgy targets the codified images of wars and calls into question public theatricality guaranteed media visibility. For example, Churchill challenges "the ambiguities of mediatized spectatorship" and "the complexities of political control" in plays like *Far Away* and *A Number* (127). I suggest to understand *Seven Jewish Children* in the same trajectory as that in a theater of war and terror where counter-responses to the mediated information are drawn out.

From BBC coverage of Gaza War to the after-show debates on various websites, media spectacle permeates everywhere right at the moment when a discourse is shaped in tandem with its dissemination. *Seven Jewish Children*'s controversy poignantly illustrates the public theatricality of political argument, mediatization, and literary intervention in theater, in cyberspace as well as in real life. Yet this progress of theatricalizing events would not be so recognizable if it were not for the theatrical spectacle constructed by Churchill's writing from which cacophonous narratives emanate. In this regard, theater's ability to "discern different discursive formations at work and identify their rhetorical stance and implicit arguments" (Colleran 7) is highlighted. To this end, the play *Seven Jewish Children* demands that audiences with dual identities as both actors and spectators "understand the veiled power dynamics underlying specific kinds of brutality" and "consider connections between representational violence and political violence" (Colleran 9).

I argue that the spectacle of *Seven Jewish Children* can counteract the media spectacle. The play and its after-show drama not only serve as a parallel to the complexity of the Gaza question. On top of that, it reveals the particular value of

theater in which alternative perspectives are brought to light for further contemplation on the report of war and conflict. The media spectacle dominates the reportage of political events; moreover, guaranteed critical visibility in media events to an extent affects people's comprehension of the complex Israel/Palestine issue. That is, media dissemination empowers those who remain visible "through media, through performative politics and through censorship" (Colleran 214). Theater spectacle otherwise disturbs us, forcing us to witness the violence caused to the precarious, invisible life.

Epilogue

Before I conclude my thesis, I would like to introduce Israeli-American director Udi Aloni and his engagement with the Israel-Palestine conflict. To explore the Israel/Palestine question in his *What Does A Jew Want*, Aloni opens up dialogues with Judith Butler, Slavoj Žižek, and Alain Badiou, three salient figures tackling Israeli and Middle Eastern politics among other intellectuals. In his book, Aloni makes several appeals to practitioners and activists in the fields of art and the humanities to address his concerns about the essential problems latent in artistic productions and their political gestures. For example, writing in the form of a letter to the celebrities involved, he discusses the case of the 2009 Toronto film festival. Collaborated with Tel Aviv, the festival promoted the city as "a young, dynamic city that, like Toronto, celebrates its diversity."

During the festival, Aloni worked with prominent artists, academics, and writers to engage in a boycott in order to protest against the festival's decision to spotlight on the Israeli city. Not surprisingly, the protest was followed by the counterattack from many famous Jewish people, claiming that "the films are in no way a propaganda arm for any government policy. Blacklisting them only stifles the exchange of cultural knowledge that artists…." In the observation of the event, Aloni concludes:

> I think we should be asking ourselves not why Israeli directors create films about Lebanon (it makes sense that people will deal with their own scabs) and not even why Israel's government supports these films and uses them for its own aims. The real question is why the image of an Israeli soldier, agonizing and crying, is so appealing to festival curators and audiences of the Western world? (136)

In addition to the critique of the conflicting realities, Aloni aims to provide different narrative dimensions of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in his film productions. As Badiou comments, "you see to what degree Udi Aloni's film is ramified as each of the element of its construction is grafted onto others in such a way as to make narrative fiction also become artistic allegory, psychoanalytic interrogation, historical meditation, and spiritual proposition"(192). Offering abundant philosophical insights based on his reading of Edward Said and Walter Benjamin, Aloni's provocative accounts designates concepts of binationalism, expecting the next generation to achieve a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this respect, emphasizing the importance of Aloni's work, Žižek also seeks the "site of possible event," to draw on Badiou's theorization, which indicates emancipatory potentials for miracles that seem impossible to happen at the present time (176-178). Overall, Aloni's activism is approved of by Žižek, Badiou, and Butler, who all are actively involved in the current political and social situations occurring in Israel and the Middle East.

In view of the notions mentioned above that confirm the artistic efforts in trying to make a difference in a quite arduous political situation, I interpret Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children* in the scope of theater's emancipatory breakthrough. As stressed by Badiou in correlating theater with politics, "what does theatre talk about if not the state of the State, the state of society, the state of revolution, the state of consciousness relative to the State, to society, to the revolution, to politics" (36)? Starting with the response to the Gaza War, the long-standing Israel/Palestine question, and the BBC news coverage, Churchill's activism through the dramatic work facilitates the balance/counterbalance of discourses in view of the play's after-show controversy. Responding to Churchill's political involvement, the pro-Israel critics also pursue a balancing narrative to her critical posture. Nowadays, a dramatic piece, a review, and

a debate can be immediately and incessantly reviewed in different ways and in various kinds of artistic productions. The production of the play and its after-show dramas therefore serve as counteracting effects to each other, providing complementary plots for the audience to take sides with certain ideologies and identifications.

The subjects discussed in this thesis suggest that the controversy caused by the play is symptomatic for the difficulties in achieving an acceptable version of telling facts about Israel and Israeli-Palestinian situation. Yet, constructing a spectacle of the cacophonous narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from which various discourses emanate, *Seven Jewish Children* reveals the particular value of theater in which alternative perspectives on the issue are invited for further contemplation. Opening up and articulating various discourses in the course of debates and theater-making, the play also signals positive outcomes of the political controversy. This effect corresponds to the theory by Badiou that theater is "the figurative reknotting of politics" (13).

On the whole, I argue that *Seven Jewish Children* creates a discursive and theatrical spectacle in which a radical departure of seeing, thinking, and telling is called upon and necessitated. This artistic effort also corresponds to Alice Walker's conviction to overcome speechlessness when confronting difficult human crises: "…though the horror of what we are witnessing in places like Rwanda and Congo and Burma and Palestine/Israel threatens our very ability to speak, we will speak" (72). We will speak. Hopefully, we will speak to reach out to the invisible and the precarious as Churchill makes the seven Jewish children present in every audience's mind.

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