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“Historical Argument” or “Cowboys and Indians”? Arnold Wesker’s TV Screenplay of Arthur Koestler’s *Thieves in the Night*

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Controversial at the time of its publication in 1946 and since then frequently dismissed as propagandistic, if remembered at all, Arthur Koestler’s novel *Thieves in the Night*. Chronicle of an Experiment was adapted four decades later for a TV mini-series first aired in Germany in 1989.¹ This article traces the vagaries of the production history of this project which included, in 1983, the commission of the English-language screenplay from Arnold Wesker. Yet the British Jewish dramatist was eventually ousted from the production because his script did not satisfy the expectations of the director and the producers. Discussing Wesker’s efforts in the light of the textual genesis of his unpublished draft screenplay and between the parameters of historical responsibility and commercial necessity, it is argued that it was ultimately the playwright’s refusal to comply with the facile “cowboy and Indians” formula proposed to him which resulted in his dismissal. One of Wesker’s main concerns was to rehabilitate the Palestinian characters in Koestler’s tale of the early phase of the Middle East conflict in Mandate Palestine. Yet following the widely criticised Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and confronted with the apologetic motivation of the adaptation project, his deviation from the suggested formula was received with scepticism. This article accordingly seeks to document the way in which the project was subject to divergent perceptions of the position of Israel and its history and to opposing strategies of instrumentalising *Thieves in the Night* and its TV adaptation for an understanding of the present. It is suggested that the eventual outcome of this

process – written and directed by Wolfgang Storch – was in effect the reaffirmation of the commercially more promising “cowboy and Indians” narrative.

Arthur Koestler’s *Thieves in the Night* (1946)

Arthur Koestler’s *Thieves in the Night* was published simultaneously in London and New York in October 1946.² The novel was designed to intervene in the intense internal Jewish debate on the use of violence in counter terror and the anticolonial struggle against the mandatory power in Palestine. No less importantly, it was meant to influence public opinion in Britain and America during the crucial run-up to what was to be UN Resolution 181 which decided the fate of the country in November 1947 after decades of increasing turmoil and bloodshed: the British Mandate was to be ended and its territory to be partitioned to accommodate both a Jewish and an Arab state.

Set in Palestine between October 1937 and May 1939, much of the novel was written on location when Koestler visited the country from January to August 1945, and to some extent it reflects the author’s own experiences.³ More specifically, *Thieves in the Night* is informed by the urgency of ending the escalating violence between Jews, Arabs, and the British mandatory power that was tearing apart Palestine and that continued to thwart a solution to the ongoing displacement of many Holocaust survivors. Rigid restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine were still in place and brutally enforced even after the Second World War. They had been imposed in accordance with the so-called MacDonald White Paper with whose publication in May 1939 the novel ends. The conclusion of *Thieves in the Night* thus responds to the political caesura marked by the White Paper which was reflected in the end of the Arab Revolt and the resurgence of the extremist Jewish underground with whose emergence, in 1937, the novel begins.

1937, like 1939, was of particular significance to the history of the Mandate period. The novel telescopes some of its crucial developments into the latter part of the year, in particular the formation of the Irgun. After a sequence of Arab riots since 1920, new violence erupted in spring and summer of 1936 which was accompanied by an Arab general strike and led to what is known as the Arab Revolt. As early as 1931 the so-called Haganah Bet (also called Irgun Yemini or Irgun Bet) split off the paramilitary Jewish self-defense organisation of the Haganah in response to the riots of 1929 with the aim of seeking active retaliation.⁴ In spring 1937 negotiations between both groups led to the return of most of the extremists into the Haganah. The remainder of the Haganah Bet subsequently called itself Irgun Zvai Leumi, in short also IZL or Etzel, and intensified its armed struggle, propagating counter terror and – after the 1939 White Paper – the military ‘liberation’ of Palestine.⁵ Summer 1937 moreover saw the publication of an earlier White Paper. Based on the findings of the Peel Commission it envisaged the partition of Palestine. Rejected by both Arabs and Jews, the spectre of partition led on the Zionist side to an increase in fortified stockade and tower settlements whose locations were now no longer determined primarily by economic or demographic criteria but by their geo-strategic potential so as to secure the Jewish claim to the land.⁶

Koestler, who reported in autumn 1937 as a special correspondent for the *News Chronicle* from Palestine on the conflict,⁷ supported the partition plan for pragmatic reasons.⁸ He felt that factually the Jewish and Arab territories were already divided; to him, partition therefore meant at least a temporary compromise and the consolidation of what had been achieved so far.⁹ The foundation of Ezra’s Tower at the beginning of the novel, albeit fictional, and the radicalisation of the novel’s protagonist need to be understood against this background.

Structurally, *Thieves in the Night* follows two trajectories, one cyclical, the other linear. The novel commences with the nocturnal foundation of the stockade and tower settlement Ezra's Tower under the auspices of an older kibbutz and against violent Arab resistance. Completing the cycle, at its end another settlement is established from Ezra's Tower. Joseph participates in the establishment of both, and the novel's linear trajectory charts his personal development in the intervening period. Initially, the British half-Jew's intellectual and distanced nature as well as his Jewish self-hatred prevent his true commitment. In fact, in response to the disturbing political situation during the Arab Revolt he becomes increasingly alienated from the chaverim (comrades) and the kibbutz which he leaves for a while as he begins to sympathise with Jewish terrorism: though he remains critical of armed resistance, he concedes its political necessity. At the end of the novel, now firmly convinced of the social, political, and regenerative significance of the kibbutz, Joseph returns to the commune, but as a secret recruit of the Jewish underground movement.

Thieves in the Night combines passages related by a heterodiegetic narrator, extracts from 'historical' documents, and supposedly objective concentrated accounts of historical circumstances with entries in Joseph's diary through which he acts as a secondary, intradiegetic narrator. His diary entries serve to achieve a time-lapse effect, inasmuch as they emerge as connecting devices between the narrative's nodal points related in more detail by the heterodiegetic narrator; at the same time, past events are retrospectively commented upon by Joseph.

The initial nodal point is the description of the nocturnal occupation of the hill on which Ezra's Tower is to be built and its successful defense against the expected Arab attack. It is followed by the first of the diary sections which conveys Joseph's insider perspective on this period and on life in the commune a year after its foundation. The next diary sequence follows on a discussion of the ethical and moral dilemmas resulting from the situation of the

Jews in Palestine which imbue his subjective reflections with a certain immediacy. The final diary passage, eventually, is preceded with the brutal rape and murder of Dina by a gang of Arabs led by Issa, the son of the Mukhtar of the neighbouring village. Torn between his attraction to the seductive Ellen and his love for Dina, traumatised after her persecution in Nazi Germany and unable to bear physical contact,¹⁰ the latter's fate proves crucial to Joseph's radicalisation. Once again, his subjective reflections are a means to investing the reader with a sense of emotional involvement, to conveying the desire for revenge, and to positing the political necessity for terrorist retribution in conjunction with serious moral scruples.

Though attempts have been made in recent years to reassess *Thieves in the Night*,¹¹ the novel's literary quality has frequently been obscured from the very beginning because of its provocative propagandistic bias.¹² It is therefore intriguing that it was not least this very bias, if in diluted form and re-directed towards the apologetic legitimisation of Israel, which appears to have rekindled an interest in the novel in the early 1980s and to have inspired the project of its TV adaptation whose volatile history is discussed below.

Arnold Wesker and the Adaptation Project

From July 1983 to January 1985 the British Jewish playwright Arnold Wesker worked on the screenplay for the TV adaptation of Koestler's *Thieves in the Night*. Altogether four versions of this text are extant at the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) at the University of Texas in Austin: the initial holograph (MS) and three typescript drafts including substantial handwritten corrections (1TS to 3TS).¹³ The idea for the project originated in an initiative of the Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) in Hamburg. Dieter Meichsner, writer and screenwriter and at this time the station's Head of TV Drama, had commissioned the screenplay and attempted to set up an international co-production. Initially, the Hamburg production firm KG Allmedia

and the Tel Aviv based Israfilm were involved in the production. Subsequently, Meichsner turned for the further funding of the project among others also to the BBC, London Films International, and Channel Four. However, once it became clear that the conceptions of Wesker and the French Jewish director François Villiers (born Salomons) were increasingly divergent, Meichsner proposed the NDR as sole production firm.¹⁴ Yet this project also failed and Wesker's screenplay as well as the rivalling re-workings of his efforts by Villiers and the Israeli writer Eran Baniel remained unproduced. Eventually, Wesker published an excerpt from the second part of the adaptation in the Jewish Chronicle in August 1986. About a year later, Meichsner informed the writer through his agent, Nathan Joseph, that the series was finally about to be produced.¹⁵ By this time, however, Wesker was no longer involved in the project, nor was Villiers. Now it was the German director Wolfgang Storch who was supposed to take responsibility for the series and it was Storch, too, who had completely re-written the script. Having worked in America and Australia for several years before returning to Germany in 1973, the director appears to have been comfortable enough with the linguistic challenge.¹⁶ Storch's version was broadcast in three parts on 11, 15, and 18 October 1989 on the German national channel ARD (Das Erste). Joseph was played by Richard E. Grant, Ellen by Marie Bunel, Dina by Denise Vivieux, and the American journalist Mathews by Jeff Harding.

An early communication from Meichsner to Wesker may help to explain why it should have been the German broadcasting station NDR to promote the English-language TV adaptation of Koestler's novel. As early as October 1983, the producer had sent the playwright a diffident and cautiously worded missive in which he explained his own interest in the film adaptation.¹⁷ Enclosed with the letter was the photocopy of a review by Yochanan Eldad from the Jerusalem Post Magazine entitled "Eichmann in Bonn. German television viewers recently were witnesses to a singular media event – the 'performance' of excerpts

from the interrogation of Adolf Eichmann”,¹⁸ which Meichsner felt might help Wesker to understand his motivation.¹⁹

The theatre project described by Eldad, written by the author and journalist Jochen von Lang and produced by the municipal theatre of the former West-German capital, Bonn, was broadcast nationally by the NDR on 29 May 1983. *Das Protokoll. Die Vernehmung des Adolf Eichmann (The Protocol. The Interrogation of Adolf Eichmann)*²⁰ drew in the tradition of documentary theatre on the original film footage of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, which was used more recently, if more controversially, also for a film montage by Rony Brauman and Eyal Sivan in their *Un spécialiste* (1999).²¹ To the Bonn production, directed by Dieter Wedel, an illustrious audience had been invited, including “politicians, church leaders, staff members of the Israel Embassy”, and Avner Less, the Israeli police chief inspector who originally interrogated the real Eichmann.²² Actors, placed among the audience, ‘disrupted’ the performance with critical interventions drawing attention to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the previous year, 1982:²³

A young woman gets up and yells: “Let’s stop talking about Eichmann. Let’s talk about El Salvador, about the Nazis who are again sitting in our government, about what the Israelis did in Beirut.” Others, also actors, interfere.

On the stage, Eichmann drops his role for a moment and participates in the discussion: “Don’t you understand what we are doing here? Don’t you know the difference? Don’t you know that 10 per cent of the Israeli population demonstrated in the streets of Tel Aviv? Where were the German demonstrators against Hitler? Whoever dares to compare these things and to talk about genocide is either evil or stupid.”²⁴

Eldad then explains the intention with reference to an interview with Meichsner:

The performance was broadcast by Norddeutsche Rundfunk. I asked Dieter Meichsner, the head of its teleplay department, what he hoped to achieve with this production. Initially, he explained, his intention had been purely historical: to supply knowledge and information about what had happened. But the events of last year, the war in Lebanon, had changed this. The tendentious press-reports on the war, and especially the malicious comparison to the Endlösung, the Final Solution, with the policy of the Begin government towards the Palestinians, had made him realise that this Eichmann programme should relate to topical political events, emphasise the unique character of the Holocaust and, above all, protest against the thoughtless and irresponsible use of the term “genocide.”

The German media had been trying to use the Lebanon war as a pretext for laying down the rucksack of guilt they carry. “It would, of course, be pleasant if we could live without this rucksack, but for generations to come we cannot and may not.” Hence the decision to place actors in the audience to stress these points with their interruptions.²⁵

At least with regard to Meichsner, the projected adaptation of Koestler’s novel may then be understood as an apologetic venture. At a time when Israel had become the focus of global and, more specifically, also of German criticism, the adaptation project was aimed at putting into perspective the controversial political and military actions of the Jewish State by insisting on the historical legitimation of its existence and the necessity of its self-assertion.²⁶ It is certainly significant that the reference to current affairs and the simultaneous interpretation of the historical period portrayed in *Thieves in the Night* was motivated

primarily by the impulse to get to grips with the German past against the background of recent political developments in the Middle East.²⁷

While Meichsner was keen to work with Wesker, the British Jewish dramatist had not been his first choice. With Rolf Hädrich, the producer had initially contracted a well-known German scriptwriter and director for his project whose cultural and historical positioning was possibly close enough to his own to suggest that they concurred in their motivation as well.²⁸ Hädrich finished the first version of the script in June 1982 – fighting in Lebanon still continued, after the IDF had invaded the country on the sixth and had subsequently advanced to Beirut.²⁹

Hädrich's early draft is quite heavy on dialogue and adheres altogether rather closely to Koestler's text – too closely, perhaps, for a screenplay.³⁰ When the German scriptwriter and director fell seriously ill and had to relinquish his work,³¹ the NDR succeeded in attracting Arnold Wesker to the task of revising, or rather completely re-writing, the English script.³²

Arnold Wesker's Conceptualisation of the Screenplay

The 'Jewish' dimension of Koestler's novel and in particular its contemporary topicality after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon arguably were decisive factors for Wesker to accept the commission. The dramatist, like John Osborne and Nobel laureate Harold Pinter, first rose to fame in the second half of the 1950s as one of the angry young men. In addition to his politically committed plays he published also fiction and non-fiction. Although Wesker's work is indebted to diverse political and philosophical influences,³³ the writer saw his Jewish heritage, of which he was very much aware, although he was not observant, as a part of his cultural identity and of his literary production. In an interview with Christopher Bigsby on the

production of his *The Merchant* in 1976, Wesker stated: “I feel a Jew, I am a Jew and because I’m a Jew I feel and write in a particular way”.³⁴ For Wesker this meant at the same time: “Though I was born in Britain, I know no other language and feel the rhythms of my dialogue and prose to be unmistakably English, yet I feel myself an alien writer in this country.”³⁵

It may have been due to this particular feeling of alienation, which appears to be not unlike the ‘symbolic’ emigration identified by Bryan Cheyette as a prerequisite to affirmative Jewish writing in Britain,³⁶ that Wesker from the very beginning never conformed to any conventions nor was ever afraid of confronting prescriptive conceptions of Englishness.³⁷ Thus the critic Harold Hobson, highlighting the provocative nature of Wesker’s work, asserted *Chips with Everything* (1962) to be “the first anti-establishment play of which the establishment [had] cause to be afraid.”³⁸

In later years Wesker persisted in emphasising his Jewishness and its occasional collision with normative Englishness. This emerges quite clearly in an interview with John O’Mahoney in 2002:

Wesker admits that many of the confrontations that have led to him being dubbed the Angry Old Man of British theatre are of his own making: “I have a foolish feeling that a quality of honesty will be understood and appreciated,” he says. “I think it’s very Jewish that you argue. Harold Hobson once advised me in a roundabout way to keep my mouth shut because that would be the sensible, almost gentlemanly thing to do. It’s part of public-school upbringing to take your punishment. But I never felt I had a choice. Part of me relishes being an outsider.”³⁹

His self-positioning as an outsider is manifest also in Wesker’s hostility towards ideologies. In his short story “The Visit” (1978) he has one of his characters proclaim: “All ideology is

anti-social".⁴⁰ Given that Wesker acknowledged his own approach to literary production as the "re-creation of experience",⁴¹ this may well reflect his own opinion and it may then perhaps also explain his particular interest in the adaptation of Arthur Koestler's *Thieves in the Night*, as well as his decision to accept the NDR's commission.

Wesker's own engagement with Zionism as a member of the youth movement *Habonim* was as short-lived as his time in the Young Communist League. He abandoned both because of his aversion to their "histrionic tendencies".⁴² In his adaptation of Koestler's novel he confronted ideologies of different provenance but, more specifically, considered also different conceptions of Jewishness and of Englishness, a concern already of Koestler's novel.

Wesker obviously took his task very serious. He researched in much detail the historical background and conducted in Israel numerous interviews with experts and witnesses – both Jewish and Arab.⁴³ In contrast to Hädrich, who reproduced the structure of *Thieves in the Night* without any significant changes, Wesker searched for a unifying framework which was to provide a structural bracket to contain the plot of the originally planned six, then four, parts of the projected TV series.

Initially, in August 1983, Wesker experimented with the notion of developing the plot entirely from the retrospective of Joseph's diary. Yet he soon seems to have abandoned this approach. He then sought to construe a framework that was to be defined by three points of reference which he described as musical, physical, and emotional. The first, musical, point of reference proposed a structure of increasing complexity that paralleled the plot development and, on the level of the story, the composition of a symphony by Mendl. The second, physical, point of reference envisaged six stages of the plot marked by the launch of a new settlement in each, like Ezra's Tower is launched from Gan Tamar. The third and final, emotional, point of reference was to be based on Joseph's development from a non-violent position to

that of an ambivalent acceptance of violence.⁴⁴ In addition, each episode was supposed to introduce a flashback of one of the central characters, with the exception of Dina.⁴⁵

Finally, Wesker considered adding a number of new scenes to Koestler's narrative which similarly were to be tied as flashbacks to the lorry's journey through the night and the founding of Ezra's Tower with which the novel commences. Among them were a concert hall, presumably tying in with the musical point of reference; a teacher giving a history lesson; and, finally, an army briefing against terror attacks.⁴⁶ To these early notes Wesker returned in January and February of the following year, 1984. Of particular interest is his further elaboration of the idea to introduce the historical context through a history lesson, possibly to be set in a kibbutz high school. The lesson was to emphasise that there were no obvious rights or wrongs in the Middle East conflict and to outline the crucial dates and developments of Arab independence which would then be contrasted with the Jewish efforts to buy ("at inflated prices") and to cultivate the land, concluding with the assertion that the Jews "didn't begin by fighting back for their land but by earning it."⁴⁷

The explanation of the historical context was to address a moral dimension which obviously had particular importance also for the production context of the script. Of similar resonance appears to have been the colonial aspect. Wesker was very much aware of the unusual triangular constellation in Palestine which was defined by two subaltern groups – the Jews and the Arabs – living side by side under a colonial power, first the Ottoman Empire and then the British. He elaborated on the awakening of Arab nationalism and the hope of the local Arab population of gaining independence, "like their Arab brothers had", which he contrasted with the "international perspective" of the Jews, "demanding a tiny fraction of land compared to the Arabs' millions of square miles". Yet he realised that what might have seemed reason-

ble from this perspective must have appeared intolerable from the other and therefore concluded: “Therein lies the tragedy” – the tragedy that this was not a conflict between right and wrong but between two rights.⁴⁸

As in Koestler’s novel and as in the report of the Peel Commission (1937) mentioned by Wesker,⁴⁹ the playwright’s plan invokes the dilemma of the clash of two legitimate yet irreconcilable claims. At the same time, again like Koestler’s novel but crucially different from the report of the Royal Commission, the text is apologetic in that it insists that “of the two rights one had to be the greater right.”⁵⁰ The context makes it quite clear that it is the Jewish right which is considered the greater of the two. This was already indicated in the way in which the political map of the region in the history lesson was to show “Palestine-Israel set in the centre of vast Arab territories”,⁵¹ which effectively promoted the “international perspective”.

As early as August 1983 Wesker had summarised the “Themes and subject matter” which to him made up the essence of the novel and accordingly also of his adaptation. Predominant among these were for him: the love stories between Joseph and Dina and between Joseph and Ellen, though he insisted on the absurdity of the latter; the history of the progress of the commune; the problems of collective living; the already mentioned conflict between two rights and its history; the personal conflict between evolutionary and violent change; the background histories of Europe, British colonialism, and Zionism; and the individual stories of the main protagonists, including also – if at this stage still with an added question mark – the story “of one Arab at least?”⁵² In addition, he identified as essential the fate of the illegal immigration boats of the Aliyah Bet;⁵³ the story of the terrorist campaign and the nature of revenge; as well as, finally, the metamorphosis of the Jews into sabras.⁵⁴

At the same time, Wesker came up with a number of questions he considered crucial.⁵⁵ The most significant of these revolve around the issues of facticity and subjective opinion. Thus, he wondered if only Koestler's material was to be used or if new material might be introduced. A distinction, he felt, had to be made between the facts and Koestler's views; and how was one's own position to these views to be negotiated: in fact, was a position to be taken in the Arab-Israeli conflict? Wesker's remaining questions were of a more practical nature, relating inter alia to the national background of the actors, the time scale, and the language of the production. Finally, he wondered who was to direct the series.⁵⁶ How important in particular this last question was going to be emerged in the course of the ultimately abortive project. But the questions about facticity and subjectivity proved to be of similar relevance to Wesker's work on the scripts.

That the dramatist increasingly consulted other source material is evidenced not only by his well-documented extensive research.⁵⁷ He moreover explained his further approach in the "Notes to be read before and after reading the scripts" sent to Meichsner: "I've had to create new dialogue but have converted much from Koestler's prose and used snatches from other books and conversations held with Israelis and Arabs."⁵⁸

More difficult to trace is the implicit criticism of Koestler's alleged bias. Wesker clearly introduced some nuanced changes to his adaptation. Yet not all of these appear to increase the objectivity explicitly aimed for by the screenwriter. Nevertheless, Wesker suggested to consult not only an Israeli writer to advise on Israeli dialogue and socio-cultural details as well as a military adviser but also a Palestinian writer to assist with Arab dialogue and socio-cultural details.⁵⁹ In the event, Israfilm contracted Eran Baniel, Head of Radio-Drama of the Israeli radio station Kol-Israel (Tel Aviv); whether an Arab expert was in fact consulted cannot be ascertained from the archived material, but it seems unlikely as no further reference to this issue is documented. Wesker does not take an unequivocal position towards

the Arab-Israeli conflict in his screenplay. It nevertheless tends to be apologetic – favouring the Zionist project, like Koestler’s novel – although the dramatist at the same time attempts to articulate an Arab perspective. Yet the appropriation of the other’s voice is obviously in itself problematic.

A crucial point for Wesker was the language of the production. “My own dream would be”, he explained in his “Notes to be read”, “that everybody spoke in their own language. I know what are the ‘market’ arguments against this, but to hear Arabs talking in Arabic, and Jews in Hebrew, and the British and Americans in English would give the series unique richness.”⁶⁰ How important this point was to Wesker emerges from his preparatory notes for a meeting with Meichsner in Hamburg in which he reiterated the point and emphasised its innovative potential. The producer was indeed sceptical and in turn insisted that the series was aimed at an English-speaking audience.⁶¹

The first manuscript draft of the screenplay (MS) was completed and sent to Meichsner in July 1984. By then Wesker had abandoned most of his preliminary ideas. Yet he retained through successive stages of the text (MS, 1TS and 2TS) the musical point of reference and, perhaps more importantly, also the idea of the frame narrative, which he ultimately set in the days immediately preceding the Six-Day War of June 1967 and with which he aimed to introduce a contrapuntal structure whose envisaged impact he attributed to the independently unfolding historical parallel in the frame narrative.⁶² Eventually, however, the musical conception as well as the historical parallel of the Six-Day War were completely eliminated from the third typescript draft (3TS). Whether the deletion should be attributed to Wesker is doubtful; it rather seems to have been imposed by the designated director François Villiers and some of the prospective producers. For this reason I will concentrate in what follows in particular on Wesker’s attempts to achieve a more sympathetic representation of the Palestinian

Arabs which is the one major area of his intervention in the original text which can be traced in all the successive versions of his screenplay.

As Wesker emphasised, Koestler himself had realised that the representation of the Arabs in *Thieves in the Night* required revisions.⁶³ Wesker accordingly gave more substance to the characters of the Mukhtar and some of the villagers as well as to the Palestinian intellectuals whom Issa befriends. In addition, he introduced two new characters: another son of the Mukhtar's, the mute Musa, who "becomes the helpless, silent witness to his father's lies, his brother's brutality, and Arab stubbornness in general";⁶⁴ and the Arab Education Officer for the Galilee, Salla, "who believes in Pan Arabism and co-operation with Jews for an independent state"⁶⁵ and who is strikingly different from the corresponding character in Koestler's novel. Finally, he set the meetings of the Arab intelligentsia in the political Salon of Mme Makropoulos, merely mentioned in the original text, but developed as an "event" in the screenplay.⁶⁶

Altogether, the extant material suggests that the second typescript draft (2TS), which is largely identical with the first typescript draft with Wesker's handwritten corrections (1TS) and which is based on the original manuscript draft (MS), reflects most closely the screenwriter's intentions as they had developed over the course of the script's creation. The third typescript draft (3TS) obviously incorporates Villier's suggestions, with many of which Wesker would have been none too happy.⁶⁷ He nevertheless appears to have considered at least parts of this version as 'authentic'. After all, he eventually based on it the printed text of the "Peace Making Ceremony" as it was published in *The Jewish Chronicle* in August 1986.⁶⁸ It is useful to bear this in mind because the genesis of the text reflects not only the problematic relationship between scriptwriter and director but more specifically corresponds to the competing constructions of Jewish history and identities embraced by both.

Writers and Directors, Cowboys and Indians

That in the case of *Thieves in the Night* the script of the TV drama was commissioned before a director had been contracted must be considered unconventional, to say the least.⁶⁹ In fact, many of the tensions between Wesker and Villiers quite clearly originate in this exceptional practice. Once the director had been signed, it must have become obvious very soon that the collaboration of both would be possible only with complications if, indeed, at all. All things considered, Wesker's and Villiers' approaches, as shown below, were simply incompatible.

The playwright and scriptwriter had emphasised in his "Notes to be read" that he was less interested in the element of suspense or the visual aspect but rather in the verbal quality of Jewish nature. He summed up:

My point is that however much I've striven – and I think succeeded – to make the scripts visual and to pursue a dramatic narrative story line, a great deal of the interest in Koestler's novel and characters lies in its/their articulated intelligence.

I also believe television is a happy meeting ground for the visual impact of cinema and the verbal impact of theatre. Both are here in these scripts.⁷⁰

Early on in the initial phase of his collaboration with Villiers, Wesker had described in a letter to David Conroy the conceptual concurrence with the director with diffidence. Conroy, managing director of London Films International, had expressed his hope that Wesker and Villiers would be able to make the necessary revisions to the scripts at a meeting in London, so that they might be produced as the stunning TV series everyone was hoping they would be.⁷¹

Wesker replied by return of post that he was looking forward to meeting with Villiers and that he hoped that a “productive working relationship” might ensue. In direct response to Conroy’s optimistic expectation he added: “We all hope the series will be ‘stunning television’.” Yet, making the crucial difference between him and the director explicit, he wondered if there was any agreement on what was to be considered “stunning”. The writer nevertheless immediately softened this critical note with pledging his commitment to finding an agreement.⁷²

Conroy had forwarded his own critical evaluation of the scripts already on 28 September 1984 to the Israeli production company Israfilm.⁷³ Even after the first revision (he refers obviously to 2TS), Conroy still criticised the lack not only of the visual component in Wesker’s drafts but also of the ingredients he considered necessary for an international commercial success. In particular, he was worried that the screenplay failed to develop the dramatic intensity of the interplay between the characters sufficiently. More specifically, he felt that Wesker’s script was too heavy on dialogue to the detriment of visual images, and that it was too obtrusively didactic.⁷⁴

As a consequence, Conroy recommended that Wesker draft a completely new script in which he was to focus less on the story’s historical but rather on its human aspect. What he was looking for was a frontier narrative that might as well be set in the Wild West and feature white settlers and Red Indians.⁷⁵ Intriguingly, the pattern the producer envisages, of the American pioneer in the West, is precisely the one which was recognised by Ella Shohat as underlying constructions of both the history of the settlement of the Jews in the Promised Land and that of the American frontier.⁷⁶ This reduction of the plot to an established and downright archetypal pattern could hardly be reconciled with Wesker’s conception. Yet for Conroy, the development of individual fates within this recognisable pattern became the crucial premise for the cautious representation of the historical background.⁷⁷

In turn, the frame narrative of the present of the year 1967 introduced by Wesker was fully endorsed by Conroy. Less, however, for its political and historical significance than rather for its creation of a temporal counterpoint and the change of pace it offered as well as for the perspective it added to the personal development of the characters.⁷⁸

Villiers too made a number of evidently rather detailed suggestions for revision. However, the material to which I had access does not clearly indicate which revisions in the third draft (3TS) were initiated by the director and which were actually introduced by Wesker himself. Conroy had characterised Villiers's style as very visual,⁷⁹ and although Wesker could hardly be happy about the direction in which the director's suggestions were tending to go, the playwright nevertheless seems to have incorporated most of the changes proposed to him into the third and final version of his script. In a letter to Villiers, dated 28 February 1984, Wesker acknowledged the difference in their approaches but nevertheless confirmed his willingness to incorporate as many of Villiers' suggestions as "made sense" to him, adding: "Most of them did."⁸⁰ In the same letter Wesker emphasised his double commitment to preserving the integrity of Koestler's novel and to producing a "script of substance". Even so, he quite clearly articulated also his disillusionment because, once again, it appears that Villiers was not satisfied.⁸¹

As an example of their different approaches, Wesker refers to the so-called "Peace Making Ceremony". It is hardly a coincidence that it was precisely this scene and its short exposition which the playwright chose to publish in August 1986 in the *Jewish Chronicle*. In fact, this is the only part of his extensive re-writing of Koestler's novel Wesker ever published and it may seem surprising that the printed text follows that of 3TS which had emerged from his confrontation with Villiers.

The director had noted somewhat petulantly in a letter to Wesker of 20 February 1985 that he felt that the playwright's efforts at cutting his text were perfunctory. He, too, explicitly mentions the "Peace Making Ceremony", observing that of its twenty-one pages in 1TS twenty still survived in 3TS, adding that they were moreover without any dramatic interest to the protagonists.⁸² Villiers' final phrase in particular provoked Wesker's detailed response:

[Y]ou may be the wrong director for my kind of writing. There could even be a cultural difference between the English and French sensibility. If, for example, you think the "peace ceremony" has "no dramatic interest for our heroes" then a very real difference exists. I believe it is saturated with dramatic tensions:

between the Jews and the British

between Arab and Arab

between Jew and Arab

between British and British

all of which is essential to our understanding of the conflicts of the country both as Koestler saw them and as they attracted themselves to me.⁸³

Villiers had stated with respect to the "Peace Making Ceremony" that in his opinion five pages were entirely sufficient and that he, though anticipating Wesker's disapproval, would attempt to write them.⁸⁴ The director's criticism, couched exclusively in quantitative terms, indicates the essential irreconcilability of both approaches.⁸⁵ In fact, the problem was not limited to individual scenes. Villiers felt that the script was too verbose throughout and suggested that Wesker not so much created and showed characters but rather explained them incessantly.⁸⁶ This finally led the director to conclude that he would not be able to continue to work with Wesker.⁸⁷

In his rejoinder Wesker, somewhat peevishly, not only cited the evidence of the earlier draft versions he had kept for the cuts he had made.⁸⁸ He moreover, taking a dig at Villiers' linguistic competence in English, explained to the director the legal situation as he saw it. To him, the original agreement with Dieter Meichsner was binding, legally but also in relation to the "tone" of the work. He conceded that the NDR might well consider to start all over again with another writer, but added that they might just as well consider to retain another director. After thus metaphorically flexing his muscles, Wesker suggested in a more conciliatory vein that he and Villiers might work together more productively through the mediation of the Israeli writer Eran Baniel. He nevertheless insisted that he could never let a script be filmed under his name which he did not respect and which he felt did not echo Koestler's intentions.⁸⁹

Villiers showed some surprise at Wesker's sudden pliability. Yet as little as he had liked the playwright's original drafts did he now approve of his largely uncritical readiness to accede to his wishes. He wrote that he had hoped instead that his suggestions would have inspired the dramatist to a further enrichment of the story line.⁹⁰

While the tone of Wesker's correspondence with Villiers is determined but reserved, he showed no such restraint in his letters to Eran Baniel, the Israeli writer commissioned to brush up the text and a personal friend of the playwright's. It was obviously also through Baniel that Wesker first learned of the complete rejection of his work through Villiers, because the director too showed some consideration towards the well-known dramatist in their direct communication.

In February 1985, Baniel reported from Paris where he had had several meetings with Villiers.⁹¹ The Israeli consultant adviser was very much taken with the exquisite food he was served in the director's home, yet he was less happy about the disagreeable matters he had to communicate to Wesker. In fact, he says that he walked for two days through the chilly

streets of Paris deliberating how best to give the bad news to his friend. Villiers, it emerges from the letter he finally sent to Wesker, was completely disenchanted with the script. He had rewritten much of the first part, but it was the second part in particular which he rejected and had himself taken a hand to overhaul completely. Baniel, once again caught in the middle, as throughout the whole episode, was at pains to soften the blow to Wesker. He acknowledged that the version of Part I he had been given to read and which he thought worked rather well was Villiers' but added that it still had much of Wesker's in it, as well as some of his own brushing up. Baniel nevertheless could not avoid relaying a kind of ultimatum to Wesker. Villiers seems to have made it quite clear that, if the third and fourth parts of the script were not to his liking, he would cancel the planned meeting with Wesker in London and would indeed search for another solution.

As Wesker had not allowed access to his scripts to anyone but Villiers, Baniel furthermore felt himself to be in a catch-22 situation as it was the director's decision which script he would be given for brushing up but had no way of finding out whose it actually was. In conclusion to his letter, Baniel expressed the hope that ultimately everything would work out fine but anticipated also that he might regret ever having become involved in the project in the first place.

To be sure, the affair was not over yet and Baniel did indeed come to regret his involvement.⁹² In a letter of 12 May 1985 he told Wesker that after various revisions little remained of his original scripts. The outcome, he suggested, was a drama series that was gripping, touching, and occasionally funny, rather than a balanced historical argument tempered with human drama and comedy.⁹³ Baniel's brief characterisation of the rivalling scripts gives clear articulation to the diverging conceptions not only of the medium of film but also of history and the experience of history by which they were informed. Yet although the Israeli attested to Wesker's more responsible approach to history, he nevertheless did not take sides,

arguing that there was no right and wrong in comparing the director's and the screenwriter's different approaches.⁹⁴ Even so, Baniel describes the hectic and muddled work on the scripts as rather messy.⁹⁵ Given the unexpectedly numerous and substantial revisions he was expected to implement,⁹⁶ Baniel moreover felt to have been taken advantage of. Yet although the writer eventually had to involve a solicitor in order to protect his interests, he nevertheless maintained that he enjoyed working with Villiers and expressed his regret at the complete breakdown of communication between the director and Wesker.⁹⁷

In his reply from 28 May 1985 Wesker gave vent to his exasperation, alleging that Baniel was in effect used as a substitute for himself "at the price of peanuts" and "without any real authority". Clearly sceptical of the outcome, he concluded: "You sound as though you approve of the end results. I reserve judgement."⁹⁸ This was of course purely rhetorical. The dramatist could hardly consent to this solution. And, sure enough, Wesker went on to mention his original agreement with Meichsner and referred the solution of the conflict to the producer.⁹⁹

Clearly, Wesker expected to be supported by Meichsner: "I suspect that there's a difference of opinion between the Germans and the Israelis. The Germans don't want to make another Exodus. The Israelis seem to want the 'adventure story'."¹⁰⁰ The reference is to Otto Preminger's film adaptation of Leon Uris' eponymous best-selling novel (1958), a huge box office success which was released in 1960 and which, similar to its literary model, wrote a largely uncritical heroic narrative of the return of the Jews to the Promised Land. Wesker obviously wanted to distance himself from this stance and it seems as if Meichsner initially had indeed been able, and willing, to go along with the scriptwriter he had after all commissioned himself. On 14 June 1985 Wesker wrote to Meichsner that he was happy to hear that he had rejected "the 'soap opera' approach" and assured him that 2TS was not his "final word". Insisting that it was Villiers who "went ahead to rewrite what I imagine was his cowboys and

Indian version”, Wesker once again offered his fullest and most reasonable cooperation – “if I don’t die from the strain of this profession beforehand!”¹⁰¹

Wesker survived, but his adaptation of Koestler’s *Thieves in the Night* did not. The precise circumstances that had a bearing on the final decision do not emerge from the documents I have been able to consult. Yet Wolfgang Storch’s production, aired in October 1989, is much closer to the “cowboys and Indian version” than is Wesker’s “historical argument”. Ultimately, it may have been economic considerations, after all, which determined the outcome.

Aftermath and Conclusion

A report in the German magazine *Stern* on the commencement of shooting in Israel in December 1987 at the very eve of the First Intifada and a review of Storch’s TV drama in *Der Spiegel* are, to some extent, useful in determining what happened after Wesker’s involvement was concluded.¹⁰² In response to the *Stern* reporter’s suggestion that the TV mini-series was about to indulge in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) at the expense of the Palestinians, the director sanctimoniously reiterated the special responsibility of the Germans towards the Jews and their state and commenced to say that he hoped his film might contribute “a tiny mosaic stone towards making amends”. Yet interrupting himself he continued instead: “O God, what pretentious nonsense. Of course no film can make any amends. Nor has any film ever been the better for its good intentions.”¹⁰³ He then insisted that he simply wanted to tell an exciting story.

The director moreover maintained that the pro-Jewish bias of Koestler’s novel was purged from the screenplay and that this corresponded to his casting policy. The latter claim may seem dubious, considering that but for the main parts all roles, including those of the

Palestinian Arabs, were cast with Israelis; with the one exception of the rapist and murderer Issa, who is played by a ‘real’ Palestinian, some of whose family were living in a refugee camp in Gaza. Given a voice in the Stern report, the young Palestinian was unexpectedly conciliatory: “What is done, is done”, he said. “Now we’re here together, and that’s that.” Yet another note crept in when he continued:

But they [i.e. the Jews] came here as if we didn’t exist, as if we’d been air. Like the kibbutzniks in the film. They are not unlikable, but unfortunately they never think of anyone else. If they’re not digging trenches, that is. And at the same time they want to be pitied because they were persecuted in Europe. But we had no hand in that, you did.¹⁰⁴

And maybe, the report suggests, the historical obligation suggested by the Palestinian actor’s implicit reference to the Holocaust was the reason why the film was made not by a British, American or Israeli director but by a German. One of the young Israeli actors elaborated further:

Our conflict with the Palestinians is caused by them being right and by us being right too. Incidentally, we won. But the Germans were not right. Your fathers wanted to destroy us. [...] When you watch the film, you must consider that the problem between us and you is much greater than the problem between us and the Palestinians.¹⁰⁵

The series as it was finally produced was apologetic, then, produced with a flourish from the “rucksack of guilt” carried by the Germans; just as Meichsner would have it from the very start – but was it also the exciting story its director wanted to tell?

It seems not. At least that is what Nikolaus von Festenberg's review in *Der Spiegel* would suggest.¹⁰⁶ Without mentioning any names, the critic alludes to the problems of finding the right screenwriter and refers to plans of involving Koestler himself as a narrator which, however, came to nothing because of the author's suicide in 1983. Von Festenberg is, moreover, acutely aware of the tensions explored in the novel which he considers to be its salient quality. It is a quality which he sorely misses in the TV adaptation. Indeed, he credits Storch with the feat of having preserved next to nothing of the spirit of Koestler's novel. Whenever Arabs appear in the film, he scoffs, a whiff of *Bad Segeberg* obtrudes: "Haji Halef Omar", he says, "the German compensation for Koestler's caricatures; and the musical score by Dov Seltzer grinds out another Exodus earworm, close to the earth and heavy."¹⁰⁷ *Bad Segeberg*, to explain the allusion, is the location of an annual festival which celebrates on its open air stage the adventure stories of Karl May; Haji Halef Omar is the Arab servant and friend of the German protagonist in a number of the oriental tales of the prolific and popular nineteenth-century writer.

Nor is von Festenberg convinced by the director's decision to use untried French and Israeli faces for most of the parts. To him, they appear to be slick and impassive. "Koestler's figures", he insists, "are marked by fate – in his dialogues, Storch only claims they are. But he fails to show them. His camera sticks like a burr to the scenes and rarely indulges in an epic perspective."¹⁰⁸ The critic concludes that if filmmakers tear into literature like this, they merely purloin the plot of a great novel. "Like thieves", he quips, "and not even in the night". It may seem ironic that the issues raised by von Festenberg are precisely those for which Wesker too had been criticised by the various producers involved in the project (too much dialogue and too little epic perspective, explaining his characters rather than showing them), even though it was his express purpose "to preserve what [he] understood to be the integrity of Koestler's novel and end up with a script of substance."¹⁰⁹

The sustained debate about the form and contents of the TV adaptation of Arthur Koestler's *Thieves in the Night* demonstrates not only the unceasing topicality of the novel. Largely predicated on different perceptions of the very nature of this topicality, the discussion moreover illustrates divergent perceptions of the position of Israel and its history and reveals different strategies of instrumentalising the literary text and its TV adaptation for an understanding of the present. Arnold Wesker saw in the project "an important, potentially powerful and influential series which demands care, attention, unpressured time, and the casting of first-rate artistic and technical talents."¹¹⁰ Small wonder that the playwright loathed the very idea of writing what to him seemed no more than another *Exodus*, a mere soap opera, a crude "cowboys and Indian version" of *Thieves in the Night*.

Notes

- ¹ See Arthur Koestler, *Thieves in the Night: Chronicle of an Experiment* (London: Macmillan, 1946) and *Diebe in der Nacht*, dir. Wolfgang Storch (D/ISR: NDR and Israfilm, 1988), parts I–III, on DVD (unpubl.).
- ² See Christian Buckard, *Arthur Koestler: Ein extremes Leben 1905–1983* (Munich: Beck, 2004), p. 230. For a recent critical discussion of the contemporary reception of Koestler’s novel, see Zénó Vernyik, “‘He Is Not English, He Is Not a Novelist; And How Far Is He Even Likeable?’ On the Critical Reception of Arthur Koestler’s *Thieves in the Night*”, *Atlantis* 38.1 (2016): 71–88.
- ³ For the genesis of the novel, see Buckard, *Arthur Koestler*, pp. 210–21; see also Arthur Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1952), p. 132.
- ⁴ See Bell, *Terror out of Zion*, pp. 23–4 and Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover, NH and London: Brandeis University Press, 1995), p. 263.
- ⁵ See Bell, *Terror out of Zion*, pp. 35, 48.
- ⁶ See Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement. A History*, vol. I: *Origins and Growth, 1909–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 319; for the original defensive purpose and further development of the stockade and tower settlements, see pp. 315–23.
- ⁷ See Buckard, *Arthur Koestler*, pp. 147–52.
- ⁸ See Arthur Koestler, “The Palestine Problem. I – Political Deadlock between Jews and Arabs”, *The Times* (25 September 1945), 5 and “The Palestine Problem. II – New Factors in the Racial Balance of Power”, *The Times* (26 September 1945), 5.
- ⁹ See Arthur Koestler, “This is an SOS for Palestine“, *News Chronicle* (15 December 1937), 17 and “Partition – The Only Solution”, *News Chronicle* (16 December 1937), 6.
- ¹⁰ For a discussion of the stereotypical aspects of the women in Koestler’s *Thieves in the Night*, including the suggestion of Ellen as seductress, see Zénó Vernyik, “‘Straight Out

of the Button-Molder's Own Ladle': On the Complexity of Characters in Arthur Koestler's *Thieves in the Night*", *International Journal of English Studies* 16.2 (2016): 25–43, esp. 29–35.

- ¹¹ See, e.g., the chapter on Koestler in Axel Stähler, *Literarische Konstruktionen jüdischer Postkolonialität: Das britische Palästina Mandat in der anglophonen jüdischen Literatur* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009), pp. 228–77; Vernyik, “‘He Is Not English, He Is Not a Novelist; And How Far Is He Even Likeable?’”; and Vernyik, “‘Straight Out of the Button-Molder's Own Ladle’”.
- ¹² See the discussion in Vernyik, “‘He Is Not English, He Is Not a Novelist; And How Far Is He Even Likeable?’”.
- ¹³ For the different textual stages of Wesker's adaptation, see (MS), HRC Wesker Box 90.5–8; (1TS), HRC Wesker Box 90.9–12; (2TS), HRC Wesker Box 91.1–4; (3TS), HRC Wesker Box 92.1–4. Parenthetical references to these scripts include in Roman numerals the episode (I–IV), followed by scene and page numbers in Arabic numerals, e.g. (3TS: I.1.1). Related documents, including Wesker's correspondence about the project, are collected in HRC Wesker Boxes 92.5–10. Where not otherwise indicated, all quotations from the archived material harmonise orthographic and typographical conventions.
- ¹⁴ See Meichsner's letters to Wesker of 14 March and 24 April 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ¹⁵ See Meichsner to Joseph on 17 August 1987, HRC Wesker Box 92.5. The letter responded to Joseph's query who had seen a newspaper report on the forthcoming production, see Joseph to Meichsner on 24 August 1987.
- ¹⁶ See Meichsner in his clearly apologetic letter to Joseph of 17 August 1987 in which he emphasises the weight of commercial considerations, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ¹⁷ See Meichsner to Wesker on 12 October 1983, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.

- ¹⁸ Yochanan Eldad, “Eichmann in Bonn”, *The Jerusalem Post Magazine* (17 June 1983): 9.
- ¹⁹ See Meichsner to Wesker on 12 October 1983, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ²⁰ Avner Less was played by Peter Eschberg, Adolf Eichmann by Werner Kreindl.
- ²¹ For this production and the original footage of the Eichmann trial, see Fritz Bauer Institut, “Cinematographie des Holocaust”, <http://www.cine-holocaust.de/cgi-bin/gdq?dfw00fbw000675.gd> (accessed 19 April 2006); the resource is currently unavailable.
- ²² Eldad, “Eichmann in Bonn”, 9.
- ²³ While the theatre audience had been advised that everything they were going to see and hear had been rehearsed, many obviously thought the interruptions were spontaneous. To the TV viewers the allegations made from among the audience were not readily recognisable as part of the performance, see Eldad, “Eichmann in Bonn”, 9.
- ²⁴ Eldad, “Eichmann in Bonn”, 9.
- ²⁵ Eldad, “Eichmann in Bonn”, 9.
- ²⁶ Plans for the project predated the invasion of Lebanon. Correspondence of Israfilm with the Israel Broadcasting Authority of 10 January 1982 suggests a potential collaboration, see HRC Wesker Box 92.9.
- ²⁷ Eldad, who attended the rehearsals, describes the production as follows: “Rehearsals for a live broadcast are always hectic, but here was an additional element that made those few days in Bonn an unforgettable experience: the emotional involvement of every member of the team, from actors to cameramen, from stage designers to sound technicians. Sooner or later – and usually sooner – every conversation turned to the central theme: the Holocaust”, Eldad, “Eichmann in Bonn”, 9.
- ²⁸ Meichsner was born in 1928, Hädrich in 1931; Storch, born in 1935, was only a few years younger.

- ²⁹ The shocking Sabra and Shatila massacres at the hands of the Lebanese Phalange were to happen later, on 17 September 1982; see, e.g., Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (1998; London: Black Swan, 1999), p. 509.
- ³⁰ See HRC Wesker Boxes 89.8–90.2. Among the most distinctive changes in Hädrich’s script, reversed by Wesker, is his replacement of the Zionist propaganda photographer Dr Lustig in Koestler’s novel with the historical figure of Natan Axelrod (also Akselrod) who is considered the founder of Israeli film.
- ³¹ See Peter Claus Schmidt to Wesker on 10 October [1983], HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ³² For the German reception of Wesker which without doubt influenced Meichsner’s decision, see Manfred Bornau, *Studien zur Rezeption Arnold Weskers in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1979).
- ³³ Reade W. Dornan, *Arnold Wesker Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1994), p. 18.
- ³⁴ Quoted in Dornan, *Arnold Wesker Revisited*, p. 91 from an interview of Christopher Bigsby with Wesker of 4 March 1976.
- ³⁵ Quoted in Dornan, *Arnold Wesker Revisited*, p. 91 from an interview of Christopher Bigsby with Wesker of 4 March 1976.
- ³⁶ Bryan Cheyette, “Introduction”, in Bryan Cheyette (ed.), *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Britain and Ireland. An Anthology* (London: Halban, 1998), pp. xiii–lxxi, p. liii.
- ³⁷ Cheyette, “Introduction”, pp. xxix–xxx.
- ³⁸ Quoted in John O’Mahoney, “The Guardian Profile: Arnold Wesker. Piques and Troughs”, *The Guardian* (25 May 2002), education.guardian.co.uk/higher/arts/story/0,9848,721777,00.html (accessed 14 March 2017).
- ³⁹ O’Mahoney, “The Guardian Profile”, n. p.
- ⁴⁰ Arnold Wesker, “The Visit”, in *Said the Old Man to the Young Man: Three Stories* (London: Cape, 1978), pp. 79–188, p. 178.

⁴¹ Quoted in Dornan, *Arnold Wesker Revisited*, p. 20.

⁴² Dornan, *Arnold Wesker Revisited*, p. 16. In an open letter of 18 July 2002 to the actor and dramatist David Hare, Wesker nevertheless retrospectively summarised his changing position towards the state of Israel and the Palestinian issue: “In the beginning, when I was sixteen, I was cynical. A Jewish homeland? Ha! We’ll all be in one place and it’ll be easier for them to get rid of us forever. But it didn’t stop me dancing into existence the new state of Israel. We linked arms and danced a hora outside The Kingsway Hall in Holborn, London, 1948. / Then, in my thirties upwards I was angry with and embarrassed by Israeli foreign policy towards the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular. / Now I’m sad. Sad that the Palestinians didn’t accept partition; sad that they went to war on the first day of the creation of the state of Israel; sad that they went to war with Israel again in 1967 and 1973 so that what had been allotted to them was now occupied because they lost those wars. / I’m saddened to see the education of five generations of Palestinian children sacrificed in an appalling sulk by keeping them in refugee camps in order to win the sympathy of the world rather than using oil money to build cities, schools, universities and factories to vie with those built by Israel”, “Open letter to David Hare about his play *Via Dolorosa*”, www.arnoldwesker.com/openletters/davidhare.htm (accessed 23 April 2006); the resource is no longer available.

⁴³ See HRC Wesker Boxes 90.3 and 90.4.

⁴⁴ See HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 30 August 1983.

⁴⁵ See HRC Wesker Box 90.4.

⁴⁶ HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 30 August 1983.

⁴⁷ HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 27 January 1984.

⁴⁸ HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 27 January 1984.

- ⁴⁹ Extracts from the report of the Peel Commission, including copious notes by the dramatist, are collected in HRC Wesker Box 92.8.
- ⁵⁰ HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 27 January 1984.
- ⁵¹ HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 30 August 1983.
- ⁵² HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 26 August 1983.
- ⁵³ Wesker refers to the history of the immigration boat *Assimi*, see also the chapter “The Little Death Ships” in Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine 1917–1949* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 55–65. In Wesker’s adaptation the historical precedent of the enforcement of the immigration restrictions is given much prominence; it is of course also mentioned already in Koestler, *Thieves in the Night*, p. 235. In 3TS Wesker further elaborated the significance of the refugee boats by adding various scenes to his source: Glickstein’s negotiations with a British officer on the quay; an interview of Mathews with the captain of the *Bohemia* (i.e. the *Assimi*); Joseph’s reflections on the misery of the refugees when he sees the ship at its berth in Haifa; and his active participation in an illegal landing.
- ⁵⁴ HRC Wesker Box 90.4, dated 26 August 1983.
- ⁵⁵ Koestler was no longer alive by then; he had committed suicide together with his wife Cynthia in March 1983 because he was terminally ill with leukaemia and Parkinson’s disease; for the circumstances of the writer’s death, see Buckard, *Arthur Koestler*, pp. 345–49.
- ⁵⁶ Note of 26 August 1983, HRC Wesker Box 90.4.
- ⁵⁷ Especially in 3TS, see HRC Wesker Boxes 90.3, 92.7–8 and 92.10.
- ⁵⁸ Arnold Wesker, “Notes to be read before and after reading the scripts”, HRC Wesker Box 92.5, p. 3.
- ⁵⁹ Wesker, “Notes to be read”, p. 4.

- ⁶⁰ Wesker, “Notes to be read”, p. 4.
- ⁶¹ Preparatory notes for a meeting with Dieter Meichsner in Hamburg, dated 23 August 1984, see HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁶² Wesker, “Notes to be read”, p. 3.
- ⁶³ See also “Remarks of P. C. Schmidt”, HRC Wesker Box 92.5, p. 1 as well as a press statement drafted by Wesker on 14 Februar 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁶⁴ Wesker, “Notes to be read”, pp. 2–3.
- ⁶⁵ Wesker, “Notes to be read”, pp. 2–3.
- ⁶⁶ Wesker, “Notes to be read”, pp. 2–3: “Koestler expressed a wish that the Arab characters be treated more sympathetically. To this end I have: / made the Mukhtar and some of his villagers more substantial; / given the Mukhtar a second son MUSA who is more sympathetic than the loutish ISSA, but who is mute. He becomes the helpless, silent witness to his father’s lies, his brother’s brutality, and Arab stubbornness in general; / created a set of new Palestinian intellectuals in place of the foppish ones who meet Issa in the Arab restaurant; / have changed the setting from the Arab restaurant to the political salon of Madam Makropoulos. This was merely referred to in the Koestler novel. I’ve created an event; / developed a minor character, a teacher, into an Arab Chief of Education for Galilee who believes in Pan Arabism and co-operation with Jews for an independent state.”
- ⁶⁷ See Wesker to Villiers on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁶⁸ See Arnold Wesker, “Thieves in the Night. A Film Adaptation of Arthur Koestler’s Novel by Arnold Wesker”, *The Jewish Chronicle Literary Supplement* (22 August 1986), iv–vi and (3TS: II.77.42–106.61).
- ⁶⁹ This was acknowledged by Wesker himself in his draft for a press statement, see HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁷⁰ Wesker, “Notes to be read”, pp. 1–2.

- ⁷¹ See David Conroy to Wesker on 14 November 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁷² See Wesker to Conroy on 15 November 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁷³ See Conroy to Shlomo Mograbi on 28 September 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁷⁴ See Conroy to Mograbi on 28 September 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁷⁵ See Conroy to Mograbi on 28 September 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁷⁶ Ella Shohat, “Columbus, Palestine and Arab-Jews: Toward a Relational Approach to Community Identity”, in Keith Ansell-Pearson, Benita Parry, and Judith Squires (eds), *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), pp. 88–105, p. 99.
- ⁷⁷ See Conroy to Mograbi on 28 September 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁷⁸ See Conroy to Mograbi on 28 September 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5. See also the comments of Peter Claus Schmidt of KG Allmedia who emphasised the, in his opinion, completely unnecessary practical problems of aging the actors, “Remarks of P. C. Schmidt”, HRC Wesker Box 92.5, p. 3.
- ⁷⁹ See Conroy to Wesker on 14 November 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸⁰ Wesker to Villiers on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5, in response to Villiers’ earlier correspondence of 20 February 1985.
- ⁸¹ See Wesker to Villiers on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸² See Villiers to Wesker on 20 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸³ Wesker to Villiers on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸⁴ See Villiers to Wesker on 20 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸⁵ Other producers, such as Peter Claus Schmidt of KG Allmedia and David Benedictus of Channel Four, concurred in judging the “Peace Making Ceremony” too long; see “Remarks of P. C. Schmidt”, HRC Wesker Box 92.5, p. 9 and Benedictus to Meichsner on 2 October 1984, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.

- ⁸⁶ See Villiers to Wesker on 20 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸⁷ See Villiers to Wesker on 20 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸⁸ See Wesker to Villiers on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁸⁹ See Wesker to Villiers on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹⁰ See Villiers to Wesker on 20 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹¹ See Eran Baniel to Wesker, dated by Wesker 16 February 1985 and received by him on 18 February, see HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹² See Baniel to Wesker on 12 May 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹³ See Baniel to Wesker on 12 May 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹⁴ See Baniel to Wesker on 12 May 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹⁵ See Baniel to Wesker on 12 May 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹⁶ See Baniel to Wesker on 12 May 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹⁷ See Baniel to Wesker on 12 May 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹⁸ Wesker to Baniel on 28 May 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ⁹⁹ See Wesker to Baniel on 28. Februar 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ¹⁰⁰ Wesker to Baniel on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ¹⁰¹ Wesker to Meichsner on 14 June 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ¹⁰² For a comparative reading of Wesker's and Storch's versions of the "Peace Making Ceremony", see Axel Stähler, "Making Peace or Piecemeal? Arnold Wesker's Screenplay (1983–1986) and Wolfgang Storch's TV Adaptation (1988) of Arthur Koestler's *Thieves in the Night* (1946)", ...???
- ¹⁰³ Stefanie Rosenkrantz and Klaus Meyer-Andersen, "Kein Film kann wiedergutmachen", *Stern TV* (3 December 1987): 4–9, 8.
- ¹⁰⁴ Rosenkrantz and Meyer-Andersen, "Kein Film kann wiedergutmachen", 8.
- ¹⁰⁵ Rosenkrantz and Meyer-Andersen, "Kein Film kann wiedergutmachen", 8.

- ¹⁰⁶ Nikolaus von Festenberg, “Im tiefen Brunnen”, *Der Spiegel* 43.41 (9 October 1989): 248–51.
- ¹⁰⁷ Von Festenberg, “Im tiefen Brunnen”, 251.
- ¹⁰⁸ Von Festenberg, “Im tiefen Brunnen”, 251.
- ¹⁰⁹ Wesker to Villiers on 28 February 1985, HRC Wesker Box 92.5.
- ¹¹⁰ Wesker, “Notes to be read”, p. 4.