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"Hammering the Same Nail" in Jalila Baccar and
Fadhel Jaïbi's Theater

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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

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Tunisian Theater at the Turn of the Century:

“Hammering the Same Nail” in Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi’s Theater

by

Rafika Zahrouni

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Introduction: From Edison Theater in St. Louis to the New Theater of Tunis

In April 2008, Ron Himes directed Wole Soyinka's play *The Lion and the Jewel*, presented by the Performing Arts Department at Washington University in St. Louis's Edison Theater.¹ An impressive performance of a well-regarded play, the social satire reminded me of the repertoire of the theater couple, Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi, the founders of the new theater of Tunisia.² Any of their plays can be as impressive as *The Lion and the Jewel*, yet they are far less well-known than the internationally acclaimed Nobel laureate's. Baccar and Jaïbi have not received similar attention because they approach theater differently. Not only are they not in academia as Soyinka, but they have focused on dramatic composition and theatrical representation based on the dialectic relationship that includes writing and staging, as will be discussed in chapter two.

My interest in contemporary Tunisian theater, however, may be traced back far before 2008. Theater was an elective in both my secondary school and college in Tunisia. The experiences of reading plays and going to the theater have also consciously and subconsciously shaped my love for this art. At the Tunis 2004 book fair, my brother-in-law's friend offered me Jaïbi's *Famīlia* (Family, 1997). This generous act gave me a novel reading experience: this play is written in a language that includes Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Tunisian dialect. It had a long-lasting impact on me as I had never before encountered my own Tunisian-accented Arabic on the page. I became more interested in exploring the theater of Jaïbi and Baccar after I attended *Khamsūn* (Fifty) in 2007.³ It was performed in the prestigious Roman theater of Carthage and marked the peak of success in the couple's career, attracting approximately 9,000 spectators. All of these experiences increased my curiosity about the subject. However, the Soyinka performance was the pivotal event that formed my interest in Tunisian theater. This moment prompted me to think about my home country's theater. This nostalgic moment brought my attention to a new area of research as I had almost

committed to Francophone studies, another area I explored during my studies at Washington University in St. Louis.

While my dissertation investigates plays written and directed by Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi—a recognized director/actor-playwright pair in contemporary Tunisian theater—it also contributes to the study of theater in North Africa in particular and Arab theater in general. This is the first research that addresses the drama of Baccar and Jaïbi, a partnership that spans almost forty years—arguably the most significant force in North African Theater. My study analyzes the evolution of Familia Productions, discovering how Familia has changed in accordance with the changing political situation, and how political changes have influenced the aesthetics of the theater, and has shifted the style from heavily symbolic to much more direct.

The questions tackled in this thesis helped me contextualize the growth of Tunisian theater from historical, social, political, and critical perspectives. This thesis demonstrate how all Familia Productions are political and Brechtian in the sense that these plays force the viewer to react to strangeness and metatheatricity. The method I applied to study Baccar-Jaïbi productions suggests an approach to theater study that is consistent with the tradition of exploring one carefully chosen troupe for its significance. This method is useful to broaden the scope of topics addressed.

While most plays analyzed in this dissertation could teach the audience about Tunisian society and its cultural and political history, a scrutiny of the ways in which they were presented sheds light on the importance of treating texts and performances as two sides of the same story. For instance, the theme of dysfunctionality that permeated all aspects of Tunisian life, especially before 2011, is developed not only through textual metaphors such

as old age and madness, but also through theatricality whereby the physical body is central to each performance.

As the title suggests, this project examines whether Jaïbi and Baccar's works use similar strategies to expose misuse of power in key social and political institutions, including the family, the hospital, and centers of the police-state such as prisons. The director, in order to describe how his company has consistently followed the same theatrical approach, uses the expression "hammering the same nail."⁴ This study aims to illustrate how employing similar themes and theatrical methods over forty years does not necessarily translate into monotony or stagnation. Interpreting the above expression requires some analytical work in order to distinguish between simple redundancy and innovation through reiteration.

Anyone who is intrigued by the theatrical experience of Baccar and Jaïbi is bound to ask several questions about the nature of their theater: whether it is political, resistant, social, experimental, philosophical, national, universal, dramatic, epic, or urban, etc. These interrogations require a close reading of the pair's works. To gauge the characteristics of Jaïbi and Baccar's theater, this dissertation attempts to challenge any reading that reduces it to one dimension. In other words, this study argues that the pair's theater is highly diverse in terms of content and form. Perhaps the key words to describe this theater are "resistance" and "diversity,"—because this theater resists the ways in which social institutions were annexed by a Tunisian regime that was authoritarian, incompetent, and repressive for the last fifty years. Moreover, aspects that are embodied in each performance—including the social, political, and aesthetic ones—suggest subjects for reflection on the conditions of Tunisian society and on the nature of political theater.

This dissertation draws on literary criticism and theater theories, especially the theories of distancing and repetition. The Brechtian theory of distancing is discussed in

Chapter Three; that of repetition is examined in Chapter Five. Chapter Three examines how Baccar's *Junūn* (Dementia, 2001) is in dialogue with a transnational convention that uses the psychiatric institution metaphorically. This chapter also shows how this convention is conveyed in myriad works of fiction. What makes Baccar's drama unique is the way in which the playwright appropriates the psychiatric case study in light of the original writings of psychiatrist Néjia Zemni. *Junūn* is also unique in the sense that the theater becomes a space where both the protagonist Nūn and Zemni's real-life patient N., whom she treated over fifteen years, meet. Baccar does not claim to replace the ward with the theater, but by arranging for Nūn—the character Baccar created, and N.—the patient Zemni treated, to meet, shows how the theater company Familia Productions is experimental in every possible way. Chapter Four provides analysis and discussion of *Khamsūn* from political and historical perspectives. The investigation of *Khamsūn* also introduces stylistic and artistic techniques in an attempt to offer fresh insights to understanding how the social critique is represented. Brechtian theory is useful to understanding and enriching the discussions about social and political criticisms in Baccar's plays. Despite the theories that are useful to explain Baccar and Jaïbi's work, it is important to note that this theater is not based on any theoretical certainties. Their play *Tsunami*, for instance, can be considered as a turning point in their theatrical trajectory because, with this 2013 performance,⁵ audiences noticed an aesthetic shift from performing stories on stage to representing immediate cultural and political sensibilities that are grounded in the political history of Tunisia. As discussed in Chapter Five, *Tsunami* leads us to ask whether the play is a link in Baccar and Jaïbi's chain of dramatic stories which critique the Tunisian regime, whether this last play marks an aesthetic rupture, and if so, for what purposes?

Most importantly, the very language used for this dissertation—English—bridges a gap in scholarship about North African theater. While there are many texts available in

French and Arabic about Arab theater, the literature in English is very limited and Tunisian theater in particular has been neglected. Further challenges to studying Baccar and Jaïbi in English-speaking countries include the fact that some of their plays are only available in Arabic and/or French. Among such works are *Junūn*, *'Ushaq al-Maqhā al-Mahjūr* (Lovers of the deserted café, 1995), and *al-Baḥth 'an 'Ayda* (Searching for Aida, 1998). It was not possible, for example, to obtain the 1995 play in Arabic, and therefore reading it in French was the only option. Exceptions include *Araberlin* (Arab/ Berlin, 2002), their only play that was translated from French to English. Baccar originally wrote it in French. The play was also translated into German so it could be presented for the opening of the Berlin festival (Festspiele) that same year. Moreover, *Araberlin* was never staged in Tunisia. The lack of material available in English has undeniably limited Jaïbi and Baccar's popularity in the English-language world. Another limiting factor is the choice of the playwrights to use the Tunisian dialect and Modern Standard Arabic, thus limiting the audience to Tunisian speakers, and to a lesser degree, non-academics. Both reasons for marginalization mean that the director/playwright pair's theater productions have been studied by only a handful of specialists. Among these, one must note Hafedh Djedidi and his *Le Théâtre tunisien dans tous ses états* (The Tunisian theater in all its states, 2003), in which he argues that Jaïbi's choice of theater space is unconventional. He illustrates his point by alluding to the 1978 performance, *Arab*, which took place in the Cathedral of Carthage.⁶ While this dissertation does not focus on *Arab* because the play script is not available, the way in which the director experiments with space is significant. This study reveals that not only the earliest plays but also the most recent ones exhibit different aesthetics just by being performed in unusual spaces. The 2013 *Tsunami*, for instance, marks a shift in the theater aesthetics of Jaïbi as he presents this performance in Dougga, the Roman amphitheater, without the use of artificial lighting. Altering the use of space is a characteristic of Jaïbi's theater. The purpose of this

alteration from his habit is to cope with urgent criticism due to ideological changes in the post-revolution era.

While Baccar and Jaïbi's performances are well-known in Tunisia and at least familiar in Europe, this dissertation on their theatrical productions will help bring greater attention to the value of their enterprise. My goal is to contribute to bringing their plays to a larger audience in academia through an extensive and ground-breaking study. While scholars such as Marvin Carlson and Margaret Litvin have already acknowledged the importance of Baccar's oeuvre to an English-language audience, this study provides more analysis and criticism of everything from the best-known plays such as *Khamsūn* to the little known *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (First real rain of the fall season, 1980). Carlson, for instance, included Baccar's *Araberlin* in his anthology of Arabic plays in English translation.⁷ Following this translation, Amine and Carlson co-authored a valuable work of criticism, "Post Colonial Theatre in the Maghreb."⁸ While the research in this book highlights the cultural and political history of North African theater, the authors devoted a very small section to Tunisian theater in general, and only three pages specifically to the theater of Baccar and Jaïbi.⁹

In addition to Amine and Carlson, Laura Chakravarty Box also argues that Arab theater is a field neglected by Western and even Arab scholars. I hope to make this study of North African theater a source of inspiration for scholars interested in exploring other Tunisian theater troupes and national theaters in North Africa. The lack of knowledge regarding Arab theater in the English-speaking world is also tackled by theater scholar Litvin whose focus on Baccar's *Khamsūn*—which she saw at the 2009 Arabesque festival in Washington D.C.—was followed by an essay in which she expressed her concern about the problem of misunderstanding the play.¹⁰ For her, the play risks being misinterpreted in the West in the sense that it can be taken to reinforce European and American preconceived ideas about Islam, religious violence, and the veil. Litvin's concern is reasonable because Jaïbi's

theater is unknown not only to the English-speaking world, but also to the majority of scholars whose fields are not specifically related to Arab theater.

In her book *Dissident Writings of Arab Women: Voices against Violence*, Francophone scholar Brinda Mehta introduces Baccar and other Middle Eastern and North African women writers who have composed creative works as a protest against social injustice, especially at times of instability such as war and political transition. In addition to Baccar, the author studied Assia Djebar, Leïla Sebbar, Fatima Gallaire, Evelyne Accad, Aïcha Ech-Channa, Laila Lalami, and others. I was fortunate to be permitted to read Mehta's book proposal in which she shows how these works disrupt patriarchal, nationalist, and colonial elements, forcing audiences to examine the Arab identity and culture in new ways.¹¹ Mehta's publication is an important contribution to women's studies, particularly, regarding women's resistance to violence through creativity.

This dissertation is interdisciplinary in the sense that it provides a survey of important plays and performances by Baccar and Jaïbi based mainly on theater history and criticism. This dissertation also aims at mitigating any misunderstandings by providing the historical, political, and cultural contexts needed to understand their theater productions.¹² My strategy for writing this dissertation is also based on the goal of including field work that consists of interviews with the director-playwright pair. Through these interviews, conducted during the summer of 2009 and 2012, I discovered how Jaïbi and Baccar's approach to writing scripts is grounded in the interaction between the page and the stage. Both conversations greatly inspired the main ideas discussed in this dissertation. Interviewing Jaïbi and Baccar, as well as reading and listening to many other interviews, a few recorded rehearsals, and checking information on Familia's official website helped considerably in documenting my study. The interviews provided insight into some of the ideas which guided this study. These interviews are included as appendices one and two. I also collected any relevant information about

Baccar and Jaïbi and posted it on a website which I've made available to the public.¹³

My study is also informed by knowledge of the principles of the New Theater and Familia Productions. The New Theater itself is influenced by avant-garde European style. The best illustration of this influence is in how Jaïbi and Baccar's theater continues to use the Brechtian theory of distancing. A close analysis of several of their theater productions from 1976 to 2013 also shows that this theater continues to explore ways of resistance that vary stylistically—from using metaphor to direct representation when portraying social and political changes.

Two major paths allowed me to understand these plays: my experience in watching live and recorded performances and speaking to the playwrights directly, and the more distant, more intellectual approach through the study of available texts: scripts, advertisements, reviews, scholarly studies. This study also reconstructs performances by paying particular attention to the principles of the New Theater and Familia Productions, both of which contributed to understanding these two playwrights over the course of their careers. Contextualizing them in the history of theater in Tunisia and in their political context, and including insights from scholarly and critical writings in Arabic that others writing in English and French have ignored, make this dissertation on Tunisian theater, particularly centering my investigation on the director-playwright pair, an important contribution to the study of theater in North Africa.

Due to the limited number of books and articles in English on Familia Productions, this dissertation relied heavily on primary sources written in Arabic and French. It benefited from professors and students' research, such as B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses preserved at the Institute of Dramatic Arts in Tunis. While there is no Ph.D. exclusively focused on Familia, I realized that several B.A. and M.A. dissertations written mostly in Arabic (and some in

French) did focus on the theater of Baccar and Jaïbi. Central themes of these dissertations include acting, scenography, violence, women actors, and others (see my bibliography).

This study also probes important questions regarding the history of Tunisian theater which are not limited to documentation. Instead, this dissertation uses the historical approach to show how the Tunisian theater has, in many important ways since the colonial era, helped foster socio-political debate. Most Tunisian writers who contributed to the literature on the history of theater have referred to Moncef Charfeddine's documentary work. Mohamed Massoud Driss also published a detailed study on Tunisian theater from 1881 to 1956 *Dirāsāt fī tāriḫ al-Masraḥ al-Tūnisī: 1881–1956* (Studies on the history of Tunisian theater: 1881–1956, 2007). *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theater: The Arab World*¹⁴ also notes that in the 1980s and 1990s Charfeddine and M. M. Driss documented the most important stages of Tunisia's theater history which span two and a half centuries (1741–2001). Most North African theater studies mentioned the year 1741—in passing—as generally being the first time the Tunisian Ottoman ruler 'Ali Bey Pacha observed a theatrical performance. The story revolves around a French troupe that, after being captured by Tunisian pirates on the Mediterranean in 1741, performed pantomimes in order to entertain the Bey and thus save their lives (1735–56).¹⁵ My efforts in this study, however, consist in probing this anecdote to discover whether it is historically valid and thus important to the history of Tunisian theater.¹⁶ While the idea of periodization of Tunisian theater starting from that date is not mine, the research I conducted with regard to that date is promising and innovative in the sense that it has the capacity to become a valuable resource on Tunisian theater history. I am indebted to theater scholar Robert Henke who encouraged me to pursue verification of this date.

The works of other scholars who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s combine both theater history and criticism. In his work *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fī-l Masraḥ al-'Arabī al-*

Jadīd: al-Masrah fi Tūnis (The useful and concise guide to new Arab theater: Theater in Tunisia, 2009), Mohamed Al-Madyouni provides a concise background on the critical events which drove the evolution of Tunisia theater from the beginning of the twentieth century to 2009. Al-Madyouni highlights both the impact of Egyptian troupes and the European influencing of Tunisian artists—often while at University—on Tunisian Theater. He focuses on four main historical moments to describe how Tunisian theater evolved from the perspective of the changes the theater has seen in Tunisia. In this way, al-Madyouni’s approach examines the history of theater from within, overlooking theater changes through the political lens. This dissertation demonstrates how each of Familia’s plays provides an occasion to critique Tunisian politics and society. These plays are grounded in the present and can only be understood within their cultural, political and ideological contexts. Baccar and Jaïbi’s theater is both experimental in the sense that it relies on inventing writing and dramatic techniques and aims at politically mobilizing the masses through culture and art.

However, despite the aforementioned research, to this date I have not come across any comprehensive, lengthy, and in-depth study in English about the Tunisian playwright and actress Baccar or any extensive critical writings on the performances directed by Jaïbi. In light of the limited research on Familia Productions Theater Company, this dissertation also seeks to fill a gap, particularly in the study of Tunisian, North African, and Arab theaters in general, which all remain largely neglected fields. I hope to extend the research on Tunisian Theater by fostering debate within the framework of feminist and reception studies modeled by other fields. The various kinds of discussions that emerge from this project may also become sources of inspiration for further research on other Tunisian and Arab theater companies.¹⁷ Even while the subject of this study is specifically national – Tunisian theater – and emphasizes the national (political, social, cultural) contexts of the drama, it also demonstrates the importance of a comparative approach, the permeability of national borders,

and the interconnections with other literatures, especially the ways in which influence flows in both directions.

The dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapter One: “Background of Tunisian Theater History,” provides an overview beginning with the delayed introduction of Arab theater and continuing with the historical background for the Tunisian Theater. While early encounters of Ottoman leaders with theater were both unplanned and sporadic, my focus is on the later phase of theater in Tunisia that played an important part under colonial rule. Tunisian theater of this colonial period played a key role in fostering revolt and promoting national identity. This chapter serves as a background not only for the general reader but also for the scholar of Arab theater who may not know Tunisian theater and the particularities of al-Masrah al-Jadid (The New Theater of Tunis, also known as Le Nouveau Théâtre de Tunis, 1975), from which Familia Productions evolved. The chapter looks at a number of events and periods: a visit in 1741 by a French theater troupe, colonial period theater, and drama in the period of independence (1956–). It also introduces the Jaïbian and Baccarian enterprise during the seventies. For the first chapter, I rely on many works on Tunisian history, including Charfeddine’s *Deux siècles de théâtre en Tunisie* (Two centuries of theater in Tunisia, 2001) and M. M. Driss’s *Fī Tārīkh al-Masrah at-Tūnsī: Nusūs wa Wathā’iq* (Texts and documents about the history of Tunisian theater, 2007). Charfeddine is a journalist and was among the earliest writers who presented Tunisian theater history and criticism to various audiences by writing books, editing a periodical, and broadcasting radio programs, such as Radio Tunis Chaîne Internationale (Tunis International Radio Channel), under the title *Chroniques tunisiennes* (Tunisian chronicles) during the late 1960s. Charfeddine also worked as the Tunisian government secretary in the cultural affairs section during the 1960s.

Chapter Two: “The Development of the New Theater,” outlines how the New Theater emerged and evolved. To account for the evolution of Familia Productions (1993), the current

theater company of Baccar and Jaïbi, it is necessary to describe Baccar and Jaïbi's previous experiences in other troupes, including Masrah al-Janūb (The Theater of Gafsa, 1972) and the New Theater itself. These regional troupes contributed to the development of the director and the playwright/actress. Chapter Two also examines how these experiences shaped the principles of the New Theater that continue to guide Familia Productions.

With this foundation laid, Chapter Three: "From Silence to Madness, from Madness to Speech: Mental Institution as a Metaphor," offers a close reading of *Junūn*. The play under discussion is based on the case study, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène: Récit d'une psychanalyse sans divan* (Diary of discourse on schizophrenia: Account of psychoanalysis without sofa, 1999),¹⁸ written by Tunisian psychotherapist Néjia Zemni. My analysis demonstrates how the original case study illuminates the understanding of *Junūn* in the way it discusses how the psychiatric institution is a microcosm of society. The asylum metaphor helps to support the overall argument of the dissertation by staging an example of social criticism mediated by social pathology that infects Tunisian social institutions. Through the representation of both the family and the hospital in *Junūn*, Baccar and Jaïbi present the daily humiliation of the protagonist and his psychiatrist as evidence of a dysfunctional Tunisian regime that needs to be changed. Chapter Three also illustrates how Jaïbi's plays rely on Brechtian ideas of performance and reviews the set of techniques used to increase audience awareness on the need to overcome silence and act against all types of social oppression.

The call for social change and socio-political criticism are also illustrated in Chapter Four through my readings of *Khamsūn* written by Baccar and directed by Jaïbi and *Les amoureux du café désert* (The lovers of the deserted café, 1997) written and directed by the Jaïbi. This chapter examines political and cultural repression in terms of content and tone. The central theme of criticism regarding Islamic terrorism is repeated through a chain of stories whereby the tone changes from indirect to direct. The significance of *Khamsūn* lies in

how it represents the events in Tunisian society in order point to omissions in Tunisian politics, such as plurality. In this play, the playwright dramatizes the fear provoked by Islamic terrorism through the story of a suicide bomber. Baccar's portrayal of the Tunisian police state system suggests that the issue of tyranny is not only related to an extreme of Islamism but also to the regime itself. The playwright also calls out the regime for considering Islamicist movements as monolithic. Chapter Four also discusses diversity by resisting single-mindedness at many important levels. The interplay of language (Modern Standard Arabic and dialect) and its social and political dimensions add to the multiple thematic and aesthetic choices to form strategies that the director and playwright implement to critique the hostility of the Tunisian regime. *Khamsūn* employs a wealth of dramatic language, including choreography, costumes, and staging techniques in order to convey social and political protest and to challenge the ruling establishment.

Chapter Five: "Repetition and Difference in Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi's Theater," steps back to consider the effectiveness of the couple's recycling of material. This chapter considers theories of repetition and asks whether the repetition of themes, tropes, and character types in multiple plays by Jaïbi and Baccar gives the audience a sense of greater meaning through accumulation. In their plays, repetition—and especially repetition with variation—is intriguing rather than redundant. By repeating certain elements, the Familia plays with the added meaning created by intertextuality and helps create familiarity among audiences. Examples of reiteration include *Khamsūn*, which is not the first of Baccar and Jaïbi's works to engage audiences with the theme of Islamic terrorism. As the dissertation title suggests, in "hammering down the same nail," their theater often revisits topics. A decade before *Khamsūn*, *Les amoureux du café désert*, explored this global dilemma in a North African context—albeit tangentially. Jaïbi's aim was to warn the audience of the possible threat of Islamic terrorism in Tunisia because it was then present in Algeria, next

door. The theme of Islamic terrorism is, however, more central to *Khamsūn*. Despite the gloomy tone in both plays, the latter transforms this bleak tendency by broadening its traditional textual focus.

The conclusion of the dissertation evaluates the importance of Baccar and Jaïbi's theater in the larger context of Tunisian theater and the major role it plays in Tunisian society. It is crucial to ask whether the theater of Jaïbi and Baccar has played—and continues to play—a role in teaching audiences about Tunisian culture and politics. The conclusion also assesses whether Jaïbi and Baccar's enterprise has contributed to theater aesthetics. While I do not underestimate the talented troupes that emerged around the same time and shortly after the birth of Jaïbi and Baccar's theater, both the popularity and complexity of the latter are the main motives for this study. The attempt of this theater to subvert the foundations of key institutions in Tunisia makes its themes bold. *Khamsūn* offers challenging critique, for example, when it addresses the issue of torture among other serious topics, but audiences can be touched by these topics in the deepest ways possible (emotionally and intellectually). This dissertation leaves other excellent troupes for other research occasions and other scholars to investigate. The conclusion also takes into consideration the representation of protest in Arabic theater.

Finally, I wanted this dissertation to be on theater because for me, there is no substitute for the face-to-face presence of actors onstage. Theater shows human genius in its immediacy. Because theater has live action, it better displays how talented actors are. Like dance, music, and other arts, theater connects people with each other. Due to its invaluable function in creating community, if only temporarily, theater will continue to persist, especially in the post-modern, urban environment of alienation. If today the theater of Baccar and Jaïbi continues to attract thousands of spectators, it is because theater is not based only on the playwright's script and the *mise-en-scène* of the director. Its uniqueness lies in

engaging an active audience. As Jon Whitmore notes, “The final meanings of a performance are concocted not by the playwright, not by the director or performers, but by each spectator, uniquely.”¹⁹ Whitmore’s statement expresses best how this dissertation is an attempt to interpret some of the plays of Baccar and Jaïbi by attending performances when possible, reading scripts, theater documentation and criticism when available in print, and decoding performances by taking the Tunisian political and cultural contexts into consideration. Whitmore’s statement highlights the importance of interpretive work by each spectator. While this study is aware of the unique experience of attending a performance, it dares to take up the script to explore it and approach it in new ways. This intellectual exercise can be accomplished through a process of analysis of a given text or performance, and I therefore question the spectator’s attendance as a constitutive part of what Whitmore interprets as “the essence of the performance experience.”²⁰ This dissertation shows how it is possible to rely on the written word in order to understand each performance in-depth, which forms an essential part of theater studies and criticism to reflect on the field in general and to help move it forward. Reading, analyzing, and rethinking a performance is certainly more complicated than the direct experience lived by a random spectator. In order to understand the significance of Baccar and Jaïbi’s work, it is necessary to take a few steps back to survey the history of Tunisian theater.

1. *The Lion and the Jewel*, by Wole Soyinka, directed by Ron Himes, Edison Theatre, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, April 19, 2008.

2. Personal names are spelled in accordance with the way the authors’ names appear in publications.

3. Foreign words and are written according to the International Journal of Middle East Studies (*IJMES*) transliteration system.

4. Fadhel Jaïbi, recorded interview with Rafika Zahrouni, Tunis, July 26 2009.

5. *Tsunami*, by Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi, directed by Fadhel Jaïbi, performed by Jalila Baccar, Fatma Ben Saïdane, Ramzi Azaiez, Toumadhir Zrili, and Mohamed Ali Kalaï, performance in Carthage, 16 July 2013.

6. Hafedh Djedidi, *Le Théâtre tunisien dans tous ses états* [The Tunisian theater in all its states] (Hammam Sousse: Dar el-Mizen, 2003), 120.

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7. Jalila Baccar, *Araberlin*, in *Four Plays from North Africa*, ed. Marvin Carlson (New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2008), 86–207.
8. Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson, “Post Colonial Theatre in the Maghreb,” in *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 131–76.
9. *Ibid.*, 211–13.
10. Margaret Litvin, “Doomed by ‘Dialogue,’ Saved by Curiosity? Post-9/11 Arab Performances under American Eyes,” in *Doomed by Hope: Essays on Arab Theatre*, ed. Eyad Houssami (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 158–77.
11. Brinda J. Mehta, “Dissident Creativity and Social Justice in Arab Women’s Postcolonial Texts” typescript, book proposal for Mills College, California, 2014.
12. Occasionally, the secondary sources themselves need to be contrasted with primary ones due to mistakes that have been recorded. In Oliver Leaman’s *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film* (2001), for instance, I found an inaccurate reference to Jaïbi as the cofounder of the Théâtre de L’Époque in Paris. Earlier sources, however, state that the theater director Jaïbi cofounded with Mohammed Driss was Le Théâtre Épique (The Epic Theater). In addition to mistakes that are either caused by inaccurate translation or misunderstanding, there are many other small errors with regard to dates, especially the ones that did not make it to publication and thus remain drafts/manuscripts, as well as the dates that refer to the time when Tunisian theater companies were founded. Tunisian theater history is in many ways a puzzle, the pieces of which can be put together if more research is conducted to resolve the confusion and lack of knowledge about the field, especially regarding inconsistencies as to events and dates. A new theater history could certainly facilitate future research on Tunisian theater.
13. See <https://sites.google.com/site/jalilabaccarandfadheljaiebi/>.
14. Don Rubin, *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: The Arab World*, vol. 4 (New York: Routledge, 1999), 259.
15. “Bey” is a title that refers to a dynasty of rulers, including regional governors, who ruled Tunisia from 1574 to 1881, during the era of the Ottoman Empire.
16. Among the sources that are crucial to examine the event of 1741: *Lettre d'un comédien à un de ses amis: Touchant sa captivité & celle de vingt-six de ses camarades chez les corsaires de Tunis avec une description historique & exacte de la ville de Gênes . . .* [Letter of a comedian to one of his friends . . .] (Paris: Clément, 1741), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, <http://www.bnf.fr/>.
17. The theatrical experience of Tunisian theater director Tawfik Jebali, for instance, is worth investigating. Jebali’s quality of performances is no less important than Jaïbi’s despite the fact that his theater company, El Teatro, is less popular than Familia.
18. Néjia Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène : Récit d'une psychanalyse sans divan* [Diary of discourse on schizophrenia: Account of psychoanalysis without a sofa] (Paris: Harmattan, 1999), <http://livre.fnac.com/a873747/N-Zemni-Chronique-d-un-discours-schizophrène-recit-d-une-psychanalys/>.
19. Jon Whitmore, *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 15.
20. *Ibid.*

Chapter 1: Background of Tunisian Theater History

This chapter provides a general overview of Tunisian theater history. It begins with an early history, providing an analysis of the lateness of theater's appearance in the Arab world and the delay of drama in Arabic literature based on the speculations of a number of scholars and theater historians. Then I describe the general history of Tunisian theater in terms of the important stages through which it has passed from 1741 to the present time. Like most histories, the development of Tunisian theater cannot be told in a consistent linear narrative. Rather than a smooth chronological development, a number of seemingly unrelated events have contributed to its evolution. The year 1741 marks the story of a French troupe that, after being captured by Tunisian pirates on the Mediterranean, performed pantomimes in order to entertain Ali Bey Pacha. The reception of the pantomimes reveals that shadow plays were probably the only form of theater known to the Bey of Tunisia at the time. After the rise of the shadow play in Turkey, it took the modern Arab play about three centuries to emerge with the father of modern Arabic theater, the Lebanese Marun al-Naqqash.¹ Al-Naqqash staged *al-Bakhīl* (The Miser), an adaptation of *l'Avare* by Molière in 1847. Then, it was not until the twentieth century that Arabic theater began to develop and become part both of cultural life and of Arabic literature based on works done by the disciples of an-Naqqash, including the Egyptian Sulayman al-Qardahi. Al-Qardahi had a major role in the formation of Tunisian theater.

In addition to the impact of the Ottoman shadow play tradition and the early European and Arab visiting troupes on Tunisian theater, this chapter also explores how, throughout its history, Tunisian theater has developed in relation to French theater by analyzing the degree of assimilation versus nativism, as well as the ability of Tunisian theater to situate itself within the spectrum between these two poles. Through this analysis, the chapter underscores

the important connections between Tunisian politics and theater to show how they engage one another, and thus Tunisian theater differentiates itself from French theater. After the end of the colonial period, both Tunisian politics and theater continued to express submissiveness and resistance, but from this point, toward the Tunisian establishment.

Most Tunisian writers who have contributed to the literature on the history of theater have referred to theater historians Charfeddine and M. M. Driss's documentary work as well as al-Madyouni's work that combines history and criticism. Charfeddine proposes that the history of theater in Tunisia spans three periods: the first from 1741 to 1914, the second between the two World Wars, and the third from 1945 to the present. His analysis is valuable in making the fundamental connections between theater history in Tunisia before, during, and after the colonial era, which lasted from 1881 to 1956. Al-Madyouni's approach to theater examines the history of theater from within, describing its development without accounting for theater changes through the political lens. In his detailed study on Tunisian theater from 1881 to 1956 (2007), al-Madyouni examines four stages. The first of these phases spans the foundation at the beginning of the 19th century to 1922. Then he describes the second stage from 1922 to 1962 during which theater in Tunisia began to assert itself. The third stage continues until the second half of the 1970s, the period in which Tunisian theater becomes established. To this stage, the author attributes the quality of starting to ask questions. Al-Madyouni also introduces what he calls the stage of maturity (1970s-present). He argues that these stages are dialectically connected in the sense that one type or phase of theater has a certain impact on the other. To illustrate his point, al-Madyouni highlights the importance of including theater in programs for primary and secondary schools and universities to build some potential for students who will pursue a career in theater.

The Origins of the Arabic Theater

Scholarly speculation on the three centuries late appearance of Arab theater is a source of endless discussion. Most scholars date the beginnings of Arab theater as following the rise of European classical drama. Other scholars suggest that the lack of interest in Greek literature among Arab scholars to be the cause. In Carlson's translation, *The Arab Oedipus*, author Tawfiq al-Hakim reflects on the late birth and development of Arab theater, referring to the absence of Arabic translations of Greek drama. Thus, for many centuries theater did not constitute a part of Arabic literature. However, al-Hakim notes that theater was considered part of literature in Europe: "The theater world and the literary world in Europe are intertwined... drama is a branch of literature studied in the institutes and universities as literature before being submitted to the stage. Europe inherited this literature from the Greeks."² The correlation between literature and Greek civilization suggests a parallel between the art of showing and the figurative art, both of which were absent in Islamic civilizations. However, the absence of figurative art, for example, is not specific to Islamic civilization only. As an example, the observer of the ancient Nabatean culture may notice that the concept of negating figurative representation is a feature of Nabatean art, including sculpture to the extent that most of the impressive facades of today's Petra are plain. Joseph Patrich's research on the nonfigurative character of the Nabatean art demonstrates that unlike the Greco-Roman art in which the gods have figures, the negation of figurative representation in this ancient Eastern culture dates back to many centuries before Islam.³

Al-Hakim argues that among the reasons that might explain the rupture between Greek and Arabic literature is the difficulty of establishing theater in a mobile society such as that of nomadic Arabs. Moreover, he notes that the excellence of Arabs in pre-Islamic poetry may be another reason the Arabs did not develop a drama tradition, especially because poetry was written in verse. The Arabs' preference for poetry at the expense of drama may be illustrated through the proximity of poetry and oral tradition as it appears in Averroes's (Ibn

Rushd) translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. In the *Poetics*, Averroes confuses the terms tragedy and comedy with the panegyric and satirical poetic genres.⁴ Averroes's translation may explain why Arabs did not know theater. However, one has to be cautious in reaching such a conclusion. Scholarly debates continue regarding whether Averroes used an accurate version of Aristotle's *Poetics* and whether the texts he used for his translation did not already include such flaws.⁵

Islamic culture has also been posited as a contributing factor to the late appearance of Arabic theater. Author al-Hakim suggests that Arabs refrained from drama because Greek tragedy is concerned with worshipping Baccus, the god of wine. Even so, the playwright does not necessarily see Islam as in conflict with theater. In fact, al-Hakim engages Islamic scripts in one of his earliest plays, *Ahl-al Kahf* (The people of the Cave, 1933).⁶ In this work, al-Hakim draws on the cave story from the Qur'ān to dramatize man's conflict with time. *Ahl-al Kahf* explores the relationship between man and unseen forces in terms of accord with Islamic thought.

It is unlikely that al-Hakim's thought would have been acceptable one century earlier. The Egyptian theologian Rifa 'Rafi'al-Tahtawi, however, argued that theater was not useful for Muslims. He lived in Paris from 1826 to 1831 and documented many aspects of Parisian life, including theater. In his work (*Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric*, 1834),⁷ al-Tahtawi describes the importance of this art for Parisians, but he does not propose importing it to Egypt. He argues that from an Islamic standpoint, theater practice is profane. Al-Tahtawi felt that theater would keep people away from religious practice. Al-Tahtawi's ideas fit in the context of Nahda/Arab Renaissance—a nineteenth-century reform movement that called for the awakening of Arabic literature, education, and religious as well as political thought.⁸ Al-Tahtawi explains, "You should know that when these people [the French] finish their usual activities to ensure their livelihood, they do not

get involved in matters of devotion; rather, they spend their time indulging in worldly matters, entertainment and games, in which they display a truly amazing versatility.”⁹ Later Arabic scholars did not share al-Tahtawi’s ideas due to a split among Arab thinkers who either suggested contemplation of religious practices in order to move to a more modern life style, or to go back to the traditional-cultural roots as a way to assert the authentic self. While in the context of Nahda movement more attention was first paid to translating thousands of scientific books, later the elite of the period showed greater and greater interest in new genres, such as the short story, drama, and the novel.

It is also worth noting that because theater, for al-Tahtawi, is thought to represent a threat, he recommends *sema*‘, a type of ritual performance during which performers—whirling Dervishes—listen to mystical music and dance following rhythmic movements with their bodies.¹⁰ Unlike theater, *sema*‘ expresses people’s religious devotion. This whirling tradition is not separated from the context of worship in general and Sufism in particular. Al-Tahtawi was among the first Egyptians to grapple with the question of adjusting to the West and to providing answers in Islamic terms. When al-Tahtawi went to Paris in 1826 as a religious teacher to a group of Egyptian students there, the head of the delegation, Khawāja Jūmar, did not mention drama in his program. During this period, drama was not thought to be a contributor to the modernization of Egypt. In Jūmar’s program, not only is literature classified at the bottom of the hierarchy after philosophy, science, and linguistics, but drama was not included because it was not considered worthy of translation. Yet again the question of whether Islam is the cause for the delay of Arab theater seems simplistic given the complicated nature of Islam in the very diverse Muslim societies. The above contradiction between al-Hakim and al-Tahtawi’s views reveals two opposing approaches to Islam. As these are the views of individuals, it is useful to ask whether theater is part of culture in Muslim societies in general. And it was. *Ta’ziah*, for instance, is an elegiac performance that

involves the re-enactment of an important seventh century event, commemorating the battle in which the Shi'ites (followers of Ali, Prophet Mohamed's cousin) were defeated. In many parts of the world, including Iran, Egypt, and other Middle Eastern as well as Asian countries, such as India, this performance is enacted on this day every year to mourn this defeat.¹¹

Therefore, it may be more productive to focus on the reception of theater in Muslim societies rather than on Islamic views on theater. For instance, critic M. M. Badawi suggests that Arabic drama is only a Western import. However, the author's claim about the roots of modern Arabic drama is not clear-cut since he appears fully aware of medieval dramatic representations.¹² In his critique of Badawi, the British scholar and translator of Arabic literature Paul Starkey acknowledges that theater in the Arab world must be influenced by Muslim and Arabic culture, thus avoiding a reductionist view that claims theater either as a completely Western import due to European colonization, or a late, entirely indigenous product. Starkey notes, "while it is impossible to deny the existence of numerous dramatic elements in Muslim culture and Arabic literature, it is equally clear that until the mid-nineteenth century, the Arab world had not been home to a theatrical tradition of the type found, for example, in the classical civilizations of Greece or Rome, or in Elizabethan England."¹³ Starkey's cautious view acknowledges that Arabic culture has had instances of theatricality since medieval times. Starkey argues that it is important to acknowledge the historical antecedents of Arabic drama in the Arab world and to show how Western drama was received.

Shadow Plays or Karagoz

Karagoz is a form of shadow play that prospered under the Ottoman Empire. The Turks did not create the shadow play genre; records show this art was brought to Turkey

during the sixteenth century. The medieval author Ibn Hazm al-Andalussi mentions that shadow plays were seen in Spain during the 11th century. Two centuries later, the first Arab shadow plays were written by an Iraqi playwright who lived in Egypt, named Mohammed Ibn Daniyal (1248-1311). The first preserved records of shadow plays in Arabic are traced to this thirteenth-century playwright, who is considered the father of Arab Shadow Theater.¹⁴ In the beginning, this form of theater appeared only in royal courts. Then, it was brought to Istanbul during the sixteenth century and was introduced in the seventeenth century to North Africa where it became more popular as it was presented in Arabic and attended by common people.

Theater critic Shmuel Moreh provides an in-depth analysis of the shadow play genre, indicating that the noun *Khayāl* (shadow) hints at live performance. Moreh, however, introduces Arab shadow plays in terms of content, rather than form. He also explains that the verb *Khayāla* means in Arabic, “to improvise an exchange of sharp retorts or making fun of somebody.”¹⁵ In Edward William Lane’s dictionary, the term *Khayāl* applies to “anything that one sees like a shadow” (Vol. 1. 835). Moreh explains how shadow plays are characterized by their ungrammatical style and impudent content.¹⁶ He also specifies that the figure of the *Karagoz* was at first just a comic and talkative commentator on local matters, but gradually this commentator became more negative and obscene. The critic explains that this form of art aims to entertain the audience, using verbal routines based on improvisation. He also argues that the existence of traditions and ritual practices imply that in the Muslim world there was an established tradition of live theater since medieval times, if only at the popular level.¹⁷ However, in his study of shadow plays in the Arab world Moreh admits, “We are not told much about the manner in which performers of *hikāyāt* [stories] or *khayāl* did their acting.”¹⁸ Although the oral tradition could be one major reason for the ambiguity of the term *Karagoz* and the lack of information about this popular Arab theater, the obscene

content of the shadow plays, too, might have played a role in keeping it to an oral rather than written form.

Much earlier than Moreh, al-Tahtawi tried to define French theater in terms of “*Khayāl*,”¹⁹ a term that does not say anything about theater as we know it today called *Masrah* (theater) rather than *Khayāl*—shadow. Al-Tahtawi took French theater for *Khayāl*, which is the only form of theater he knew. His unfamiliarity with the modern form of theater is manifested through his focus on the physical description of the theater he visited in Paris. Al-Tahtawi’s description of Parisian theater is a religiously subversive reflection of how he personally perceived this art as entertaining and thus a threat that weakens the Muslim’s relationship to his Lord. His speculations suggest that he probably took the content of French theater for the obscene content of shadow plays.

The Tunisian theater scholar Mahmoud al-Majri, refers to the traveller Ibn Battuta who provides a valuable source to account for the history of Shadow Theater. For instance, he describes how Ibn Battuta witnessed African theater in the state of Mali based on the use of costumes and masks.²⁰ The author indicates that the tradition of Karagoz existed much earlier in Tunisia than the tradition of puppet plays, which later replaced the Karagoz. In this way the critic makes an important distinction between *Khayāl* (three-dimensional theater) and Karagoz (flat theater), arguing that unlike the one-dimensional Karagoz, *Khayāl* refers to the three-dimensional puppet plays. The theater critic also notes that Karagoz was not in the theatrical traditions of the Monguls, central Asia, and Persia.²¹ In agreement with al-Majri, Farouq Sa’d also explains that Persia knew a similar form of theater to *Khayāl* known as *Fānūs al-Khayāl*.²² In his study on the medievalist playwright Ibn daniyal, scholar Hamada Ibrahim also notes that shadow plays originating in China were subsequently exported to Turkey, Persia, and, later, to Africa and the Arab world.²³ Shadow plays became part of the theatrical scene in Tunisia in the seventeenth century during the Ottoman rule. However, the

first recorded instances of Tunisian Karagoz came from nineteenth-century travelers who attended shadow performances.

Shadow Plays in Tunisia

Karagoz in Tunisia is mentioned in chronicles of theater. In Charfeddine's *Tārīkh al-masrah al-Tūnisī: Mundhu Nash'atihi ila al-Ḥarb al-'Alamia al-'Ūlā* (The History of Tunisian theater: from its emergence to the end of the first World War, 1972),²⁴ Karagoz is sometimes labeled in Tunisia as "Karakūz." Performers work behind a backlit curtain so as to project shadows. Theater historian Charfeddine defines Karagoz as "playing with pictures that are made of thick cardboard to represent shadows from behind the screen, moving and narrating hilarious stories; trans mine."²⁵ Charfeddine states that Karagoz usually involves a popular cynical character who aims to entertain his audience, and is known to present bold and political satire.

This form of art is documented in the accounts of European travelers such as Jean Lux and Paul Arène toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. These travelers described both the themes and the settings of the shadow plays they watched in Tunisia. During his visit in 1884, Arène states, he attended shadow plays that took place in a spinning and weaving shop. The shadow plays were not limited to Tunisian theater practitioners. Yves Chatelain mentions that Paul Laffitte presented a shadow play, *Malḥamat Carthage* ("The Epic Story of Carthage") in Tunis in 1901.²⁶ In these accounts, Karagoz is described as a popular indigenous performance presented in the native dialect, especially to celebrate Ramadan (month of fasting for the Muslims) nights.²⁷

In his journals, André Gide describes the Tunisian Karagoz he attended during his sojourn in Tunisia toward the end of the nineteenth century. Author Gide summarizes the play, *Lu 'bat Karagoz fi-l- Ḥammam* (A Karagoz's game in the Turkish bath,) which tells the

story of the character Karagoz who likes to go to the same bath where Fatma and her servant bathe. In the story, unlike a countryside dweller, the Hashish smoker, a Turkish man, a Jewish man, and a policeman, Karagoz is not allowed to enter the Turkish bath. So, Karagoz takes revenge, raping these men one after the other. Following the rapes Karagoz has the woman Fatma for himself who immediately gives birth to a baby. The baby character comes into the world screaming and expressing his desire to have a woman for himself. In the same ludicrous manner, the Karagoz show ends with the character Karagoz raping everyone leaving the bath.²⁸

A similar Karagoz story bearing the same title is documented by theater scholar Mohamed Aziza. The author does not name his source, which suggests that his description depends on oral transmission of Karagoz performances. However, Aziza's account *Lu'bat Karakūz fi-l Hammām* (A Karagoz's game in the Turkish bath) is more about the interaction between the main characters Karagoz and Hāziwāz in the bath. In the Turkish bath, Hāziwāz does not appear responsive to the needs of Karagoz who wants to have Hāziwāz clean his body by massaging him. For instance, if Karagoz requires Hāziwāz to clean his leg, the latter cleans his arm, and so on. To make Hāziwāz fulfill his wishes, Karagoz inverts his orders. Critic Aziza adds to Gide's plot that Hāziwāz, the trickster, steals Karagoz's clothes while the latter is bathing in the Turkish bath. Then, in the street, Hāziwāz meets a woman on her way home to whom he offers a ride on his shoulders. By offering to transport the lady, Hāziwāz intends to find out where she lives. Without her knowledge, Hāziwāz has inserted Karagoz's clothes in her basket. Toward the end of the story, Karagoz meets both Hāziwāz and the lady. Upon finding his clothes in the woman's basket, Karagoz becomes furious with the woman. Upon her arrival at her home, Hāziwāz asks her for money in return for carrying her. The story ends with her son-in-law ousting both Hāziwāz and Karagoz. Karagoz reacts against the son-in-law's aggression by kidnapping the young lady and running away.²⁹

Although shadow plays were popular in Tunisia from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1920s, their morality was frequently questioned. In the year 1905, an article appeared in the Tunisian newspaper *al-Rashidyya* condemning the immoral nature of Karagoz performances. The article states that neither the Tunisian government nor audiences responded to the newspaper's previous call to ban Karagoz.³⁰ Lux, for instance, critiques Karagoz performances mainly for their impudent content that he calls ordures (trash) to which a large attentive audience including children was exposed.³¹ A similar denigration to that of Lux is implied in Hamada's analysis of Ibn Daniyal's shadow plays. Unlike Lux, Hamada categorizes this type of play as belonging to the heretic genre. However, the Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous disagrees with Hamada, arguing that the basest scenes in Ibn Daniyal's plays specifically, and in shadow plays in general, form a way of expressing offensiveness, which is one of the genre's major components.³² Wannous reproaches the deletion of obscene terms by Hamada in his translation of Ibn Daniyal's plays, considering that this form of censorship not only distorts Ibn Daniyal's plays by deleting their defining characteristic—obscenity—but also has misled other scholars in their understanding of Ibn Daniyal's works. For Wannous, the shadow play is a popular art form whose value should not be investigated outside the context of obscenity.

Wannous may be referring to the *Mujūn* genre in Arabic literature. This genre involves libertinism. An example of writers who composed in this genre was the eleventh century poet Khatib Baghdadi. He wrote on party crashers, describing the party crasher's extreme hardcore sexual language in public.³³ Wannous's reflections are thus reasonable with regard to the danger of satisfying the conditions of high drama at the expense of the spirit of shadow plays, if one deletes obscenity, "an aesthetic surgery"³⁴ that misshapes an original condition. Instead of comparing shadow plays to other plays, Wannous calls for reading the

shadow play genre from within in order to value the history and contribution of this form of theater in promoting popular art for centuries.

While shadow plays existed in Tunisia as a tradition that revealed cultural understanding between the Turkish and Tunisian civilizations, the early encounters of Tunisians with the modern form of theater illustrate a clash between the Tunisian and French culture. There is a cluster of early contacts that should be understood in terms of two major encounters, which indicate that theater was previously unknown to Tunisians: the 1741 and 1846 events. During the 1846 visit to Paris of the Bey of Tunisia, Muḥammad Pasha Bey and his secretary Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Ḍiyāf, the Bey and his secretary attended a theatrical performance at the invitation of the King of France. The earliest event consists of the visits by European theater troupes to Tunisia. The haphazard performances of 1741 initiated Ali Bey and his Court to French theater. This intriguing anecdote illustrates the linkage between Tunisian theater history and politics.

The cover letter of the 1741 comedians' documents shows that it is written by an anonymous troupe director and actor who calls himself "D..." The letter specifies that twenty-six actors were in the troupe that had come from Genoa.³⁵ The document is also supplemented with a historical description of the city of Genoa. It provides the reader with hints about a French theater troupe that was on tour. Both the writer and the addressee of the letter are called "D..." A copy of the letter is available at the National Library of Paris in which the French troupe director who is also an actor wrote:

Most likely, you will be astonished to find me absorbed into deep thinking. However, with ease I allowed myself to surrender to a state of sadness in which I was absorbed by fate. . . . When together we thought to have passed the Monaco bay; our seamen were surprised to see how rowboats were thrown in the ocean. They recognized that these were Tunisians, who hastened to get onboard, screaming dreadfully.³⁶

The importance of the quotation, in particular, and the letter in general lies in the references one can research to verify whether the event happened.³⁷ The anonymous writer immerses his friend in a description of his misfortune by describing his troupe's distress at being captured. The section omitted by the ellipsis describes how, after encountering a severe storm but suffering no damage, this troupe continued to sail until being attacked by Tunisian pirates. After all of the pirates boarded their ship, the troupe members appear to have become greatly distressed. More references to real places appear in the letter. The document reveals that after spending five months in Genoa, the troupe was planning to return to Toulon.³⁸ However, a tempest blew them into a dangerous maritime zone close to the coast of Monaco, which was inhabited by Tunisian privateers.

Most importantly, the anonymous narrator outlines the contentious relationship between France and Tunisia in terms of "spectacles" of barbarity and civilization. The narrator explains that unlike in France, the label "spectacle" does not refer to a performance as in Tunisia, but rather to bloodshed. Describing the difference between Tunisia and France in terms of "spectacle," the narrator writes that the troupe was concerned about the bad humor of the Bey who is accustomed not to seeing spectacles, except for streams of human blood. The narrator contextualizes the state of barbarity associated with the authoritarian Bey by referring to slavery. The anonymous actor states that when a French renegade who was on the boat serving as an interpreter mentioned the name "Tunis," a sense of misery was triggered among the troupe members, leading him to ask the renegade about the Tunisian way of life and about the barbarity that they enacted through slavery.³⁹

The comedian's letter goes beyond a mere description of the state of barbarity in which the Bey and his court are involved by showing that none of them understands theater. The reaction of the pirates, the Bey, and his court is also indicative of their ignorance of comedy and the instruments that the French troupe carried with them. The comedians soon

realized that they were captured to be enslaved but, amid their distress, were still surprised at the reaction of the pirates toward their possessions: “. . . . What a surprise that was when they opened the first box! They saw two or three turbans that were decorated with gems. They expressed how astonished they were through shouting and gestures.”⁴⁰ This quotation describes the Tunisian pirates’ curiosity regarding the ornamented turbans, costumes, and masks they found in the actors’ boxes. Not only were these pirates disappointed at not finding the fortunes they wanted, they were also surprised at the odd costumes they saw.

The reception of the French troupe is also intriguing in the sense that it describes the Bey’s reaction vis-à-vis the pantomime that the troupe performed to entertain him. The French troupe decided to perform *Harlequin Statue & Perroquet* (The statue of Harlequin and the Parrot).⁴¹ The narrator reports that the actors thought this particular pantomime was suitable to portray the feelings they experienced: hope over despair. The opening of the pantomime, with the appearance of the character Pantalon, seemed to have pleased the Bey. In the summary of the letter, the narrator specifies that when the time came for the performance to begin, the actors were on stage, and Pantalon seemed to have entertained the Bey with his monkey trick gestures. However, the Bey and his court shouted at the sight of Harlequin.⁴² In the letter, it is stated that the renegade—a French rebel who was captured by the Tunisian pirates and ended up working for them as a translator—also reported to the troupe that the appearance of the character Harlequin in his black mask frightened the Tunisian ruler and his companions for they thought this character was the devil. Clearly the Bey’s comment raises racial questions since upon being frightened by the mask and the black face of Harlequin, the Bey ordered the troupe members enslaved. The letter confirms that slavery was a common practice in Tunisia until January 23, 1846, when Ottoman Bey Ahmed Ibn Mustapha decreed a ban on slavery in the country. It is noted that in 1741, the Bey required that the French troupe do hard labor in the countryside, except for Harlequin

(Desforbes) who was imprisoned. Later, after the intervention of the renegade who provided an explanation for the use of masks in theater, the Bey agreed to release the French troupe for more entertainment under one condition: that the masks be left out. Most notably, this letter can be viewed as evidence of the early exposure of the Tunisian Bey and his court to theater, the art of pantomime, and the use of masks. The events of 1741 especially demonstrate the unfamiliarity of the Bey and his court with theater at that time. However, the description of the incident reveals that the Bey and his court were acquainted with a different type of performance, the Turkish Karagoz, since the Bey was himself of Turkish origin and represented the Ottoman government in Tunisia.

In between the early contact of Tunisians with shadow plays and their late contact with modern theater, a second event occurred: The year 1846 was marked by the Bey Muḥamed Pacha's trip to France and his initiation to French theater. The Bey of Tunisia, Muḥammad Pasha Bey, and Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Ḍiyāf visited France in the mid-nineteenth century. Curiously, travelers such as Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf did not show interest in the dramas presented by the French and Italians in Tunisia around the same time because this theater was mainly attended by the expatriate community as it was presented in their own languages. By their very presence, these troupes must have had some indirect effect on preparing the ground for Tunisian theater to emerge much later. However, it is not until his trip to Paris that Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf became interested in this art. His visit and exposure to French theater likely sparked his interest in exploring theater and writing about it.

The purpose of the Bey's first trip to the French court was to strengthen the political ties between the two countries. The Bey was accompanied by his secretary Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf, one of the early reformers in Tunisia. In *Ithāf az-Zamān bi Akhbār Mulūk Tunis wa 'Aḥd al-Amān* (Presenting contemporaries the history of the rulers of Tunis and the Fundamental Pact)⁴³, Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf describes the importance of theater for the Parisians.

The performance that Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf attended concerned a woman who has lost her father and wants to marry someone of a different class. Her mother disagrees with her, thinking that King Louis Philippe I will not approve of her choice. Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf writes that the daughter asks, “Under what kind of law can the king manage our souls and in an oppressive way while we are free?”⁴⁴ The King of France, who was attending the play with the Bey and Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf, applauded the line to show his approval. He attempted to prove to his people that he had empathy for them. The interaction between the character and the king shows how French performance breaks the fourth wall, engaging audiences. Moreover, the king not only showed compassion for the couple but also manifested his power by possibly breaking class boundaries and encouraging freedom. Based on this performance, Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf describes theater as “among their [the French] honorable crafts because its origin lies in educating people, refining their tastes. . . . It includes sometimes music and other times singing and dancing”⁴⁵ While it seems that the author acknowledges and appreciates this art, his employment of the term “honorable” suggests that he might have previously thought theater was lacking in honor, perhaps, a subversive reflection of the way Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf internalized karagoz. Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf might have been amazed to see the King applauding the actress, a sign of his approval, when she was questioning his power on stage. This moment seems to have changed not only the course of action in the performance but also the thinking of Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf and the Bey regarding French theater and politics.

The reaction of the Bey and his secretary could also be interpreted as a sign of their political and cultural inferiority to the French. A conversation between the Bey and Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf illustrates this feeling of inferiority.⁴⁶ Both the Bey and Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf began to extrapolate the features of French civilization from this one performance, drawing on the interaction between the King and his people. Clearly, this event also caused the Bey and his secretary to worry about their political backwardness regarding their relationship with their

people in comparison to that of the French royalty.⁴⁷ It is also possible that the Bey saw the King's response as an erosion of the ruler's power, but it does not seem that the Bey learned a lesson. Exposure to French theater did not mean that the Bey would change his behavior toward his people. One may argue that Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf's earlier conclusions with regard to the importance of theater as an expression of French civilization advertises both the French king's devotion to this art and the freedom inside the borders of France only. The discussion of the political context below clarifies how the interests of France were based on a contradiction: while ostensibly wanting to export the ideals of freedom, France pursued this aim through colonization, a form of enslavement and exploitation.

Early Visits by European Theater Troupes to Tunisia

The strategic location of Tunisia, which had led it to become a hub for European trade, likely explains the presence of European settlers in Tunisia since the beginning of the nineteenth century. These European communities, mainly French and Italian, sought to entertain themselves with, among other diversions, theater. However, theater was also used by the French as a means of colonial and cultural domination. Whether it was intended for cultural amusement, or colonial ends in the name of civilizational mission, French performances initiated some Tunisians to Western theater. This early contact with Western theater is documented by the European troupes that had presented their plays in several theater locations in Tunis since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Performances were held in venues such as Tapia (1842), Théâtre Carthaginois (1860), Théâtre David Cohen Tanugi (1875), Casino Municipal (1902), Politèama Rossini (1903), and Théâtre Municipal (1912).⁴⁸

European traveler and author Alexandre Dumas mentions that during his visit to Tunisia in 1846, he attended *Le Déserteur* (The Deserter) directed by Madame Saqui, a tightrope walker and skilled dancer. Dumas indicates that *The Deserter* was a melodrama in three acts, and that he did not expect to see the troupe of Madame Saqui because he associates Madame Saqui's theater with "gymnasium and comic opera."⁴⁹ The comic genre of theater was meant to entertain the French community in Tunisia at the time. Similarly noted in John McCormick's work, Arthur Pougin affirms that Madame Saqui's theater followed the same approach as that of the Popular Boulevard Theater in nineteenth-century France.

In *Tunisia: Crossroads of the Islamic and European Worlds*, Kenneth J. Perkins notes that during the nineteenth century, the Italian community was significant in Tunisia, where Italian theater troupes were touring the country.⁵⁰ Charfeddine mentions that after the Politeama Rossini Theater was founded in 1903 in Tunisia, Italian troupes were active in Tunisia until 1926. For example, Georges Candas's plays were presented. These include "*Passing Tunis, China in Tunisia, and Madness-Tunis.*"⁵¹ Charfeddine also indicates that some Italian troupes performed French plays in the Italian language, but also performed many Italian operas around the turn of the twentieth century, such as *Rigoletto* (1903). European audiences were likely the target audiences of these troupes because, except for the elite, the Tunisian community did not seem to identify with their performances.

In addition to its facilitation by the theater of Western theater troupes, Tunisian theater was also indirectly influenced by the political circumstances of the time. These early Western contacts, however, played a crucial role in paving the way for Tunisians to establish their own theater, as shall be demonstrated below.

Tunisian Theater from 1905 to 1956

On the sociology of Tunisian nationalism, Jean Duvignaud explores how the spirit of nationalism dates back to pre-colonial socio-political and economic conditions, portraying how Tunisian society was not homogeneous. He notes the extravagance of Tunisian aristocrats at the expense of the exploited peasant class. For the sociologist Duvignaud, disparity between social classes constituted an important factor that led to the rise of nationalism. He also argues that the foundation of Khaldounia Institute, a modern school considered the counterpart of Zitouna Institute (religious school) also shaped emotional nationalism. The importance of Khaldounia Institute lies in teaching modern Arabic literature, photography of that era, math, chemistry, and other subjects. These subjects shaped intellectual perspectives and led to the emergence of a new intelligentsia in the country. It is important to note that the ascendance of Habib Bourguiba and the nationalist movement—also known as the Le Mouvement Destourien (Constitutional Movement) in reference to *Destour* (constitution)—evolved during the thirties. Bourguiba gathered the elite of Khaldounia around him in the year 1934. The term *Tunisi  * (Tunisianess) claims both tradition and reform. Bourguiba’s notion about *Tunisi  * (Tunisianess) would become influential in contemporary Tunisian theater. The leader’s ideology consisted in preserving Arab-Islamic identity and transforming traditional structures.⁵² The very notion of *Tunisi  * is useful in understanding what the Ja  bi himself calls the “homotunisianus,”⁵³ by which he meant the particularities of the Tunisian in every way possible.

Al-Madyouni explains, the two first Tunisian theatrical troupes, dubbed the al-  ilal (The Crescent) and an-Nejma (The Star) were also operating in 1905.⁵⁴ These troupes emerged in the context of the many cultural, political, and economic associations that were created in Tunisia at the beginning of the twentieth century. The purpose of these associations was mainly to enforce political and cultural ideologies. The beginning of the twentieth

century marked a turning point in the history of theater in Tunisia due to the impact of the reformist Mohamed Abduh and his ideas of pan-Islamism on Muslim countries.⁵⁵ Abduh spread the ideas of social and religious reforms and encouraged scientific education as a way to break away from dogma. He also called for pan-Arabism as a way to defeat colonialism. The early theater formation in Tunisia was also influenced later by the arrival of Egyptian troupes.

The Tunisian Theater under the Influence of the Visiting Egyptian Theater Troupes

Two Egyptian troupes, al-Comedia al-Misryia (the Egyptian Comedy) and al-Jawq al-Miṣri (the Egyptian Troupe), traveled to Tunisia in September 1908 and September 1909, respectively, where they inspired the development of Tunisian theater while it was still in its infancy. The director of al-Jawq al-Miṣri, Sulayman al-Qardahi, was initiated into Arab theater by al-Naqqash (1815-1855). Bubakkir Khlūj, a Tunisian scholar of theater and performing arts, states that al-Qardahi directed fourteen plays including some that concerned Arab culture and others that were adaptations of European theater.⁵⁶ For example, al-Jawq al-Miṣri performed William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Othello* in 1908⁵⁷ and Naguib al-Haddad's *Salāh al-Dīn al-'Ayyūbī* (Saladin) in 1909.⁵⁸ Al-Qardahi also presented plays written by Abu Khalil Qabani (1833-1902) including *Harun al-Rashid*.⁵⁹

Both Saladin and Harun were historical figures who became larger than life due to their significance to Arab culture. Saladin was born around 1137-38 and is known as one of the greatest leaders of the region as he was able to unify Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Palestine under his command and led them to victory over the Christians at the time of the Crusades of Pope Urban II in 1098.⁶⁰ The Pope had the intention of recovering access to the Holy Land for Christians. Saladin also gathered scholars and founded religious and

educational institutions that promoted the idea of *jihad* (struggle). Saladin is thus considered not only a symbol for Muslims but also a respected figure in the eyes of Europeans. This archetype of Saladin was specifically used in theater as an instrument of resistance during the nationalist struggle against French occupation. In this sense, the Muslims in *Saladin* may have represented the Tunisians and the Christians may have referred to the French. As such, this representation predicted victory over and independence from French colonial power. The incorporation of the Arabic language and Arab historical heritage into Tunisian theater asserted Tunisian identity and pride as well as resistance to French cultural dominance.

Al-Qardahi's troupe suffered from the constraints of economics that the domination of European theater created in different ways. For example, it was difficult for al-Qardahi, especially in the beginning, to find a venue because both al Maṣrah al-Baldi (The National Theater of Tunis) and the Rossini Theater, were essentially monopolized by the French and Italian communities. Al-Qardahi was initially forced to start touring in other cities, such as Sousse, and thus brought theater to regions outside of major cities. He subsequently obtained admission to the National Theater, thus opening the door for performances in Arabic for the first time. Al-Qardahi's plays were adaptations originally translated from French, Italian, or English. He directed these plays in Fusha (standard Arabic) and then in the local dialect. It is important to note that the local Ottoman governor, the Bey of Tunisia, honored al-Qardahi, nominating him as "the founder of the Arab theater in Tunisia."⁶¹ Al-Qardahi's success had an impact not only on the founding of Tunisian theater, but also on the reception of other visiting theater troupes that later arrived from Egypt in terms of using Arabic language, Arab history, and respectable figures of Arab heritage.

Al-Qardahi's Egyptian troupe formed a short-lived pan-Arab theater that influenced Tunisian theater among other Arab theaters. After al-Qardahi died on May 5, 1909, his troupe did not leave Tunisia immediately. Instead, they collaborated with several Tunisian actors,

such as Aḥmad Bulayman. Bulayman later became a member of the al-Adāb troupe (The Letters) in 1911 and formed al-Jawq al-Miṣri al-Tūnsi (the Egyptian-Tunisian troupe), the first pan-Arab-African theater troupe. Tunisian and Egyptian actors among others presented *Sidq al-Ikhā* (True brotherhood), by the Egyptian writer Ismail ‘Assim al-Muhami in 1909. They presented a number of plays afterward but their experience was short-lived. Under Egyptian influence, Tunisian theater gained experience with the classical repertoire, reflecting on shared aspects of language and religion. Theater was then shaped by religious ideals, perhaps to attract audiences and to make conservatives believe that this art reinforced religious ideals.

There were other Egyptian troupes that toured Tunisia around the same time, such as Ibrahim Hijazi’s Egyptian troupe, which came to Tunisia in 1909. They were critiqued by the theater reviewer Mohamed No‘mān, who judged the troupe to be less successful than al-Qardahi’s.⁶² In addition to Hijazi’s troupe, the Egyptian troupe of Salama Hijazi introduced musical theater to the Tunisian theatrical scene in 1913.⁶³

The Development of Tunisian Theater 1910 to 1956

Following the dissolution of the Tunisian-Egyptian troupe, two Tunisian troupes, al-Shahāma al-Adabiyya (Literary Pride)⁶⁴ and al-’Adāb (the Letters), were established by Hassin Bouhajeb Abdel-Kader Al-Qaba’li and Hassan Guellati in 1910 and 1911, respectively. The Tunisian theater became more established due to the influential role played by both troupes for about a decade. Whereas al-’Adāb expressed resistance toward France, al-Shahāma al-Adabiyya presented no political agenda. In this respect M. M. Driss affirms, “In contrast to al-Shahāma, which did not play any political role, members of the al-’Adāb troupe had contributed to the political movement since its establishment.”⁶⁵ It is noted that al-’Adāb presented *Saladin* in 1911.⁶⁶ The staging of such a political play was not surprising.

Appropriating the figure of Saladin in theater was a way to reinforce Arab identity, with emphasis on the Islamic golden age. With regard to *Saladin*, M. M. Driss cites a telling extract from the Tunisian police archives of 1912: “This type of play does not seem judicially well chosen at this time, when public opinion is preoccupied by the Turkish-Italian war.” Naturally, the French considered political plays that identified with a symbolic unifying figure during the First World War to be an expression of resistance and therefore dangerous. Staging *Saladin* was a threat to colonial rule due to the effect of emotional unification that this play was able to produce.

After Turkey sided with Germany in the First World War, the French prohibited any performance of Tunisian-national theater in Tunisian theaters. In response to French anti-nationalism, al-'Adāb and al-Shahāma al-Adabiyya united in 1922 to form one troupe, at-Tamthīl al-'Arabī (The Arab Acting), but dissolved with the collapse of the Tunisian Youth Movement. In his account of Tunisian Theater From 1881 to 1956⁶⁷, M. M. Driss describes the intertwined relationship between Tunisian theater and the Tunisian Youth Movement (1904-1934).⁶⁸ The year 1904 marked a protest of these youths who demanded syndical rights similar to those enjoyed by French and Italian workers in Tunisia. This movement was founded in 1907 by Béchir Sfar, Abdeljelil Zaouche, and Ali Bash Hamba. These were members of the elite at that time. Most of them were educated in Sadiki College. This movement's major aim was to protest against the French protectorate. The movement was primarily launched against inequalities imposed by French rule on the Tunisian people in terms of taxes, salaries, job opportunities, etc. in the public sector.⁶⁹ Despite their French educations, the Bash Hamba group was influenced by ideas of reform, especially with regard to nationalism, pan-Arabism, and pan-Islamism. The Youth Movement also influenced education in the way it called for bilingualism. The Sadiki ideal for the movement was to

educate Tunisians in Arabic and French. Among the reformists that had a great impact on these youths was Hayreddin Pasha, the founder of Sadiki School (1875).

Without the birth of this reformist elite, modern theater might never have become part of the Tunisian political and cultural scene at the time. Among other important members of the Tunisian elite was Abd al-Aziz al-Thaalbi (1874-1944), who received education at the Zitouna and Khaldounia Institutes. He became connected to the Tunisian Youth Movement and served as editor of their Arabic newspaper, *Le Tunisien* (The Tunisian) from 1907 to 1912 when he was expelled from Tunisia. Before his expulsion, however, Sheikh al-Thaalbi was also the secretary general of al-'Adāb troupe (The Letters Troupe) in 1912.⁷⁰ Al-Thaalbi's political and cultural contribution shows how the Youth Movement, theater, reformism, and nationalism are interconnected. His contribution to Tunisian theater also shows that religious leaders were not necessarily disconnected from theater. This elite had a pivotal role in launching a nationalist movement, the dissolution of which led to end of political activist theater troupes. The experiences of al-'Adāb and al-Shahāma al-Adabiyya were replicated in many other cities across the country, marking the beginning of the professional stage of Tunisian theater. At-Tamthīl al-'Arabī along with other Tunisian troupes that emerged at the time showed a common interest in presenting works that were translations, adaptations, and original scripts written by Tunisians. Among these troupes, al-Hilal (The Crescent) in 1921, al-Saā'da Troupe (Happiness Troupe, 1924), al-Mustaqbal al-Tamthīlī (The Future of Acting), a troupe founded by Mohamed Habib in 1927, and Fadhila Khaytami's troupe, which was created in 1929.

Against the backdrop of these newly founded troupes, the French attempted to undermine Tunisian culture and language by limiting the Tunisian theater experience. These measures had an impact on the early Tunisian repertoire and led different troupes to include more historical than social plays. Moreover, the political plays were upsetting to the French

who refused to allow the formation of any troupe whose members were affiliated with the Tunisian Constitutional Party, known as al-Ḥisb al-Dūstūrī. For example, members who applied to form the Aghlabites Theater Troupe (Firqat al-Aghālība) in the 1930s, were denied permission. It is important to note, however, that the resistance to French occupation was not the only political motive for the existence of these troupes. Tunisian theater during the 1930s was meant not only to educate and entertain the masses but also to indoctrinate them into the view of the emerging Destour (The Tunisian Constitutional Political Party).

The French responded to these attempts at indoctrination by presenting provocative plays that commented on Tunisian culture. These include *The Harem (al-Ḥarīm, 1929)*, written by the Italian writer Gaston Costa and translated into Arabic by E. David, a teacher at Ṣadiqia College in Tunis. In his *Account of Tunisian Theater*, M. M. Driss explains that *Al-Ḥarīm* also seems to parody Muslim women, suggesting that they are adulterous, and mocks both the pilgrimage sites in Saudi Arabia and the practice of calling to prayer. While this play seems to denigrate Islamic practices through the representation of the harem, there is no conclusive evidence that the harem existed in Tunisia before or during the colonial period.⁷¹

The reception of *Al-Ḥarīm* according to M. M. Driss' survey demonstrates that this play produced multiple responses among Tunisians as well as European travelers, who reported seeing the performance. Because the text was written by an Italian Orientalist, it suggests that it dramatized a representation of Tunisian reality rather than a twisted idea of Tunisia. However, the tension between the colonial powers and the colonized subjects might have provoked the Tunisian audience at that time and prompted a form of auto-censorship. The critic M. M. Driss reports that some Tunisians abstained from attending the play, reading it as an allegory that attacked Muslim society. In contrast, among the Tunisian actors who performed in *Al-Ḥarīm* was Faḍila Khaytami who claimed that the play presented no harm to Tunisian identity. These diverging reactions toward *Al-Ḥarīm*, a play that dramatized not

only the relationship between Tunisia and France but also between the theological and Westernized schools, reflect Tunisian society at a moment of disagreement between conservatives and progressives or reformists.

The French engaged in similar tactics during the thirties and after the Second World War. They also continued to contain theatrical challenges to their rule by restricting Tunisian dramatic activities. According to M. M. Driss, between 1933 and 1934, five Tunisian troupes were denied the right to perform, as were another five troupes between 1947 and 1949, due to their participation in the struggle for independence.⁷² In addition to limiting theater establishment because of political party membership, the colonial powers also censored scripts. The year 1922 marked the establishment of a censorship committee by the French. Theater locations were under control and later in the 1920s, playscripts were also subject to censorship.⁷³ Beginning in 1934, censorship of play scripts by the colonial powers took different forms. For example, the French resisted the expression of nationalism by banning the Tunisian national anthem except by prior authorization from the government. Ironically, this repression motivated Tunisians to use theater in order to represent their struggle for the right to self-expression for political, educational, and cultural purposes.

The expression of Arab Islamic culture was disseminated not only through performances but also through reviews in newspapers and theater magazines such as *Al-Mumathil* (The Actor,) created in 1923. The national radio also played an important role by broadcasting plays beginning in 1938. These were early initiatives taken to establish Tunisian theater. A few years later, in 1945, a national committee was formed, *Lajnat ad-Difa'an al-Masrah at-Tūnisiyī* (The Tunisian Theater Defense Committee) to establish theater as part of Tunisian cultural life and educational system.⁷⁴ Author al-Madyouni identifies the founders of the theater committee and describes the concerns of its members with regard to the use of the Arabic language, its aspirations to found an institute of theater, and a theater library.

Tunisian theater served the goals of the nationalists seeking independence from the French. The plays also allowed audiences to escape from the daily reminders of living under colonial rule. They promoted Arab culture and Tunisian pride by promoting the Arabic language in its standard Fusha and grammatical usage. Theater recalled prouder moments from the golden age of Islamic civilization. For example, *Abd-ar-Rahman an-Nasser* (1944)⁷⁵ is a play that illustrates the interest of the troupe al-Kawkab at-Tamthili in portraying a great historical figure of the Islamic civilization during their time in Andalusia (see appendix 3).⁷⁶ This Umayyad figure, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam al-Rabḍī ibn Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dākhil (born January 891—died October 15, 961, Córdoba), ruled Cordoba (Spain) starting from 912 and was titled Caliph in 929. The title denoted prestige and honored his military successes. He was known for his intelligence in strategies used in campaigns against the crypto-Christian rebels. These were Christians who attempted to keep the practice of their religion as a secret, usually by deliberately observing the rituals of another religion publicly. In places and time periods where Christians were persecuted or Christianity was outlawed, instances of crypto-Christianity have surfaced. Abd-ar-Rahman was able to secure the frontiers of Spain. An-Nassir was a title given to him by a poet to acknowledge his status as the victor, literally *an-nasr* (victory).

Post-1956 Tunisian Theater: The Revival of the Tunisian Theater and the Impact of Habib Bourguiba’s 1962 Speech

After independence in 1956, the Tunisian government showed particular interest in strengthening theater. A 1962 speech by Bourguiba, the president of Tunisia (1956-1987), represents a turning point in the history of Tunisian drama. The speech was exclusively about the theater and was delivered to an audience of both Tunisian theater specialists and the

cultural elite. His proposal for an audience passionately interested in Tunisian theater to take French theater as their model may make Bourguiba appear to be an assimilationist. At first glance, Bourguiba's speech appears to undermine the establishment of an independent Tunisian theater, since one would logically expect Tunisia to forge its national history by breaking away from colonial influences. Bourguiba himself had suffered in French prisons during the 1930s and 1940s and his speech appears paradoxical. However, it could be argued that the president's goal was to draw on the mixed cultural heritage of two apparently irreconcilable cultures. It is possible that Bourguiba and his progressive followers believed that French theater, as a cultural model of modernity, would make him seem moderate, indeed, might make him appear to have a place midway on the spectrum between the assimilationists and nativists.

Another way of codifying the aforementioned speech of Bourguiba can be accomplished by investigating "the importance of the dual culture."⁷⁷ By dual, Bourguiba meant both the Tunisian and the French cultures. What is at stake in this statement appears in the contradiction of a voice that calls for modernity and openness, yet does so mainly via mimicking French theater and culture. While nationalizing Tunisian theater would bring it under state control and censorship, it would also lend it institutional support. The proposal to establish a national theater was to help legitimize and professionalize the efforts of amateurs.⁷⁸ The speech implied a clear intention to contribute to the success of the theater sector by nationalizing and institutionalizing it as well as by establishing theater studies and professionalism. Specifically, the Tunisian government proposed creating a theater program in 1962 and specified the requirements for a college degree in that field. Shortly after the 1962 speech, the Tunisian government also started to offer scholarships that allowed students of drama to train in Europe. These measures would pave the way to various types of theater,

including the Heritage Theater, the political theater, and another category whose repertoire is not political.

Three Main Categories of Theater Troupes during Bourguiba's Political Regime

During the 1970s, there were at least three major categories of theater. The first category revolves around the Heritage Theater, established by 'Izz al-Dīn al-Madanī (1938-). With its pacific resistance against the political regime of the time by presenting plays that assert Tunisian history, identity, and culture, this category seems to express itself against the Tunisian political regime by using the values of the past to address the needs of the present. This emphasis on Tunisian national heritage was made against the backdrop of French colonial heritage. The second category includes those who attempted to avoid political themes so as to be in harmony with all parts, including both the Tunisian and French heritage, by representing both cultures on stage. Ben 'Ayed is the best representation of this category. The third category concerns the Political Theater and the those that best represent this theater are Fadhel Jaïbi and Jalila Baccar. This director/playwright-actress couple is more concerned with Tunisian daily life (as will be demonstrated), but their theater is not isolated from Western theater in aesthetic terms. These three categories, which are undeniably significant to the development of Tunisian theater, will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

In the 1970s, a leading Tunisian dramatist, al-Madanī, wrote historical plays similar to *Saladin*, which had been presented during the first quarter of the twentieth century in the context of reclaiming Arab-Muslim culture and heritage through theater.⁷⁹ The Heritage Theater, which prospered during the post-Second World War era, advocated nativist works. This gave expression to Tunisia's wish to assert its identity while struggling to gain independence from France. All of al-Madanī's plays are written in standard Arabic and most

focus on literary and historical Arab heritage. The playwright's productions were mainly staged in The Kef Theater (located in the northwestern section of Tunis) under the leadership of Moncef Souissi. The 1974 *Diwan az-Zanj* (Negro volume), for example, recounts the story of a slave who revolted during the 'Abbasid era against his leader. Critic al-Madyouni asserts that the playwright refers to an era of neocolonialism. Highlighting al-Madanī's national opposition to the ex-colonizer France, al-Madyouni argues, "Based on *Thawrat az-Zanj* (The Negro Revolution), al-Madanī describes the instruments of containment that rests on making these states [the ex-colonized countries] fall into the trap of debts, the trap of counselors, and the trap of consumption. This keeps these countries in a state of complete dependence on these colonial powers"80 In this respect, al Madyouni explains that The Negro Revolution addresses the dynamics of power and exploitation, using a portrayal of an historical event from the 9th century to comment on the contemporary situation.

Along the same lines, in his essay *Al-'Adab al-Tajrībī* (The experimental literature), al-Madanī claims that the Tunisian writer has to free himself from depending on both Eastern and Western literary heritage in both content and form. Al-Madanī states, "The Tunisian avant-garde has no wish to be connected with the Western avant-garde" (8-26). Al-Madanī's theoretical claims have been critiqued by Starkey, who notes that there are some references in al-Madanī's *al-Insan as-Ṣifr* (The man zero) which show Western influence. Perhaps in his writings, al-Madanī was not be able to disconnect from French influences because he studied language, Arab Literature, Sociology, Moorish Sociology, and Anthropology at the College of France in Paris during the mid-1960s.

Ali Ben 'Ayed (1930-1972)

The postcolonial era was also marked by a second category of Tunisian theater that was less political in nature. Ben ‘Ayed (1930-1972), one of the most well known early actors and stage directors of the 1960s, was sent by the government to Egypt in 1955 to study theater. The following year he left for Paris to pursue more training with Jean Vilar.⁸¹ Back home in 1958, Ben ‘Ayed served as a theater assistant with the Municipal Theater of Tunis. Here he later directed his first two plays, an adaptation of *Hamlet* and *al-Kul min ‘Aychoucha* (All is because of ‘Aychoucha), in 1959. In all, Ben ‘Ayed directed a diverse collection of twenty-seven plays with the objective of staging plays that suited both local and global tastes. Among other plays he directed and performed in are adaptations of Albert Camus’ *Caligula* (1961) and William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1959) and *Othello* (1964). Ben ‘Ayed’s work thus reflects the wide adaptation of Shakespeare in the Arab world, as well as the bilingual culture in which he had been raised, the dual education he received, and his roles as a student under René Simon and trainee under Vilar.

Ben ‘Ayed directed other plays that may fit the spectrum between the two categories of assimilationist and nativist works that seem to avoid any political agenda. He was more concerned with establishing the aesthetics of theater than conveying a political message. He developed the role of the theater director in bringing all efforts of specialists together to make a collective work of art possible. Gathering musicians, painters, and playwrights to work together on theater projects fulfilled the director’s purpose to lead and collaborate.⁸² According to Ben ‘Ayed, the role of the theater director will eventually encompass many responsibilities.

In addition to revolutionizing the role of the director, Ben ‘Ayed attempted to direct adaptations of universal works that were relevant to Tunisian social specificities. For instance, Ben ‘Ayed directed *al-Marishāl ‘Ammar* (1967), an adaptation by Nouredine al-Kasbaoui based on Molière’s *The Bourgeois Gentleman* (1670). *Al-Marishāl ‘Ammar*

exemplifies how adapting Western plays to Tunisian settings creates representations that maintain some of the universal aspects of Tunisian culture. In other words, both Molière's original play and Ben 'Ayed's adaptation address the issue of class distinctions and include scenes for comic effect, but do so from different cultural perspectives. Unlike Molière's *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, which ridicules the discrepancies between the bourgeois and the noble classes, *al-Marishāl 'Ammar* delves into the linguistic differences between urban and rural regions in Tunisia. Comparing the French and Tunisian works requires examining the ambiguities, appearance, and disguises of the bourgeois/gentleman class as key factors in the enjoyment of a privileged title or of membership in a high social rank usually associated with the city dweller rather than the rural man's life style.⁸³

Ben 'Ayed also directed a variety of other plays that dramatized Tunisian historical concerns, such as Habib Boulares's *Mourad al-Thalith* (Mourad the Third, 1966).⁸⁴ This play represents a turning point in Tunisian theater. It draws on the historical Tunisian repertoire describing the historical and psychological conflicts that characterized the era of Mourad III, the Bey, an Ottoman representative who governed Tunisia from 1699 to 1702. Mourad III ruled with cruelty and brutality and was eventually assassinated. Staging such a play reveals that Ben 'Ayed engaged with dramatic literature that is not based on collective writing, but rather on a playwright's drama. Murad III was not to be a bloody Bey of Tunis.⁸⁵ *Mourad ath-Thalith* was not read as political allegory at the time of Ben 'Ayed. As cited in al-Madani's "Ali Ben 'Ayed's Diverse Repertoire: Ali Ben 'Ayed's Theater," the playwright himself explains, "*Mourad III* is not a political play. Rather it is a historical one."⁸⁶ Today, this play might be read anew. By this I mean that the historical reading may indeed serve as political critique.

It may be important to note that Ben 'Ayed's troupe, Firqat al-Masrah al-Baldi (the Municipal Theater Troupe), has been a professional public theater troupe since 1954.⁸⁷

Ben 'Ayed hoped that the national troupe would present works that cultivated Tunisian theater in a researched manner in order to make it part of world theater.

The End of Ben 'Ayed's Era and the Rise of Independent Theater Troupes or Political Theater

The end of Ben 'Ayed's era was marked by a change in Tunisian politics that abandoned socialist views, which also affected theater. By 1971, Bourguiba's pro-Western tendencies had become clearer with his embracing of capitalism.⁸⁸ The change was not only at the level of economics, for by the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s the middle class was dominating the working class. By 1971, these socio-economic conditions resulted in protests at schools and universities. This adjustment affected all fields including drama, as funding was cut for Tunisian national troupes and both university and school theater centers. However, as far as education went, the Tunisian government continued to encourage theater studies, even constructing the Institute of Dramatic Arts in Tunis, erected in 1982. Government sponsored festivals across the country have also continued to include plays as part of their annual programs. These festivals are capable of attracting thousands of attendees each year, depending on the capacity of each amphitheater.

However, the decline of theater led some national troupes, such as the Theater of Gafsa,⁸⁹ to break away from the Tunisian political structure, which attempted to control theater through censorship. This step was also taken by other troupes that decided to deviate from an ideological theater. This break led to the birth of the first private and professional theater troupe in Tunisia, the New Theater (1975), known as al-Masrah al-Jadid. As the New Theater deserves more consideration, the next section of this chapter will explain how the troupe emerged and developed, and how it operated against the background of the aforementioned ideological intentions of the Tunisian government. Through the committee of

ensorship, the Tunisian government prohibited *al-Hallaj*, for example, a production by Souissi in 1974. It was to counter such governmental measures that new private troupes were created.

It is important, however, to mention that in addition to the New Theater, other private theater troupes were created around the same time which are still active to this day. During the 1980s, there were around 100 private troupes. In addition to the New Theater, the most influential troupes are Elteatro, El-Hamra, the Phou Theater, and Masrah al-Ard (Earth Theater). The cultural private center Elteatro (1986) is directed by Tawfik el-Jebali; al-Masrah al-'Udhwy (Organic Theater), later called El-Hamra (1981), is led by Ezzedine Gannoun; the Phou Theater (1979) is under the leadership of Raja ben Ammar and Moncef Essaïem; and, Masrah al-Ard (Earth Theater) (1984) is directed by Nouredine el-Ouerghi.⁹⁰

There has also been a great deal of crossover among the troupes. Many theater directors of these other troupes collaborated at some point in their artistic careers. They seem to have gained inspiration from similar sources. Jebali for instance co-authored *al-'Urs*, a play of the New Theater. In 1976, he was an actor and co-author of *al-Wartha* (The heritage), another production by the New Theater troupe. Jebali also co-founded the Phou Theater. Mohamed Driss and Jaïbi met in Paris in 1968, where they were both studying. Baccar and Jaïbi met in Gafsa Theater, where Baccar started her professional career as an actress. The next chapter will explore the theatrical project that Baccar and Jaïbi started in Gafsa (1972) and their collaboration in Tunis, beginning with an overview of the background, identification, and principles of the New Theater.

In sum, the trajectory of Tunisian theater indicates that the initiation of Tunisians into theater occurred through the attendance and reception of shadow plays brought by the Turks to Tunisia. Then, the events of 1741 and 1846 show how Tunisians were introduced to European plays in a back-and-forth fashion. While the encounter with the troupe captured in

Tunisia in 1741 occurred by chance, the 1846 visit to France was deliberate. Following these visits, the Egyptian troupe of Al-Qardahi contributed to the establishment of an Arab theater in the country. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, politics and theater have not always been intertwined. However, unlike many repressive regimes that closed theaters, it is quite curious that the Tunisian government not only kept political theaters open, but also both encouraged their existence and imposed censorship at the same time. Such obstacles fostered political debate and paved the way for theater to both represent and interact with Tunisian politics and society. Despite the despotic political regime, Tunisian theater did not die. Rather, it overcame censorship by producing metaphorical plays in order to remain socially and politically involved. The following two chapters address how the New Theater that later becomes Familia Productions engages these political and aesthetic choice.

1. Marvin Carlson, *The Arab Oedipus: Four Plays from Egypt and Syria* (New York: Martin E. Segal Theater Center, 2005), 16. Carlson states: “The originator of the Arab theater in the East was, as is well known, Marun an-Naqqash. He was followed by his disciples, al-Qardahi and Abu Khalil al-Qabbani, among others” (16).

2. *Ibid.*, 17.

3. *The Formation of the Nabataean Art: Prohibition of a Graven Image among the Nabataeans*, ed. Joseph Patrich (Boston: Brill Academic, 1997), 166.

4. *Aristotle Fan ash-Shi'r* [Aristotle's De Poetica], translated and ed. Abdurrahman M. M. Badawi (Cairo: Misr, 1953), 55.

5. Nancy E. Berg, “When Ibn Rushd Met Borges,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 41 (2010): 148–59.

6. The play *Ahl-al Kahf* (The people of the cave) recounts a story that took place during the reign of King Decius. It is about two ministers dubbed Marūsh and Mishlīniyā, a shepherd called Yamlikhā, and his dog Khatmir. Because they are Christians, together they flee to the cave for fear of being persecuted by the Romans. After they wake up, they realize that three hundred years passed while they were sleeping in the cave. The people of the cave realize that the money they kept with them belongs to a different era and is therefore worthless. Curiously, the cave men are brought before the new king, who is also Christian. This turns to be good news because he has treated them as if they were saints. Their fear quickly disappears, but their aspirations to meet their beloveds complicate the narrative. Marnūsh discovers that both his son and wife died. Mishlīniyā keeps forgetting that they have slept for the last three hundred years and he insists on reconnecting with Prisca, the daughter of the new king, who intriguingly happens to have a girl who is also called Prisca. She resembles the Prisca whom Mishlīniyā knew and loved before hiding in the cave. Due to their inability to adapt to new time and space, the people of the cave decide to go back to where they come from, and ultimately, they die in the cave. Prisca, the daughter of the new king,

realizes that she also loves Mishlīniyā. Joining in on a conspiracy with Ghalias, who is her teacher, she succeeds in obtaining his approval to join Mishlīniyā and dies by his side.

7. Rifa‘ Rāfi’ al-Tahtawi, *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz* [Imam in Paris: Account of a stay in France by an Egyptian cleric] (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 2001).

8 . Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1991), 304-08.

9. Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz*, 225.

10. Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), 191. Ernst explains, “Still, the turning dervish dance of the Mevlevi is inseparable from its musical context, and it is known by the same word for listening to music: *sema* ‘ in Turkish pronunciation.”

11. Laura Chakravarty Box, “Context,” in *Strategies of Resistance in the Dramatic Texts of North African Women: A Body of Words*, by Laura Chakravarty Box (New York: Routledge, 2005), 36–37.

12. M. M. Badawi, *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 7.

13. Paul Starkey, “Drama: Early Experiments,” in *Modern Arabic Literature*, by Paul Starkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 163.

14. Three of Ibn Daniyal’s shadow plays have recently been translated (2013), and they continue to form the subject of scholarly debates on Arab theater.

15 . Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theater and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arabic World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 127.

16. Moreh, *Live Theater and Dramatic Literature*, 118.

17. *Ibid.*, 3.

18. *Ibid.*, 127.

19. At-Tahtawi, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ bārīz*, 136.

20. Mahmoud al-Mejri, *Masrah al-‘Arāis fī Tūnis: Min al-‘āb al-Karakūz ila al-‘Urūd al-Ḥadīta* [Puppet theater in Tunisia: From karagoz to contemporary performances] (Tunis: Sahar, 2008), 17.

21. P. Boratav, “Karagoz,” in *Encyclopédie de L’Islam* [Encyclopedia of Islam], new ed., 627.

22. Farouq Sa‘d, *Lissān al-‘Arab Dictionary*, 932.

23. Ibrahim Hamada, *Khayāl aḍ-Ḍil wa Tamthīlyyāt Ibn Daniyal* [Shadow plays and Ibn Daniyal’s performances], 54.

24. Moncef Charfeddine, *Tārīkh al-masrah al-Tūnisī: Mundhu Nash’atihi ila al-Ḥarb al-Ālamia al-‘Ulā*, al-Juz 1 [The history of Tunisian theater: From its emergence to the end of the First World War, vol. 1] (Tunis: Matbāat Jaridat al-‘Amal li al-Nashr wa al- Ṣaḥāfa, 1972).

25. *Ibid.*, 18. "وهو اللعب بصور من الورق الغليظ تمثل خيالات من وراء ستار بحركات و حكايات لطيفة (ص 18) *ومضحكة جدا" (تاريخ المسرح، شرف الدين، ص 18) All translations in this dissertation from the Arabic d French are mine unless indicated otherwise.

26. Yves Châtelain, *La vie littéraire et intellectuelle en Tunisie de 1900 à 1937* [Literary and intellectual life in Tunisia from 1900 to 1937] (Paris: Geuthner, 1937), 142.

27. Othmane Ka ĩāk, *At-Taqālīd wa-l’Adāt at-Tūnisyya* [Tunisian habits and tradition]

(Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisyya lil-Nashr, 1981), 74.

28. André Gide, *Journal, feuilles de route (1895–1896)* [Diary, road journals (1895–1896)], 221.

29. Mohamed Aziza, *Les formes traditionnelles du spectacle* [Traditional forms of shows] (Tunis: STD, 1975), 50–58.

30. Mohamed Maseoud Driss, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Masraḥ al-Tūnisī* [Studies on the history of Tunisian theater: 1881–1956] (Tunis: Sahar, 1993), 37. The document provided in M. M. Driss' study has an accurate date, September 9, 1905. This article is, however, anonymous.

31. Jean Lux, *Trois mois en Tunisie; journal d'un volontaire* [Three months in Tunisia; journal by a volunteer], 101.

32. Salim Hijazi and al-'Amid al-Baḥri, *Khayāl aḍ-Ḍill wa Aṣl al-Masraḥ al-'Arabī* [Shadow plays and the origin of Arab theater] (Damascus: Manshūrāt Wizārat ath-Thaqāfa [Ministry of Culture Press], 1994), 19.

33. Emily Selove, "A Day in the Life of an 11th-Century Baghdadi Party-Crasher," lecture, University of Colorado–Boulder, 16 January 2014.

34. Hijazi and al-Baḥri, *Khayāl aḍ-Ḍill wa Aṣl al-Masraḥ al-'Arabī*, 19.

35. A copy of the cover letter appears in appendix four.

36. *Lettre d'un comédien*, 2, 4.

"Vous vous étonnerez, sans doute, de me voir dans les réflexions; cependant il m'est bien permis de m'y livrer dans le triste état où m'a plongé le sort. . . . Mais quand ensemble nous eûmes passé la Baie de Monaco, quelle fut la surprise de nos matelots de voir jeter les chaloupes en mer et de reconnaître des Tunisiens qui se précipitaient dedans avec des cris épouvantables."

37. Appendix Five addresses the letter's veracity.

38. Jean-Philippe Van Aelbrouk's supposition that the French troupe was on its way to Toulon seems to rely on the fact that François Hus was the only comedian who did not join the troupe. Rather, he "went back to Toulon by boat" ("regagne Toulon par bateau"). Jean-Philippe Van Aelbrouk, "Comment faire de l'ordre dans une dynastie de comédiens? Le cas de la famille Hus éclairé par des documents d'archives," *Proceedings of the Second Annual Cesar Conference*, 21–23 June 2006.

39. *Lettre d'un comédien*, 20.

40. *Lettre d'un comédien*, 14-5.

41. *Lettre d'un comédien*, N. P.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Note that Ibn abī aḍ-Ḍiyāf's *Iṭḥaf az-Zamān bi Akhbār Mulūk Tunis wa 'Aḥd al-Amān* was completed in 1872 but not published until 1963. In eight tomes, the author recounts Tunisian history from the Islamic era to the Ottoman period under the leadership of the Husseini Beys. He proposes the reformation of the political system in Tunisia by stressing democracy and condemning oppression.

44. Aḥmad Ibn abī aḍ-Ḍiyāf, *Iṭḥaf az-Zamān bi Akhbār Mulūk Tunis wa 'Aḥd al-Amān* [Presenting contemporaries the history of the rulers of Tunis and the Fundamental Pact] (Tunis: al-Matba'at al-Rasmiya li al-Jumhuriya al-Tunisiya, 1963), 103.

"فصاحت البننت . . . بأي شرع يتصرف السلطان في أرواحنا بالقهر ونحن أحراراً."

45. *Ibid.*, 102.

"وهي من الصناعات الشريفة عندهم، لأن مرجعها تربوية الناس وتهذيب اخلاقهم، . . . وفيها الموسيقى، تارة يكون ابن أبي العمل الغناء والرقص."

46. *Ibid.*, 103. ("So he said [THE BEY], Despite the grandiosity of his power and the large number of his soldiers, the King of France still considers himself at the service of his people. Oh Sheikh, how about us?)

I [IBN ABI AL-DHIAF] told him: These people [the French] are so many years ahead of us in terms of civilization that this advancement makes their civilization manifested in their moral habits as well as manners. There lies a huge difference between them and us.”)

فقال [الباي]: سلطان الفرنسيين على قوة عدته، وكثرة جنوده، بهذه الحالة [في مراعاة الرعايا] فكيف بنا أيها الشيخ؟
فقلت له: ان القوم سبقونا الى الحضارة [بأحقاب السنين] حتى تخلقوا بها، وصارت من طباعهم وبيئنا وبينهم بون بانن."

47. The tension with regard to the relationship between the two countries became very tense, ultimately resulting in France sending its navy and soldiers to intervene in Tunisian politics. Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf’s claims that a decade after his trip to France, the French said that the French government did so to guarantee the right of all people, including foreign residents in Tunisia, to practice their faith and buy lands, among other actions. According to Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf, the French forced the Bey to sign the Fundamental Pact (‘Aḥd al- Amān’) in 1857 (Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf, *Iṭḥaf az-Zamān*, 240–44). Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf specifies that the pact was signed following the case of an execution of a Jew. The Bey ordered the execution of a Jewish man for insulting a Muslim and denying that he had done so at the court. Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf recounts the details of this affair, explaining that the Bey was indeed involved in several suspicious executions and did not seem to consult his ministers at all times (ibid., 233–38). Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf notes that the pact resulted from other factors besides the Bey’s injustice and explains that in one document the French consul had claimed, “We do not oppose this affair only, but we also oppose the policy of the Tunisian government” (ibid., 238). Attempting to be objective, Ibn abī al-Ḍiyāf also admits that even after signing the pact, the Bey was involved in the murder of a Moroccan fellow, which further infuriated the French consul.

48. References to these theaters are in Mohamed al-Madyouni’s work, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fi-l Masraḥ al- Arabī al-Jadīd: al Masraḥ fi Tūnis* [The useful and concise guide on new Arab theater: Theater in Tunisia] (Sharjah: Arab Theater Institute, 2009), in which he cites that Raoul Darmon provides further details on these theaters and the theater in Tunisia since the beginning of the nineteenth century in his article “Un presque siècle de théâtre à Tunis (rétrospective de 1862 à 1914)” [Almost a century of theater in Tunisia (in retrospective from 1862 to 1914)].

49. Alexandre Dumas, *Le véloge ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis* (Paris: Alexandre Cadot, 1848), 36.

50. Kenneth J. Perkins, *Tunisia: Crossroads of the Islamic and European Worlds* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), 70. “The number of Europeans in Tunisia multiplied rapidly. Most had some connection with commerce, although many Italian laborers and farmers crossed the Mediterranean to escape harsh economic conditions in their homeland. Political refugees from Italy added to their numbers, and until the 1930s, Italians formed the single largest foreign community in Tunisia.”

51. Charfeddine, *Deux siècles de théâtre en Tunisie* [Two centuries of theater in Tunisia] (Tunis: Ibn Charaf, 2001), 55. “Tunis qui passe, La Chine à Tunis, et Folie-Tunis.”

52. Louis-Jean Duclos, Jean Duvinaud, and Jean Lega, *Les nationalisms maghrébins*, 90–92.

53. Fadhel Jaïbi, recorded interview with Rafika Zahrouni, Tunis, July 26 2009.

54. Al-Madyouni, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fi-l Masraḥ al- Arabī al-Jadīd*, 14.

55. Duclos, Duvinaud, and Lega, *Nationalisms maghrébins*, 88.

56. Djedidi, *Le théâtre tunisien*, 14.

57. It is important to note that Shakespeare has been widely translated and adapted in the Arab world. In *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, Margaret Litvin discusses the importance of what she calls the “global kaleidoscope,” a new approach that explains how British colonization was not the only reason Shakespeare became known in the Arab world. Although Litvin’s approach contextualizes how *Hamlet* was appropriated in contemporary Egypt, I believe that

the Tunisian-French relationship may be represented by mapping the complexity of resistance and influence and may explain how Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" appeared in al-Qardahi's and later Ben 'Ayed's repertoires, among others.

58. *Salāh al-Dīn* is an epic drama that depicts the Muslims as victorious over the Christians during the Crusades.

59. Al-Madyouni, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fī-l Masrah al-'Arabī al-Jadīd*, 16–17.

60. "Saladin (Ayyubid Sultan)," *Encyclopædia Britannica* Online, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518809/Saladin/>.

61. Adaptations included plays written by Shakespeare such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

62. Al-Madyouni, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fī-l Masrah al-'Arabī al-Jadīd*, 18.

63. Djedidi, *Théâtre Tunisien*, 15.

64. The title al-Shahāma al-Adabiyya is not consistent in books on Tunisian theater. Unlike Djedidi, *Théâtre tunisien* (14–15), al-Madyouni's *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fī-l Masrah al-'Arabī al-Jadīd* introduces this troupe as al-Shahām al-'Arabyya (Arab Pride), 24.

65. M. M. Driss, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Masrah al-Tūnisī*, 36.

"لكن على العكس فلم يكن لأغلب أعضاء الشهامة دور سياسي . . . ساهم بقية أعضاء (فرقة الآداب) في أهم مراحل الحركة السياسية منذ نشأتها" (ادريس 36).

66. *Ibid.*, 18–23. 1911 is also the date of the first publication of a Tunisian play script titled *as-Sultān Bayn Judrān Yoldz* (The sultan in between Yoldz' s walls), written in standard Arabic by the journalist Mohamed Jaïbi (1880-1938). The play was presented in 1909 for the first time. In this play, M. Jaïbi describes the despotic regime of the Ottoman leader Abd- al-Hamid II, who ruled Tunisia but was deposed in 1909.

67. *Ibid.*, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Masrah al-Tūnisī: 1881–1956* [Studies on the history of Tunisian theater: 1881–1956] (Tunis: Sahar, 1993).

68. *Ibid.*, 33.

69. Khaled Guezmir, *Jeunes Tunisiens* [Tunisian youths] (Tunis: Alif, 1986), 97-98.

70. M. M. Driss, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Masrah al-Tūnisī*, 69.

71. The debate regarding *The Harem* may also relate to the controversy regarding harem literature that continues to preoccupy scholars. In her 2008 lecture "Where Elites Meet: Households, Harem Visits and Sea-Bathing in Pre-Colonial Tunisia c. 1830–1881," in *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, ed. Marilyn Booth, 177–210 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), scholar of history Julia Clancy-Smith presented her analysis of the Tunisian harem. I was privileged to attend this lecture and believe that Clancy-Smith provided valuable evidence regarding the status of the Husseinid dynasty in relation to the women of the Beys. However, I do not think that her synthesis, which draws on the accounts of European consuls who resided in Tunisia and of the destruction of both of the Beys' palaces, provides sufficient evidence to prove that the harem was indeed a reality in Tunisia. My claim is based on the fact that although the wives of the European consuls were close to the Tunisian princesses, their narratives do not appear to disclose anything important about the social status of these Tunisian women; instead, they provide information regarding the architecture of their households, clothing, and décor. Clancy-Smith argues, "Reports of harem socializing offer rich, ethnographic evidence about the physicality of daily life in upper-class residential compounds. Details of clothing dress, food, furniture, and furnishings—in addition to female body mass—in turn supply clues about taste, aesthetics, and the critical matter of gifts that greatly influenced the politics of sociability" (193). Clancy-Smith appears to propose the existence of a pre-colonial Tunisian harem without considering three main issues. The first is the outsider's view, which she cited based on an exchange of letters between the Tunisian women and the French women, who

belong to the family of the Bey and the King of France, respectively. The second is the oral tales reported by her neighbor and friend, Ms. Rostem, a Tunisian woman, with regard to Hotel Zephyr, which was erected in the place of the Bey's palace in La Marsa (a suburban area in Tunis). Clancy-Smith seems to base her evidence on the fact that the Bey's palace in La Marsa, which bore traces of what she claims to be a Tunisian "harem," was demolished by Habib Bourguiba. This appears to be a thoughtful supposition, but it requires reconsideration of whether the female households of the Husseinid Bey dynasty represented real harems or merely appeared as harems to female European visitors. The third reason may relate to the tendency of Europeans to equate polygamy under the Ottoman Empire with the system of the harem. While the harem seems to have a lustful dimension, drawing on women's captivity, polygamy in the context of some Muslim societies is not always associated with denigrating women. Rather, it is a complex system based on its own legal codes.

72. M. M. Driss, *Dirāsāt fī tārikh al-Masrah al-Tūnisī*, 68–84.

73. M. M. Driss, *Dirāsāt fī Tārikh al-Masrah al-Tūnisī*, 14.

74. Al-Madyouni, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fī-l Masrah al-'Arabī al-Jadīd*, 46–47.

75. "Abd Al-Rahman III (Umayyad Caliph)," *Encyclopædia Britannica* Online, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/767/Abd-al-Rahman-III/>.

76. Ezzeddine al-Din al-Madani and Mohamed as-Sqanji, *Ruwād at-Ta līf al-Masrahī fī Tūnis 1900–1950* [Pioneers of theater writing in Tunisia 1900–1950] (Tunis: ash-Sharika al-Tūnisya li-l-Tawzī', 1986), 18.

77. Al-Mejri, *Masrah al-'Arāis fī Tūnis*, 63. "Al-thaqāfa al-musdawaja ḍarūryya."

78. More details about the 1962 speech are provided in Chapter Four.

79. Djedidi, *Théâtre tunisien*, 40.

80. Ezzeddine al-Madani, *Masrah al-Din al-Madani wa-l Turath* [The theater of Ezzeddine al-Madani and heritage] (Tunis: Sahar, 1992), 104.

"و قد صورّ المدني من خلال "مسرحية ثورة" الزّنج آليات هذا الاحتواء الذي يعتمد إسقاط هذه الدّول في فخ القروض وفخ المستشارين و فخ الاستهلاك مما يوقع هذه البلدان في تبعية تامة لهذه القوى الاستعمارية . . ."

81. Bin 'Ayed received training by Jean Vilar (1912–1971), the founder of the Avignon Theater Festival (1947) and director of the National Popular Theater of France from 1951 to 1963. His approach may exemplify how theater is meant to serve and interact first with French society and second with French territories. It seems therefore that Bin 'Ayed followed Villar's model of a theater that wants to be international.

82. In *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fī-l Masrah al-'Arabī al-Jadīd*, al-Madyouni explains how Bin Ayed revolutionizes the role of theater director and contributes to change the aesthetics of theater directing in Tunisia (64–70).

83. For further details about this play and its Tunisian adaptation entitled *al-Marishāl 'Ammar* see Appendix Six.

84. Habib Boulares, *Mourad ath-Thalith* [Murad III] (Tunis: Maison Tunisiene de l'Édition, 1968), 57–58.

85. Chakravarty Box, *Strategies of Resistance*, 53.

86. Ezzeddine al-Din al-Madani, "Ali bin 'Ayed's Diverse Repertoire: Ali Bin 'Ayed's Theater," 31.

87. Djedidi, *Théâtre tunisien*, 17.

88. Describing Bourguiba's policy in the 1960s, Guilbert Cohen-Tanugi writes, "At the same time the country's hitherto fundamentally pro-Western foreign policy took on a more neutralist hue, notwithstanding a revival of cooperation with France" ("Tunisia," *American Jewish Year Book* 12 [1964]: 320).

89. Appendix seven will be provided to illustrate the main troupes that contributes to the evolution of Baccar and Ja'ibi.

90. Jebali is known to have written *Mudakkarāt Daynasur* (Memories of a dinosaur, 1987), an adaptation from Brecht's *Dialogues of the Exiled*. Jebali also directed a popular play series, *Klem al-Lil 1-11* (Night talks) in ten episodes from 1985 to 2004. Despite the diversification that characterizes Jebali's repertoire, the art of storytelling becomes a predominant aspect of his theater. However, Jebali's theatrical episodes (Night talks) convey nothingness and are in rupture with the traditional sense of storytelling. Gannoun directed *Tyour el-Lil* (Night birds, 1996), *Des feuilles mortes* (Dead leaves, 1998). Ganoun's play *Akhir Sa'a* (The end, 2011) is a monodrama that stages the body as a site for anxiety, contrasting the disorientated humanity against the instinct of survival. In addition to Jebali and Ganoun's theaters, Ben Ammar's Phou Theater presented *Tamthil Klem* (Speech representation, 1980), which she and Jebali co-authored. El-Ouergui directed, among other plays, *Uruq el-Ma Tah't es-Swaqi* (Water roots, 2009). El-Ouergui's nationalistic representation concerns socio-economic issues of country people such as unemployment. The earth/land is featured as an important component in all plays of this troupe. In *Uruq el-Ma Tah't es-Swaqi*, it was striking for the audience to see a construction taking place on stage by using real bricks, sand, and some basic construction tools. Gannoun's performance is about an unemployed young Tunisian man who graduated but never had the opportunity to work in his field. A wall was being constructed, however, each time it seemed built, it fell down. Symbolically speaking, the wall in the play might refer to the state of demolition, forewarning the end of the political system that is largely responsible for the economic situation in Tunisia. El-Ouergui's *Uruq el-Ma Tah't es-Swaqi* is also about the connections between Tunisia and the Arab world. The wall reminds the conflict between Palestine and Israel since in the performance, the Palestinian concern is intermingled with the local concerns of the Tunisian unemployed youth in his meddling with sand and bricks to erect the wall.

Chapter 2: The Development of the New Theater

This chapter delineates the specific background of the New Theater Troupe from which Fadhel Jaïbi and Jalila Baccar’s current theater company, Familia Productions, evolved. In order to show the continuity between the New Theater and Familia, this chapter will not only account for the background of both troupes, but will also focus on similar theatrical and thematic points that informed the New Theater and continue to inform Familia. This continuity will be demonstrated through the early main productions of the New Theater, *Al-‘ Urs* (The Wedding, 1976) and *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (First real rain of the fall season, 1980) and later Familia productions, such as *Khamsūn* and *Famīlia*. I argue that the New Theater had a long lasting impact on Familia as it fostered discontent and thereby influenced the performances of Jaïbi and Baccar, past and present. From a local perspective, the New Theater is rooted in the social, economic, historical, and political circumstances and discourses of Tunisian society during the 1970s. In the aftermath of the failure of the Socialist Party that was in power during the 1960s, the Tunisian government started to encourage privatization in the late sixties and through the seventies. This political choice, influenced by President Habib Bourguiba as a way to found a Modern Tunisia, resulted in the emergence of independent theater troupes. Privatization led to the decline of state-owned theater troupes. This new economic and cultural scene, however, did not mean that the government readily granted theater troupes freedom of expression. The New Theater came into being as the first of these private troupes in 1975. Its foundation marked the beginning of private theater in Tunisia, which signaled a step toward “independence” from state control. Drawing on its representation of discontent, this section aims to show how Familia Productions—a branch of the New Theater—is embedded in social and political criticism. The Tunisian government, however, attempted to control the New Theater and Familia in myriads of

ways. Regularly choosing not to sponsor these theater troupes, for instance, was one way of impeding their progress. The Municipal Theater director of Tunis and former New Theater actor, Mohamed Driss, provides an overview of the constraints and working conditions that the New Theater troupe had to bear in order to present *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*.¹ In addition to the lack of resources at one level, the decisions made by the government regarding where the group could perform and whether they could advertise on television, impeded the ability of this theater and the later Familia theater to reach out to rural areas. These actions may be considered forms of indirect censorship. With the exception of *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* that was broadcast on television in 1980, the New Theater and Familia plays were not advertised until the year 2007 when Tunisian station Hannibal—less official than the first National Tunisian station—introduced Familia to wider audiences, providing Jaïbi and Baccar with the opportunity to respond to questions about their drama.²

In this respect, the New Theater has largely operated counter to the state control that permeated every aspect of culture in Tunisian society, including drama. The Censorship Committee, for example, prevented free speech and imposed approved ideological discourse. In *Mughāmarat al-Fi'l al-Masraḥi fi Tūnis (Theater's adventure in Tunisia)* Mohamed al-Madyouni indicates that in 1966 the Tunisian government established the euphemistically termed committee, *Lajnat at-Tawjīh al-Masraḥī* (the Theater Orientation Committee).³ While its early role was to safeguard and promote the use of the Arabic language, this committee was later in charge of censorship. Because of its independence from the state, however, the New Theater enjoyed a limited degree of freedom that makes it different from national troupes, which were financed by the state and thus obliged to conform to official ideology. Despite its lack of state support on most occasions, the New Theater has continued to flourish and be politically

involved. In dealing with the tension between requirements imposed by the censorship committee and the necessities of conducting performances that aim to be independent and free, from its beginning the New Theater challenged the state system. Although difficulties hampered its development initially, this background meant the group evolved to play a role in fomenting cultural opposition to the official regime in Tunisia. Operating from this position led the troupe to gain more popularity than any other in the country.

Unlike the theaters mentioned above, 'Izz al-Dīn al-Madani's theater of Arab heritage and 'Ali ben 'Ayed's European-centered theater, the major aim of the New Theater has been to contest the Tunisian political structure by unveiling its official ideology through a strategic representation of daily life. The New Theater celebrates neither the glory of the Arab past nor the achievements of European culture, but takes advantage of the immediacy of theater to critique social and political failings of the here and now. The New Theater can therefore be taken as a reaction to both al Madani's and Bin 'Ayed's theaters in organization as well as aesthetics.

Al-Masrah al-Jadīd (The New Theater) also known as "Le Nouveau Théâtre de Tunis," was founded in 1975 by Jalila Baccar, M. Driss, Fadhel Jaïbi, Fadhel Jaziri, and Habib Masrouki. Both Jaïbi and Jaziri had previously directed plays and films. Jaziri was born into a middle class family in Tunis in 1948 and was culturally and politically influenced by his father's careers first as a bookseller, and later as a manager of the Zitouna hotel and Ramsès coffee shop, a site where politicians, writers, theater people, and musicians meet. At the Sadiki Secondary School of Tunis, he was a member of a theater association. Jaziri also gained training in acting under the supervision of Ben 'Ayed. Already in the 1960s, the young Jaziri was politically engaged as a member of a student committee. He benefited from a scholarship to London around 1970 and returned to Tunisia two years later. Together with Jaïbi and Souissi, Jaziri had some theatrical

experience in the Theater of El-Kef. In 1972, with Jaïbi, Samir al-Ayadi, Raouf ben Amor, Farhat Yamun, and Raja Farhat—also a director—Jaziri co-founded Masrah Gafsa (The Theater of the South). Unlike Jaïbi and similar to Driss, Jaziri also had both a passion for and practice in acting during the early stages of his career. Also, both Jaïbi and Jaziri had started with political activism early—while in college. In 1975, Jaziri contributed to the foundation of the New Theater of Tunis along with Jaïbi, Driss, Baccar, and Masrouki. The latter had experience in acting and together with Jaïbi he co-directed both plays for the stage and adaptations of theatrical productions for the cinema.⁴ To this day, however, Jaziri and Jaïbi's cinematic productions are limited compared to the number of plays they directed. Being more prolific in theater could be related to many reasons, including their passion for the art, the higher interest of Tunisian audiences in theater versus cinema, and the relative economy of producing theatrical events enabled them to contribute to this field more frequently as it is much less costly than operating in the cinematic industry. Born in Kairouan in 1948, Masrouki graduated in Cinema Studies from L'Ecole de Vaugirard in 1971. He obtained a license (three-year undergraduate degree) in Sociology from L'Ecole Louis Lumière in 1973. Masrouki was also the founder of a film association in the city of Kairouan, where he volunteered to train amateurs. All five colleagues belonged to the same generation and collaborated on acting, directing, and writing until Masrouki's suicide in 1982. After Masrouki's death, the other members gradually dispersed. Driss, for instance, decided to leave the troupe in 1982. Jaïbi and Baccar collaborated with Jaziri for a decade before founding, in 1993, their own theater company, Familia Productions, thus ensuring the continuity of the New Theater.

The Founders of Familia Productions, Jaïbi (1945-) and Baccar (1956-)

Growing up in Ariana, a province situated near Tunis, the director Jaïbi lost his father at the age of four. His mother, who had been widowed with four children, worked as a tailor for her neighborhood. He completed his studies at the secondary school Alaoui in Ariana, where he took Arabic and French. From his Arabic literature classes, he was particularly influenced by the Tunisian poet Abu al-Qassim ash-Shabbi (1909-34), best known for his verse, "If the people one day have the will to live/ Destiny must then respond."⁵ The verse implies self-determination and free-thinking at the expense of accepting the concept of pre-destination. The theater-director's rejection of cooperating with the Tunisian regime manifests his adherence to Shabbi's concept. Jaïbi was also introduced to theater by his Arabic and French teachers. He joined a chorus upon starting secondary school and had roles in the plays directed by his school teachers. He also attended evening classes about theater taught by Abdelmottalib Ezzaazaa who directed a young theater company at the time. This company presented works by Federico García Lorca and Bertolt Brecht. Attending rehearsals of such plays marked a decisive moment in Jaïbi's early discovery of theater prior to his enrolling in college. After he obtained a Baccalaureate in Tunisia, he hoped to obtain a scholarship to study cinema abroad, but his dream was not fulfilled. Instead, he decided to enroll in a BA English program and to keep looking for other opportunities. Soon, he held the position of assistant director for Tunisian TV (in 1966). He planned to travel to Czechoslovakia for Cinema studies, however conflicts with his supervisor, Hatem Ben Miled, led to the withdrawal of the scholarship. Charfeddine, who was at the time head of the theater department, helped Jaïbi to obtain a scholarship to study theater in Paris. Jaïbi moved to France where he pursued a Masters in Theater Studies at the Institute des Etudes Théâtrales (Paris III Sorbonne) between 1967 and 1972. Before graduating, he served as a trainee at the Université Internationale du Théâtre (1969-70). In France, together with M. Driss, co-

founder of the Théâtre Epique (Epic Theater,) Jaïbi directed *La Neige au Milieu de l'Été* (*Snow in Midsummer*) by Chinese playwright Guan Hanqing (c.1241-1320). In addition to these experiences, Jaïbi considers his readings of William Shakespeare's drama as well as his exposure to international performances in Paris in the late 1960s, to be major influences on his work. Specifically, he states that the performance of Hélène Weigel (1900-1971), Brecht's wife, in *The Mother*, a play written by Maksim Gorky, has had a lasting effect.⁶

Upon returning to Tunisia in 1971, Jaïbi experimented with different regional troupes that enriched his repertoire. In the Northwest of Tunisia, he collaborated with Souissi, founder of who had founded the El-Kef troupe in 1967. With Jaziri, Jaïbi was the co-founder of the Théâtre du Sud (the Theater of the South) also known as the Theater of Gafsa, in 1972. He left in 1973 but the Theater of Gafsa exists to this day. The following year with Lamine Al-Nahdi—considered one of the most successful comedians in Tunisia—Jaïbi co-founded the amateur Arab Maghreb Troupe, which was one of the most distinguished amateur theater troupes in the country during the early 1970s. Their production *al-Karita* (*The Cart*, 1974) written by Al-Nahdi and Kamel Al-Touati, and directed by Jaïbi, Jaziri, and Masrouki had an astonishingly long run of 300 performances. The play tells the story of a poor family that migrated from a village situated in the northeast of Tunisia to settle in Tunis, the capital, living in the cart in which they made the trip. The family is composed of the father and his four young sons, none of whom has a job. Among these sons is Al-Sabti (Al-Nahdi) who describes his act of roaming the avenues of Tunis in the most satirical way as he discovers the city through aspects of modern life such as cars, traffic lights, grocery stores, fountains, and fast food. The father, frustrated by his inability to feed his sons, sends two of them to look for Belgacem—a fellow he knows—to borrow some money. His sons forget who they are looking for, and each time they come back from their

search, they report to their father and to their brothers how captivated they have been by all sorts of odd objects they have seen in the city. The play portrays the social and economic changes that were taking place in Tunisia at the time. Unemployment and housing issues are represented through both this large, jobless family and the cart that is a substitute for a house. Jaïbi's experience in the Arab Maghreb Theater and his contribution to directing *al-Karita*, influenced his development in many important ways. On this occasion the director supervised the acting style of the commedia dell' arte—a type of theater in which he was trained in France. The use of masks by Al-Sabti and his family represent how alienated they are in the city.

In addition to his work establishing theater troupes, Jaïbi has also trained actors and worked as a film director. As the director of the Centre National d'Art Dramatique (The National Center for Dramatic Art in Tunis) between 1974 and 1978, his goal was to reconcile theater production and education.

Jaïbi's companion, actress and playwright Baccar, grew up in a lower middle class family in Tunis. As mentioned above, Baccar had joined the regional troupe of Gafsa in 1973 and co-founded Familia in 1993. She met Jaïbi in the Theater of the South. Her background was very different from Jaïbi's. Baccar did not receive any academic training in theater either in Tunisia or abroad. Her early exposure in secondary school may have acted as a substitute for theater education and encouraged her passion for it early in her life. Baccar did not receive any traditional education except in French language and literature while she studied at the École Normale Supérieure, a prestigious language institute in Tunis. Among the French texts that had a lasting effect on her understanding of the relationship between actor and character is *Le Paradoxe sur le comédien* (The paradox of acting) by the French philosopher and art critic Denis Diderot. After one year, she decided to commit to theater. Also unlike Jaïbi, Baccar was not

engaged in politics early in her life, the year during which she enrolled in college to study French, 1975, marked the end of political activism in Tunisia as state control increased from the 1970s forward.

The director and playwright also diverge in regard to their interests: directing vs. acting. Jaïbi had a very limited experience with acting; Baccar never directed plays. Baccar has been considered Tunisia's leading actress since 1976 and Familia's leading playwright since 1998. Although they wrote a number of plays together, Baccar has written most of Familia's scripts and has performed in almost every play directed by Jaïbi. Before this couple founded Familia, they worked together with Gafsa theaters and their experience in that troupe helped shape their work in the New Theater and later in Familia Productions, their current theater company.

The New Theater Sources of Inspiration: Jaïbi and Baccar's Theater Experience with El-Kef and Gafsa Troupes

The New Theater incorporates the multiple experiences of its members acquired in both Tunisia and France before 1976. The Tunisian troupes El-Kef (1967) and Gafsa (1972) constitute the main sources of training for the director-playwright pair. Both theaters focused on Tunisian and Arab heritage. However, the Kef repertoire was more eclectic as it included many adaptations from both Eastern and Western plays, in addition to indigenous productions. Of particular interest to the early career of Jaïbi is that during his time in the troupe of El-Kef, he directed *al-'Athra* (The Stumbling) an adaptation of Peter Weiss's play *How Was Mr. Mockinpott Cured of his Sufferings*, 1973. Tunisian scripts written by al-Madani and Samir Ayadi were also part of the Kef's productions.⁷

Since its founding in 1967 by Moncef Souissi, the Kef troupe differed from other regional troupes such as Bin ‘Ayed’s in terms of aesthetics. The principles of El-Kef troupe were geared toward symbolism, distancing, directing, and collective theatrical work.⁸ The Kef troupe’s unique vision emerged from what was known as the Manifesto of Eleven (1966), a statement signed by Souissi and other Tunisian youths. In the Manifesto, these youths reviewed the limitations of Tunisian theater, critiquing the inability of theater to reflect the people’s traditions and to address their daily concerns. The Manifesto’s program aimed to establish theater that would be in dialogue with larger audiences.

After their time with the El-Kef troupe Jaïbi and Baccar, the director and actress, joined the Troupe of Gafsa in 1972. Mohamed Raja Farhat founded this troupe with other members whose contributions led to Gafsa’s diverse productions. Along with Jaïbi and Baccar, M. Driss, Fadhel Jaziri, Samir Ayadi, Abd-ar-Raouf Ben Amor, Rached Manai, and Farhat Yamun were all active members. During its early phase, Gafsa theater’s main principles involved the importance of collective work and the dramatization of both contemporaneous political history and the cultural heritage of Tunisia. For instance, the troupe directed Samir al-Ayadi’s play *al-Jazia al-Hilalyya* which provides a reading of the Tunisian Workers’ Movement. Of particular interest to the trajectory of Baccar and Jaïbi are a number of plays including the 1972 play, *Djoha wa ash-Sharq al-Hā’ir* (Djoha and the disoriented Orient) written by Raja Farhat and directed by Jaïbi. The play presents the cultural heritage of storytelling in new ways. Jaïbi also directed *al-Borni wa-l ‘Atra* (Unusual male and female proper names).

During the second phase of Gafsa troupe’s development, many of the aforementioned members migrated to Tunis. In 1975, the Gafsa troupe was directed by theater director-actor,

Abdelkader Mokdad. Since that date, the repertoire of Gafsa became dominated by popular theater inspired by Tunisian cultural heritage, especially that of the southern part of the country. Most plays directed by Mokdad had a double focus: to entertain the audience and to represent the reality of people in the south of Tunisia. *Fīrān al-Dāmūs* (The mice of the cave, 1975) was one of these. This play describes the conditions of the people in the mines of Gafsa. The play was well received and was performed more than 800 times. The impact of both the El-Kef and Gafsa troupes on the training of Baccar and Jaïbi helped shape their thematic and aesthetic choices at The New Theater of Tunis.

Other Sources of Inspiration

The New Theater approach is rooted in certain events that inspired Jaïbi and Baccar. These sources include the spring 1968 protests in both Paris and Tunis. In a 2011 interview with Jaïbi and Baccar, Caroline Broué and Hervé Gardette, two journalists from Radio France Culture, inquired as to whether they had been influenced by the May 1968 events. To the question, Jaïbi replied, “For me May 68, with what happened in the Odeon, was a decisive and an important turning point. From May 68, I retain a Cultural Revolution. We did not talk then except of remaking the world through culture.”⁹ Also in an interview conducted by Moez Mrabet with Jaïbi in 1997, the director explained that theater thrived in 1968. Raising Brecht to iconic status, Jaïbi adds “We were divided between being either Brechtian or nothing.”¹⁰ In the same interview, he also explains that he was fortunate to attend performances such as *Mother Courage* (1939) acted and directed by the students of Brecht under the management of the Berliner Ensemble in the same way it was directed by Brecht himself a decade or two earlier. In the

interview conducted by Broué and Gardette, Baccar pointed out that the students' and militants' protests in Tunisia started in March 1968. Baccar curiously added that Michel Foucault, then a professor in Tunis, wrote an article on the young Tunisian students who were protesting in March 68.

Besides these two important dates, one cannot overlook the significance of the Arabs' defeat in June '67 in the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War. Jaïbi and Baccar cannot be unaware of the implications of the '67 war to their theater. This concern is manifested in many plays, including *Khamsūn*, but also in a famous monodrama that was performed by Baccar in Beirut, under the title *al-Baḥth 'an 'Ayda* (Searching for Aida, 1998). The play chronicles fifty years of occupation of the Palestinian lands from 1948 to 1998. The sense of bitterness in most plays by Baccar and Jaïbi echoes the Arab defeat. It is shaped through depictions of old age, schizophrenia, fanaticism, and dictatorship. To these local and global concerns, it must be added that Jaïbi and Baccar have continued, since the late seventies, to write and direct plays that stage socio-political criticism.

The New Theater: Is it a Movement?

Baccar and Jaïbi do not claim that the New Theater adheres to any specific theater movement, nor to represent any particular literary movement. In Jaïbi's terms, "We do not recognize ourselves in any existing movement."¹¹ On the other hand, theater critics such as Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson note, "The limitations imposed on regional theaters working under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Safeguard of Heritage paved the way for the significant development of both a venture and a movement, called *al-Masrah al-Jadid* (The New

Theater).”¹² Amine and Carlson can be taken to mean that the state was able to co-opt a number of regional theaters, but it was not able to impose much limitation on the New Theater. The second part of the above statement, however, is problematic because a close reading of Jaïbi and Baccar’s plays will help clarify the most important characteristics of a new theatrical model rather than a movement. Unlike Amine and Carlson, Jaïbi himself, as stated above, and Mrabet, a theater professor and actor who took parts in some of the plays directed by Jaïbi, explain that the New Theater is not a movement. Like Jaïbi, Mrabet notes in an e-mail exchange that the New Theater is first and foremost a troupe whose members share an interest in renewing Tunisian theater. He adds that a major constituent aspect of the New Theater is two-fold: the aesthetic as well as the organizational. For Mrabet, the New Theater is not a movement in itself, but an initiator of a new theatrical practice that is both diverse and rich.¹³ In light of Mrabet’s explanation, a close reading of Jaïbi and Baccar’s plays and performances will help clarify that the director and playwright have been experimenting with an approach that can be understood in most of their productions through an understanding of their many shared principles.

The goal in this section is to explore this theatrical approach, or “method,” which is the term Baccar used in an interview conducted by Ridha Boukadida, a Tunisian scholar of theater as well as a playwright, actor, and director. The author notes that Baccar considers the New Theater *une méthode* (a method).¹⁴ The characteristics of this method involve experimentation with the process of writing scripts for the stage. The approach of the New Theater also attempts to break away from both French and European theatrical models as well as those of Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries. A third characteristic of the New Theater is the way it combines different linguistic registers and non-semiotic forms of meaning to exploit new ways of dramatizing local socio-political themes that engage the largest possible audience.

The New Theater Principles

The aesthetics of The New Theater are, to a certain degree, unchanged, mirroring the founders' experience at the Theater of Gafsa. Nor did the development of Familia Productions correspond to a radical theatrical change in so far as the approach of these artists is concerned. Of course, the plot of each play performed is unique, but some stylistic characteristics are maintained. Among the features that did not change significantly are the process of collective writing, language choice, the portrayal of political power dynamics, and the use of Brechtian techniques to increase the audience's political understanding. Almost any of the plays of Jaïbi and Baccar can be used to explore how they have appropriated Brecht in a skillful way. With Familia productions, the director/actress pair became experts in writing and directing Brechtian performances without losing the specificities of the Tunisian context.

Among the defining features shared by the New Theater and Familia Productions are the ways in which both troupes explore the actor who acts as narrator. This technique is used whenever the narrator's speech is meant to provide the setting, introduce the story, contextualize major events, or advance the plot. As an example in New Theater plays, *al-'Urs* (The wedding, 1976), primarily written by Driss and Masrouki and directed by Jaziri and Jaïbi, opens with a narrator who identifies the main characters, Sara (played by Baccar) and Fateh (played by M. Driss). As the narrator introduces the newly married couple, both of whom belong to the working class, he explains that they are caught in a difficult situation economically due to the pressure of keeping up appearances and their inability to repair their run-down apartment. The walls of this apartment crack, allowing cold and rain to enter. This increases the couple's discomfort and may also hint at an imminent split between the newly married couple. The actual split does not occur

in the play, but due to financial hardships, the couple becomes verbally and physically violent toward one another. For instance, in scene 4, the *Dbāra* (The Stratagem), Sara tells Fateh to sell his apartment before it is completely destroyed or confiscated by City Hall—which has threatened to turn it into a parking lot. Fateh refuses to listen to Sara, claiming that he cannot sell it because it officially belongs to his father. Sara explodes in anger at her husband because he hid his miserable economic circumstances from her before they were married. She retaliates by attacking his manhood. For Sara, a lack of financial power means a lack of virility, which may be considered as a culturally-based attack.

As an another example, one may look at *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (1980), where both Youssef (M. Driss) and Laroussi (Fadhel Jaziri) introduce the story and tell the audience how Beya (Jalila Baccar) is absent because she decided to go to a Turkish bath that day. When Baya appears she also tells the audience her story using the third person. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* represents the conflict between the middle class and the working class. Youssef, Beya, and Ezzeddine (also played by Driss) belong to the middle class. Laroussi, ‘Am Salah (also played by Jaziri), the production manager, and all the other journalists and employees, belong to the working class. At the company, the owner Youssef (played by M. Driss), and his relatives hold the power. His stepdaughter Beya (played by Baccar) is a journalist and his nephew Ezzeddine (also played by M. Driss) is the administrative director. Hence, the company is vulnerable to inefficiency because the members of the family may not necessarily hold their positions based on merit. The lack of effectiveness of the media—and especially the newspapers—forms the main concern of this play. The drama also suggests that the media problem is a political one. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* describes how media is dominated by the powerful in Tunisia, hinting that these people have their hands in everything. In the first scene, Youssef symbolically crumples a paper

ball that leaves black ink on his hands. He finds the ink very hard to clean off his hands. He then throws the paper ball to the floor. By means of the paper and these actions there is an exchange of a wink between Youssef and the audience which is reminded of the dark state of the press. Youssef's hands stained by ink suggest he is not 'clean,' that is, not honest. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* clearly targets newspapers that are submissive to the official Tunisian political discourse. In his critique of *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, Ahmed Hadiq 'Urf argues, "[The newspaper] does not produce its own discourse. Rather, it is satisfied with regurgitating the same discourse to which it is dictated: coping with the government system and being devoted to the prevailing meanings, moral values, cultural norms, representations, and more, to expand submission."¹⁵ In the context of *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* as a statement against the official attitude, Beya does not tolerate the lack of free speech. She was trained abroad to report news freely. In France, she observed how journalism was in favor of pluralism and free expression. Her previous life experience thus equipped her to discern between independent and submissive journalism. As illustrated earlier, Beya judges *al-Akhbar* to be disconnected from the real life conditions of Tunisian citizens. For her, the newspaper does not highlight important news. Instead, it conceals news.

The narrative technique continues to be used in *Khamsūn* as this play starts with the narrator's recorded voice, describing how Tunisia's past was at the crossroads of civilizations. The narrator contrasts the pluralistic cultural systems that certainly included multiple ethnicities and religions within the nation's political and cultural traditions during 1956-2006. The narrator critiques how Tunisia is reduced to a postcard of beautiful sandy beaches. The narrative voice juxtaposes these contradictions, explaining how Tunisia was a host to The World Summit on the Information Society, a historical event that occurred in Tunisia in 2005. In capturing real historical and political events, the narrator recreates the history of Tunisia to dramatize its

decline. Reminding the audience of Tunisia's history is an act of resistance against any political leadership that claims fake achievements. The narration at the opening of the play portrays a sense of regret for lost glorious civilizations and ends up with the suicide bombing that bears witness to the shaky political and cultural situation in modern Tunisia.

Notable characteristics of the New Theater acting style also lie in the shift between narration and acting, where the actor plays multiple roles, including one main part, while also performing the parts of other characters either by playing extra roles or by speaking in the third person while the other character is present onstage. To illustrate this point, I will show how these theatrical techniques are also prevalent in both the New Theater and the Familia companies. In scene 2 of *Al-'Urs*, Sara speaks in the third person about her husband. While standing next to him, she explains that both he and his mother want to dominate her.¹⁶ The use of the third instead of first person, similar to the playing of different roles by the same actor, recurs in most plays studied here. By using multiple roles, the audience is forced to have distance from the actor. The use of third person also creates distance between the actor and the character. *Khamsūn*'s audience, for instance, encounters the same actress (Baccar) in her role of Maryam, Amal's mother and—during the interrogation scenes—the role of the policewoman, Wassila. The latter questions Hanen, Juda's roommate, in an attempt to force her to confess a connection to the bombing. While Wassila performs in the dark theater, lighting focuses on the suspect. Maryam then stands next to her daughter, who speaks about herself in the third person, ("She [Amal] keeps watching al-Jazeera TV counting the number of the dead.")¹⁷ Maryam comments on her daughter's speech, ("She [Amal] cries, cries because of the vanquished men, because of the beaten hands.")¹⁸ In this performance, the actress' tone changes each time she embodies a different role; from the comforting tone of the mother to her daughter, to holding Laith (Moez

Mrabet) complicit in her husband's imprisonment and torture because of his Leftist ideals, to her threatening tone as policewoman.

An additional striking characteristic also common to the New Theater and Familia is the way in which they the theme of repression through the body. This theme concerns the way the actor is able to take an abstract idea, internalize it, and then express that inner thought through physical gestures, costumes, and movements. Modeling roles for this theme requires the use of specific costumes and props. With regard to the body, Baccar describes the manner in which Jaïbi approaches actors in terms of sculpture. She notes, "He never works without considering the abilities of the actor."¹ Baccar means that Jaïbi's perspective is based on performance that involves the actor/narrator in correlation with the décor, music, lighting, and space management. However, Jaïbi's originality is centered on the actor's body. The complexity of the body on stage lies in the multiple dimensions that the body expresses. *Khamsūn* provides remarkable examples for the ways in which characters are physically, intellectually, and emotionally engaged to portray power relations. In *Khamsūn*, during the scene where the policeman Laith interrogates Maryam regarding her daughter's involvement in Juda's suicide, Maryam wears a simple and yet polished outfit, a mid-length skirt and a wrap scarf. This attire, combined with her short haircut, suggests a pragmatic attitude that contributes to the image of the mother present in defense of her daughter. The focus is on the wearing of specific attire which makes the audience rethink the habitual fact of clothing in a different way. Emphasis on power is also shown through posture. Power is in the hands of Laith, who stands while Maryam sits. The scene illustrates how Laith forces Maryam to submit to the rules of the police unit, by controlling her movements from above. The posture and the tone of voice of both characters portray a key principle of what Brecht calls the 'Gestus.' Showing gestus highlights power dynamics, which become visible

through the characters' relative positioning and change of tone.

In addition to *Khamsūn*, *Famīlia* (1993) exemplifies best how Jaībi makes the staged body something capable of being altered by the actors. *Famīlia* is the most pertinent example for portraying Tunisian political decay through the experience of old age, employing the aging body to represent political oppression. Jaībi's experience with directing the play highlights his focus on the relationship between three elderly, sick, and disenfranchised sisters—Babouna (Fatma ben Saïdane), Bahja (Jalila Baccar), and Molka (Sabeh Bouzouita), and their interactions with Tuhami Ḥsayra (Kamel Touati), a hunchbacked police superintendent who does not seem any younger or any less frustrated than the three sisters. The play examines how political oppression is duplicated in the personal stories of the three sisters by describing their state of existential frustration at being denied everything they had ever wanted, as well as by discussing the socio-political tribulations embodied by their relationships with each other, with members of their families, with acquaintances, and specifically with Ḥsayra. Despite the power his position entails, the distorted body of Ḥsayra appears to represent a decaying Tunisian political structure. Indeed, the superintendent's deformed body may not be mere coincidence, nor convey old age only, as the police department does not typically employ hunchbacks. This physical characteristic portrays the how deformed the police unit has become over time. This deformation represents the distorted system of power. *Famīlia* represents the repressive political system first through Ḥsayra's behavior. It examines how political oppression is duplicated in the personal stories of the three sisters by not only describing their state of existential frustration, but also by discussing the socio-political tribulations embodied by their relationships to each other, members of their family, acquaintances, and Ḥsayra. The political oppression at the national level is therefore duplicated at the level of these three women's private stories as governed by power

relationships.

Famīlia opens with the three sisters insulting and spitting on each other on their way back from the cemetery where they were paying a visit to their recently deceased fourth sister, Zohra. The relationship between the sisters is governed by hatred and jealousy. In the opening scene, Babouna insults Molka and spits on her while they walk close to the audience. While cursing, the characters' tone of voice, facial expression, and movements show a social gestus. This gestus when viewed clearly and loudly onstage is observed anew by the audience and causes them to laugh. While each sister tries to control the other's life, the major conflict revolves around Ḥsayra. Babouna, the eldest, appears suspicious of Molka's moral conduct in regard to her relationship with Ḥsayra. Similarly, Bahja disapproves of Molka receiving Ḥsayra at home and is skeptical of her younger sister's piety. When the four actors first performed *Famīlia*, the oldest among them was only in her early forties.

The actors recreate the experience of old age through the use of a few simple props such as glasses and a scarf, dated clothes, and a false hunchback. Each of these four characters also suffers from an age-related disease. They all transform their mouths right in front of the audience, making its lower cavity much lower to indicate a loss of teeth. Both Bahja and Babouna, and to a lesser degree, sixty-three-year old Molka, wear old-fashioned clothes. Old age is also captured in the way the actors walk on stage. When she walks, the actor portraying Bahja spreads her legs apart to maintain her balance. She also looks down as if she were afraid of falling. The actor playing Babouna shuffles and trembles, to the extent that she falls a few times despite holding her hands fast to the wall. The character Bahja cannot tolerate her overactive lone kidney, which betrays her in a scene where Ḥsayra prevents her from going to the bathroom. Babouna is portrayed as breathing with difficulty, suggestive of a respiratory disease. At the end

of the play, Babouna cries out loudly, expressing her desire not to die—a common motif in *Familia*'s plays. While the youngest of the sisters seems healthier than the others, Bahja characterizes Molka as a nymphomaniac. Bahja's comment betrays her own sexual repression and criticizes Molka's desire to be sexually active while in her sixties.

Ḥsayra's decay is introduced through his hunched back. The man also suffers from hemorrhoids—a sign of dysfunction that hints at a disease mostly representative of repression from a bureaucratic life of sitting inactive. Changes in the body with aging thus represent all sorts of societal dysfunction and decay due to the repression that permeates all aspects of life. This repression affects not only the characters among each other, but also the audience as they watch the sisters provoking each other through verbal and physical abuse.

Frustration, old age, oppression, and resistance to power are portrayed by the ways in which the actors move on and off stage. Not only their movements, but also the characters' physical appearances, actions, gestures, and speech are central to Ja'ibi's directing. In the epilogue of *Familia*'s script, the critic Sabry Hafez explains that this play addresses serious issues that are beyond the stories of Bahja, Babouna, Molka, and Ḥsayra in that *Familia* purports to depict the state of old age that is at the heart of this play to infer the senescence of an entire society in decay. Hafez's interpretation can be thought authoritative when considering these deformed old characters as symbolic of a society that is falling apart.

Writing

While New Theater leaders claim to break away from existing theatrical conventions, both in Europe and the East, it does not mean that there are no traces of European dramatic

elements in New Theater plays. References not only to the Epic Theater but also to Experimental Theater as well as to the Theater of the Absurd helps to understand what Tunisian theater shares with world drama. Different European movements such as Realism and Expressionism informed the New Theater. The focus on social questions as well as the interior life of characters depicted broadens the scope of the New Theater, marking its focus on larger questions that include absurdities, conscious, intellectual, and unconscious experiences. While it is reasonable to claim that *Famīlia* includes absurdist elements, it is important to note that in this play, causality and meaning do not collapse as happens in most absurdist plays. However, an emphasis on experimentation with specific ways of writing, narrating, and staging a play in accordance with Tunisian theatrical possibilities has shaped this model in many respects.¹⁹ The writing style of the New Theater gave expression to political resistance by challenging the earlier theater developed by Ben'ayed and by sensitizing the audience so that they could start thinking critically and be moved to take action outside the theater.

This troupe has produced most of its own scripts based on new techniques, topics, approaches, and materials. As argued by Djedidi, “This is the generation of rupture.”²⁰ By rupture, the author meant that Tunisian playwrights and directors such as Baccar and Jaïbi did not consider staging Tunisian plays other than their own. Djedidi explains that refraining from using Tunisian scripts may be understood in several ways. The author claims that Tunisian playwrights do not read the works of other Tunisian writers. Djedidi’s first claim seems implausible because even if Tunisian directors did not select local texts, this does not necessarily mean they are unaware that these texts exist. Another way to look at disregarding Tunisian dramatic literature is the fact that this literature is not abundant, which limits the choice available to directors such as Jaïbi whose stylistic, aesthetic, and thematic perspectives prompt the need to

create his own scripts. Djedidi also assumes that the failure to stage Tunisian dramatic literature was a discouraging experience for many directors. Among the unsuccessful productions based on Tunisian dramatic literature was Mahmoud Messadi's *Haddatha Abu Hurayra qāl* (Thus spoke Abu Hurayra, 1979),²¹ directed by M. Driss who called this performance *Hadith* (1998).

Djedidi points to the fact that Jaïbi has always preferred to stage his own scripts, without acknowledging the intertextuality between his and other texts. The tendency to produce his own texts explains the reason why adaptations are very limited in the repertoire of Jaïbi. The only obvious ones are *al-'Urs* (The wedding, 1976), an adaptation of Brecht's *Respectable Wedding* for the New Theater, and later, for Familia Productions, Jaïbi directed *Junūn* (2002, Dementia), an adaptation of a psychiatric case study.²² However, as cited by Djedidi in an interview with Jaïbi, the Tunisian theater critic Faouzia Mezzi reports that the director admits his liberal take on foreign texts, benefiting from the genius of the authors who inspired him, including August Strindberg and Ingmar Bergman. In this interview, Mezzi indicates Jaïbi's views on adaptation: "What I am certain about is that I do not clothe Strindberg in a Jebba (traditional Tunisian clothes), neither do I proceed with plating."²³

Similarly, in *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fi-l Masraḥ al-' Arabī al-Jadīd: al Masraḥ fi Tūnis* (The useful and concise guide to new Arab theater: Theater in Tunisia), al-Madyouni also discusses the shift in theater direction in Tunisia and how the director gains paramount importance at the expense of the dramatist and script. Al-Madyouni emphasizes the collective nature of producing the written work, which no longer depends on fixed scripts written by a playwright. Meanwhile, critics Djedidi and al-Madyouni must be aware that the theater of Jaïbi aspires to be experimental. The play in Jaïbi's theater evolves with the participation of the actors who are the foundation of the theatrical act. The director leads the project, but the script becomes

a common work that troupe members build together. The script project is the point of arrival rather than that of departure from which any performance begins.

Al-'Urs, for instance, was collectively composed by members of the New Theater—Driss, Jaziri, Masrouki, Baccar, and Jaïbi. In the context of the New Theater, the experience of building up to that performance fits into the context of experimental theater. The collective writing experience of *al-'Urs* exemplifies how the script remains a draft that changes in accordance with the needs of the particular performance in progress until the final rehearsal takes place. The project of writing a play thus becomes a field of experimentation and improvisation that engages all members of the troupe in both collective writing and performing. This does not mean that every troupe member decides what should be kept in the final draft. Based on an interview conducted with Jaïbi, Ridha Kéfi indicates that for each performance, the troupe members each have their own responsibility. Jaïbi has stated that for the *al-'Urs* script, for example, the final decision was both Masrouki's and Driss's. Jaïbi said in an interview that in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, Jaziri was mostly responsible for a great deal of the script writing. In a similar context, Jaïbi describes this writing procedure in terms of “a study of a play.”²⁴ This type of theatrical investigation also reflects the insight of the renowned Tunisian dramatist al-Madani who emphasizes “the necessity of collective work” in his theoretical study *al-Adab at-Tajrībī* (The Experimental Literature).²⁵ Nonetheless, the collective writing process differs from The New Theater to the Familia troupes as most of the latter's scripts are almost exclusively written by Baccar or occasionally by both Baccar and Jaïbi. Baccar became the primary writer for the Familia troupe in 1998, with her writing of *al-Baḥth 'an 'Ayda* (Searching for 'Aida).

Historical Consciousness

The New Theater can also be seen as a form of experimentation in the arts, which points in the direction of change. The views reflected in Baccar and Jaïbi's works are in line with al-Madani's thoughts on experimental literature, namely, that it should stem from "historical consciousness,"²⁶ based on the understanding of the connections between the past, present, and future. This might be most apparent in *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* (Amnesia, 2010), which was clearly the most visionary of Familia's productions connecting the past, present, and future of Tunisian politics. Reviewing most of the plays of Baccar and Jaïbi might be the best way to illustrate how they keep an eye on the past while grounding the New Theater and later Familia in the here-and-now.²⁷ One of the major aims of Jaïbi and Baccar is the preservation of Tunisian collective memory through their relating of Tunisian daily life. This fits into a larger project of contesting the Tunisian socio-political structure by unveiling the intent of the official ideology to obliterate this memory. This collective memory encompasses all that pertains to the Tunisian citizen: the past, present, and future.

Language

Third, the New Theater experiments with language in that the director—playwright pair is concerned with painting Tunisian daily life in a style that combines standard Arabic and dialect with a sporadic use of French. The dialect is the dominant language compared with the standard that is used mainly for the sake of specific discourses, such as in religion and poetry. French is also used in two different ways. It either comes naturally from characters who have lived in France for a while, or it concerns the casual French words and expressions almost every Tunisian uses in daily speech. Such a linguistic variety also indicates the level of education of the characters as reflected in how accurately they use standard Arabic and French. There is also a

tendency for the middle-class to use French more than the working class. Language thus helps to suggest to which social class and to what intellectual level a character belongs.

By including both dialect and standard Arabic, Jaïbi's theater also aims at attracting audiences by the thousands both in Tunisia and the wider Arab world. After all, both educated and uneducated Tunisians express themselves in the Tunisian dialect. On the other hand, including the standard version of Arabic has helped New Theater plays be more widely circulated in the Arab world as standard Arabic is understood by all literate Arabs. The combination of the Tunisian dialect and standard Arabic is compensated for by the use of translation and subtitles when Jaïbi's plays are performed in non-Arabic speaking countries.

The combination of registers multiplies the number of diverse audiences. In an interview conducted with Jaïbi, the latter borrowed Antoine Vitez's French expression 'élitaire pour tous,' claiming that the New Theater aims to be "elitist for all"²⁸—the literal equivalent of "masrah nukhbawī li-l jamī'."²⁹ Paradoxical as it may sound, this expression meant different things to Tunisian and French directors. In his work, *Le Théâtre des Idées* (The theater of ideas) Vitez (1930-1990)—a French actor, playwright, poet, and a theater director—uses the expression "an elitist theater for all" first in 1968 in Nanterre, then in 1972 in Ivry.³⁰ Vitez meant that theater can address not only the masses at theater venues in Paris, but also almost anywhere in the French territories both inside and outside physical theaters, to which Vitez refers as "banalité de lieux" ("banal locations"; *ibid.*). For Jaïbi, however, this expression implies that the language used in his theater addresses everyone. This can be understood based on the multiplicity of registers, including not only standard and Arabic dialect, but also urban and Bedouin dialects in addition to French to address larger audiences.³¹ In a similar context, al-Madani argues that the most important characteristic of experimental literature lies in its commitment to reality, which for the

New Theater means the “Tunisian reality.”³² The applicability of al-Madani’s insights to the practices of the New Theater is manifested in daily language use. In this way, the New Theater resists the political measures taken to encourage the use of standard Arabic in theater. For Baccar and Jaïbi, this position seems to be detached from the reality experienced by Tunisians in their daily life. Linguistic variety may thus be regarded as a political statement. Combining linguistic registers implies a deviation from the use of standard Arabic and a challenge to the policies of Arabization that took effect in the 1970s.³³

During a 2012 interview with Baccar, she replied to the question of elitism stating that their theater includes anyone and—not necessarily just the elite—and she provided concrete examples to bolster her argument. Baccar indicated that she encountered a classmate of hers who was an English teacher and asked Baccar what she had become. Clearly this classmate had no idea what Baccar was doing despite the relative degree of fame she had achieved. On the same day, the playwright encountered a shoe salesman in a popular open market who told her how much he appreciated her works. Baccar’s anecdote reveals that her works are recognized by almost all social categories in the country. It would therefore be wrong to assume that her theater is limited to the educated classes since her classmate was unaware of the renowned theater troupe, Familia. Baccar emphasizes the concept of *Masrah al-Muwāṭana* (Theater of Citizenship), conveying that their theater engages not only the elite but all Tunisian citizens. What sometimes conflicts with the playwright’s claim is the fact that their theater is known to be an Urban Theater. Therefore, it may be a misconception to assume their theater can reach everyone in Tunisia. In the Argentinian newspaper *La Nacion*, Baccar provided a similar explanation of the expression “elitist for all,” clarifying that her troupe’s main concern is to have

a popular theater that is inclusive of everyone, including the government, the young, and the unemployed.³⁴

Spaces of Representation

Concerning stage choice, the New Theater members opted to present their performances on non-traditional stages. The New Theater troupe wanted to break away from the traditional stage by disregarding the architectural characteristics of the Aristotelian theater. By experimenting with non-traditional spaces, the aim of the troupe was to allow for a closer interaction between the audience and actors. However, the change of theater locations was also due to growing audience sizes. Jaïbi's theater has been able to attract thousands of audience members in the last decade. This troupe started with small audiences. Only seven people formed the first audience at *Al-'Urs* in 1976. In an interview conducted by Tarek Weslati, Jaïbi explained that opting for traditional spaces became "a wish and a necessity."³⁵ For instance, *Al-'Urs* was performed in an art center known as the Yahya Hall for the Arts. In the prologue of the play, Driss explains that the Center did not resemble a theater. The playwright and actor Driss depicts the stage as a chessboard around which the audience could sit. They faced one another in such a way that they were close to the actors. Driss also explained that as the number of audience members increased, *Al-'Urs* was presented in different locations in the northern and southern parts of Tunisia including the youth hostel of La Marsa, the cathedral of Carthage, a deserted garage in Hammam Lif, an open-air courtyard in Zarziz for three thousand soldiers, and in Jerba, Hammamet, and Tabarka.³⁶ *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* was also presented in a cinema hall called The Lido in 1980.³⁷ With the founding of Familia, the troupe went back to the traditional theater for two reasons. First, in an interview broadcast, Jaïbi clarified that locations like the Lido had been

confiscated by the government. Second, the need for traditional theaters had become urgent in order to accommodate the increasing number of viewers. To put it differently, as the number of attendees has tremendously increased since *al-‘Urs*, and since the troupe no longer has access to these non-traditional spaces, Baccar and Jaïbi have been obliged to again stage performances in classical theaters.

In sum, the New Theater was one of the most influential and popular theaters in Tunisia during the 1970s. The principles of the New Theater and Familia Productions contributed to understanding these playwrights' contributions. *Famīlia* calls for societal change that requires a rupture with traditional values. Baccar and Jaïbi seem to argue that the symbol of oppression is not only embodied in Ḥsayra's acts of domination and his invasion of the sister's personal space, but also of their own complicity in rejecting more liberal values. This contrast is specifically depicted through the discourse of Molka—who is driven toward liberalism and even libertinism on the one hand, and Bahja—who seems to represent a more balanced view between modernity and tradition. *Famīlia* engages its audiences with questions of progressivism and traditionalism within the framework of liberation versus oppression at all levels of the society. The New Theater prepared Baccar and Jaïbi to reinforce in Familia the sense of experimentation they began during their previous experience. The next chapter will further illustrate the Brechtian theatrical techniques the couple employed and adapted based on examples from *Junūn* and other dramatic, cinematic, and psychiatric texts.

1. Ridha Boukadida, *Le Nouveau Théâtre par lui-même: Entretien avec Fadhel Jaïbi, Mohamed Driss, et Jalila Baccar (1985–1987)* [The New Theater by itself: Interviews with Fadhel Jaïbi, Mohamed Driss, and Jalila Baccar (1985–1987) (Tunis: Sahar, 2011), 155.

2. “Fadhel Jaïbi Khamsoun Hannibal TV,” [Fadhel Jaïbi's Khamsūn at Hannibal T.V. August 15, 2013] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6as72J_PKhg

3. Mohamed al-Madyouni, *Mughāmarat al-fi'l al-Masraḥi fi Tūnis* [The theater's adventure in Tunisia], vol. 1 (Tunis: Sahar, 2000), 119–20.
4. Roy Armes, *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*, 508.
5. Abu verses are also included in the Tunisian anthem.
6. "Emission Du Mercredi 13 Juillet En DIRECT et En PUBLIC Du Festival d'Avignon (Cour Du Musée Calvet) 3/5 - Arts & Spectacles – France Culture," [Wednesday live performance July 13, 2011 at the festiva of Avignon (Hall of Calvet Museum) Arts and Shows France Culture Radio,]
<http://www.franceculture.fr/emission-le-rendez-vous-10-11-emission-du-mercredi-13-juillet-en-direct-et-en-public-du-festival-d-a>.
7. Djedidi, *Le théâtre tunisien*, 21. The Kef's repertoire included more than twenty plays. These are also mentioned in Mohamed al-Madyouni, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fi-l Masraḥ al-'Arabī al-Jadīd: al Masraḥ fi Tūnis* [The useful and concise guide on new Arab theater: Theater in Tunisia] (Sharjah: Arab Theatre Institute, 2009), 82–83.
8. Al-Madyouni, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fi-l Masraḥ al-'Arabī al-Jadīd*, 81–83.
9. Fadhel Jaïbi and Jalila Baccar, video recorded interview with Caroline Broué and Hervé Gardette, France, 2011. <http://www.franceculture.fr/emission-la-grande-table-grand-entretien-avec-fadhel-jaibi-et-jalila-baccar-2011-01-24.html>. Jaïbi maintains, "May 68 avec ce qui s'est passé au théâtre de l'Odeon a été une expérience importante et déterminante pour moi. . . De May 68, je retiens une Révolution culturelle; on ne parlait que de refaire le monde par la culture."
10. الجعايبى: "كنا إما برشتيين وإما لا" (المرباط، ص 61).
11. Boukadida, *Nouveau Théâtre par lui-même*, 71. Jaïbi claims, "Nous ne nous reconnaissons dans aucun mouvement existant"
12. Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson, *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 172.
13. My e-mail exchange with actor Moez Mrabet on 12 February 2012 was originally in French. Mrabet wrote, "Le 'Nouveau théâtre' est tout d'abord un groupe dont l'expérience artistique à constituer la pierre angulaire d'un renouveau du théâtre tunisien, aussi bien sur le plan esthétique que sur le plan de l'organisation du métier et de la pratique théâtrale. . . . Bref, le 'Nouveau théâtre' n'est pas un mouvement en s voi, mais il fut l'initiateur d'une nouvelle pratique théâtrale diverse et riche."
14. Boukadida, *Nouveau Théâtre par lui-même*, 169.
15. 'Urf, Ahmed Haḍik. *Al-Masraḥ at-Tūnsi wa 'Awa'iq at-Tajāwuz* [Tunisian theater: From Obstacles to improvement] (Tunis: Dar al-Janub, 1997), 163.
 "... (الجريدة) لا تنتج خطابها الخاص وإنما تكتفي بإعادة إنتاج الخطاب الذي يملأ عليها: احتكام للجهاز وتكريس للساند (معان، قيم، تمثلات، معايير، الخ...) و مضاعفة للامتثالية." (أحمد حاذق العرف، ص 163)
16. Mohamed Driss, *Al-'Urs* [The wedding] (Tunis: Cinémar, 1985), 27.
17. *Khamsūn* [Fifty]. Written by Jalila Baccar. Directed by Fadhel Jaïbi. Performed by Baccar, Jalila, Fatma Ben Saïdane, Moez Mrabet, Lobna ben Mlika, and Jamel Madani. Premiered in Paris, June 2006. "أمل: تتفرج في الجزيرة و تحسب في عدد الموتى." (خمسون).
18. Ibid.
- مريم: "تبكي على الرجال المغلوبة، على اليبدين المضروية."
19. Boukadida, *Nouveau Théâtre par lui-même*, 74. Jaïbi describes this procedure in terms of "a study of a play."

20. Djedidi, *Théâtre tunisien*, 46. “C’est la generation de la rupture.”
21. Mahmoud al Messadi, *Haddatha Abu Hurayra qāl* [*Thus spoke about Hurayra*], (Tunis: Dar al-Dār al-Tūnusyya li-l Nashr, 1973).
22. Like *al-Urs*, which is an adaptation of Brecht’s *Wedding*, *Junūn* is adapted from the Tunisian psychiatrist Néjia Zemni’s *Chronique d’un discours schizophrène récit d’une psychanalyse sans divan* [Diary of discourse on schizophrenia: Account of psychoanalysis without a sofa] (Paris: Harmattan, 1999), <http://livre.fnac.com/a873747/N-Zemni-Chronique-d-un-discours-schizophrène-recit-d-une-psychanalys/>.
23. Djedidi, *Théâtre tunisien*, 47; Faouzia Mezzi, *La Presse de Tunisie*, 3 November 1996. “Ce don’t je suis certain, c’est que je n’habillerai pas Strindberg d’une jebba ni ne procéderai par placage.”
24. Boukadida, *Nouveau Théâtre par lui-même*, 74. This stage might be considered as “la recherche d’une oeuvre,” Jaïbi said.
25. Ezzeddine al-Madani, *al-Adab at-Tajrībī* [The experimental literature] (Tunis: al-Sharika at-Tounisya li-t-Tawzi, 1972), 22.
26. Ibid., 23. (الوعي التاريخي "المدني، ص 23)
27. Boukadida, *Nouveau Théâtre par lui-même*, 76. Jaïbi expresses, “Chacun de nos spectacle proposait une image du ici et maintenant, tellement neuve, tellement paradoxale, tellement dans l’inattendu, tellement hors les normes.” This statement maintains that although “all performances propose to represent the here-and-now, they differ in that each performance appears anew, paradoxical, unexpected, and outside the limitations of norms” (ibid.).
28. Antoine Vitez, *Le théâtre des idées* [The theater of ideas] (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 102. Vitez (1930–1990) is a French actor, playwright, poet, and theater director. Vitez explains, “Nous disons: *un théâtre élitaire pour tous*. C’était en 1968, à Nanterre, puis en 1972 à Ivry” (“We say: *an elitist theater for all*. It was in 1968 in Nanterre, then in 1972 in Ivry”) (102). In this context, Vitez meant that theater can address the masses not only at theater locations in Paris but also almost anywhere in the French territories and inside as well as outside theater buildings, which Vitez refers to as “banalité de lieux” (“banal locations”) (ibid.).
29. Fadhel Jaïbi, recorded interview with Rafika Zahrouni, Tunis, July 2009.
30. Vitez, *Théâtre des idées*, 102. “Nous disons: *un théâtre élitaire pour tous*. C’était en 1968, à Nanterre, puis en 1972 à Ivry.”
31. Jaïbi recorded interview.
32. Al-Madani, *al-Adab at-Tajrībī*, 15. (الواقع التونسي "المدني، ص 15)
33. “Social Change and Institutions,” in *Change in Tunisia: Studies in the Social Sciences*, ed. Russel A. Stone and John Simmons (New York: State University of New York Press, 1976), 90–93. Arabization can be defined in terms of asserting the Arab identity of Tunisia. Based on their 1976 study on Tunisia, Stone and Simmons’s illustrate that Arabization is reflected in education. While primary education was almost purely in Arabic, emphasis on Arabization was reduced in high school. Despite the fact that Arabist sentiment pervaded among college educated Tunisians, they believe that both Arabic and European influences shape the Tunisian identity.
34. Alejandro Cruz, “Theatro Independiente Tunecino” [The independent Tunisian theater], *Lanacion* (Buenos Aires), May 27, 2003.

35. Tarek Weslati, “At-Tawajuhāt al-Ikhrājyya lada al-Fadhel aj-Jaïbi Bayn *Ghassalit ennuwādir wa Khamsūn*” [Jaïbi Fadhel’s directing perspectives for *Ghassalit ennuwādir wa Khamsūn*] (bachelor’s thesis, Institute of Dramatic Arts, 2008), 66.

فاضل الجعايبى: "... رغبة و ضرورة..".

36. M. Driss, *al-‘Urs*, 8.

37. Al-Madyouni, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufīd fi-l Masrah al-‘Arabī al-Jadīd*, 103.

Chapter 3: From Silence to Madness, from Madness to Speech:

The Psychiatric Institution as Metaphor

Mental illness, whether as subject or metaphor, is a theme frequently found in literature. From the description of all sorts of mental illness in film and drama, to the portrayal of this issue in art, to studies that address human behavior in behavioral biology, to psychiatric case studies conducted by health practitioners whose main concern is to treat mentally-ill patients, artists and philosophers have utilized mental disease in their work to better explore larger concepts such as political oppression and tyranny. These artists and philosophers also focus on the complicity of the individual in allowing for manipulation by repressive regimes and social norms. While at face value, repression is psychic, a deeper understanding of this issue inevitably involves the societal and political machinery that strives to find new ways of subjugation. In this chapter I argue that while correspondences between dysfunctionality in the psychiatric ward and in the larger society are often portrayed in art, specifically drama and film, Baccar's *Junūn* (Dementia, 2001) is unique in the sense that it portrays not only the ineffectiveness of the ward, but also other inadequate institutions, including the bitterness of tyrannical behavior within the family and the imposed, most tyrannical act of silencing the individual within all kinds of institutions—schools, mosques, military camps, rehabilitation centers, etc. These are some of the essential issues that motivated Baccar and Jaïbi to consider mental illness through performance. Contemplation of the inefficient political situation in Tunisia led Baccar to appropriate the case study of Néjia Zemni. *Junūn*, composed by Baccar and directed by Jaïbi, is based on *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène: Récit d'une psychanalyse sans divan* (Diary of discourse on schizophrenia: Account of psychoanalysis without a sofa, 1999)¹ written by the Tunisian psychotherapist Zemni.

Indeed, this convention is well documented across cultures. Some of the most relevant

cinematic and theatrical examples are Milos Forman's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), originally a novel by Ken Kesey; Sidney Lumet's *Equus* (1977), originally a play by Peter Schaffer; and, *Marat/ Sade* (1963), a play by Peter Weiss.

Baccar certainly did not invent the idea of using the ward as a metaphor for socio-political oppression. Her play, however, differs from other historical and cultural artifacts in the way she represents the Tunisian ward. Baccar deeply addresses this psychiatric matter in many important ways. The playwright constructs the madness of her protagonist by means of discovery of the physical as well as the poetic self through the use of a set of Brechtian techniques that engage the audience to come and witness her radically different views on treating a schizophrenic patient symbolically. In order to show how the idea of representation of illness as metaphor in *Junūn* is unique, it will be compared with previously referenced works and reveal the treatment of madness in each text and along with its implications.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest portrays the American asylum system's interest in imposing conformity during the 1960s.² In the film, the protagonist, Randle P. McMurphy (Jack Nicholson), disrupts the routine at the asylum by encouraging the patients to watch a baseball game on TV, giving them ideas on how to run away from the hospital, driving them on a bus to go on a fishing trip, and more. Regardless of the fact that McMurphy has faked insanity in order to be released from a prison work-farm, his actions display how he stands as a rebel against the institution's attempts to silence patients by drugging them and ordering operations on them. Throughout the film McMurphy's behavior runs contrary to Nurse Ratched's routine. Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher) embodies the institution's approach of sedating patients. In her words, "The best thing we could do is to keep going with our daily

routine” (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*). As this statement indicates, she does not have any desire to reform her institution. Instead, she is more comfortable enforcing the asylum’s laws which enable her to control patients. These regulations are reinforced by the use of medication, electroshock therapy, and lobotomization whenever needed.

McMurphy represents the nonconformist who wants to raise the American people’s consciousness during the politically and socially times of the 1960s. The protagonist struggles against oppression in the mental asylum, which is a metaphorical microcosm for the raging decade of the 1960s in America. In his analysis of Kesey’s novel, which the film closely follows, Jerome Klinkowitz notes:

Randle Patrick McMurphy is the first fictional hero to practice that key strategy of the sixties leadership: raising the consciousness of the people. The ward inmates represent a cross section of American society, but his most responsive pupil is Chief Broom, a Native American, the First American, whom the progress of events has reduced to a deathlike silence. McMurphy restores the Chief to life, “blows him up whole again,” and so reanimates America—just what the culturally regenerative movements of the sixties sought to do.³

Based on the role McMurphy plays in the film, the critic argues that the protagonist represents the figure of a rebel battling the injustices that occurred during the early history of America which silenced Native American tribes. Klinkowitz’s analysis of McMurphy foreshadows the symbolism by reviving the history of America: by acknowledging its past, America can learn from it and enact the necessary reforms during the turbulent decade of the 1960s.

The film addresses the question of conformity by encouraging a supposedly mute patient to play basketball. The scene, which portrays McMurphy’s efforts to teach the American Indian patient, “Chief” Bromden (Will Sampson), how to play basketball, disrupts the monotonous life on the ward. The basketball scene shows how McMurphy stands as an agitator against the routines of the asylum. The protagonist’s activity breaks away from the routine of the ward by standing out from the group. Unlike conformists who tend to feel more

comfortable when blending into a group, McMurphy does not fear courting attention by using self-deprecating humor. There is a physical contradiction between the short McMurphy, who sits on the shoulders of a tall inmate as he moves back and forth toward Chief, making comical moves and creating physical humor. Due to the strategy McMurphy employs to teach Chief how to slam the ball through the net, the scene appears unfamiliar and over simplified. The unfamiliarity and oversimplification strikes the audience as a caricature, causing them to burst into laughter. Laughing at—and not with—McMurphy, the audience is encouraged to think about the implications of the scene rather than identifying with the patients. The scene demonstrates that unlike the orderly, McMurphy breaks with the ward's routine. His actions confront the audience with a contradiction of the assumption of an idealized psychiatric institution where patients receive help from the medical staff. An orderly reacts offensively to McMurphy's conduct. While the orderly thinks it is absurd to teach this game to a dumb and deaf person, McMurphy argues that if it doesn't help Chief, "Well it don't hurt him, either, does it?" (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). McMurphy has faith that this patient is capable of learning how to play basketball. Most importantly, McMurphy believes in Chief's potential to move from silence to expression. Ultimately, it turns out Chief chose to be mute.

The scene suggests that one can learn from McMurphy's behavior as an agitator. His actions fault the institution for its failure to treat the disabled with dignity and respect. In this context, critic George B. MacDonald addresses the characters' part in helping audiences of the film appreciate the basketball scene as a learning experience. MacDonald argues, "In the style of Brecht, Forman breaks our emotional rapport with the zany basketball game to warn us against becoming too involved with these characters, who are not 'zany' at all. Forman wishes us not to become the people of this film but to learn something from their experience."⁴ MacDonald thus conveys that the film director invites the audience to realize that McMurphy has the potential to introduce a new therapeutic method that engages Chief,

regardless of the latter's muteness, to socialize with other patients. This conclusion may also be inferred from the camera's movement back and forth from McMurphy and Chief to the orderly and nurse as she silently observes the action through a window on an upper floor. These camera shots affect how the audience perceives the usual routine at the institution, in general, and Nurse Ratched's therapy, in particular. Upon seeing the nurse and orderly, who are also observing the scene, the audience may stand outside, thinking of the passivity of Nurse Ratched and the orderly, in contrast to the action of McMurphy's. It is important to note that the filmmaker, Forman, juxtaposes the action and inaction of these characters, all of whom the spectator is made to face and pass judgment on, regarding the scene on view. Both the multiplicity of points of view and the humor of the scene disrupt the audience's identification with the characters. As a result, the audience is invited to engage intellectually, coming to their own decisions regarding the question of conformity at the psychiatric institution.

Equus

Sidney Lumet's film *Equus* (1977) is an adaptation from the Peter Shaffer play of the same name (*Equus*, 1973). The film bears resemblances to both *Junūn* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in displaying how the asylum is a place that mirrors social repression. It is worth noting, however, that the psychiatrist in *Equus* plays a different role from that of the caregivers in the previous works mentioned. While the psychotherapist in Baccar's play is a rebel and Nurse Ratched in Forman's film is a sadist who simultaneously forcefully maintains the status quo, the character of Dr. Dysart (Richard Burton) in *Equus* is ambivalent. On one hand, Dysart wants to ensure that his patient, Alan (played by Peter Firth), adjusts to a normal life, but he doubts his treatment is effective. *Equus* takes place in a psychiatric institution in Hampshire, England. It tells the story of a seventeen-year-old patient named

Alan whose repressed sexuality and religious fascination with horses leads him to blind six of them. In the asylum, the psychiatrist Dysart treats Alan's case. While Dysart makes efforts to know what motivated Alan's actions, he also questions the purpose of his own profession in two monologues. The film opens with one of these monologues:

You see, I'm lost, what use I should be asking questions like these to an overworked psychiatrist in a provincial hospital? They're worse than useless. They are, in fact, subversive. The thing is ... I am wearing that horse's head myself. . . . I can't see it because my educated average head is being held at the wrong angle. I can't jump because the bit forbids it, and my own basic force, my ... Horsepower, if you like is too little. . . . The doubts have been here for years piling up steadily in this dreary place. (*Equus*)

Alan's case activates Dysart's doubts about his career as a psychiatrist, and makes those doubts intolerable. Dysart attempts to ask questions such as "What use is grief to a horse?" (*Equus*). He launches a series of seemingly nonsensical questions that appear more relevant to the horse than to Alan. The psychiatrist is disappointed to find that helping patients necessitates that their passion be killed. Dysart also becomes aware of his disenchantment with his life, which is devoid of passion. The film explores the processes of analytic healing in a psychiatric institution and shows how the psychiatrist is as tormented as his patient. Pursuing a treatment that will kill Alan's passion torture Dysart.

Dysart's treatment suggests that Alan's violence against horses is related to conflicting religious concepts that Alan had received from his parents. For instance, Alan's mother, Dora (Joan Plowright), informs the psychiatrist that she used to read the Bible to her son on a daily basis, while Alan's father, Frank (Colin Blakely), accuses his wife of being too religious. In order to protect his son from the influence of his mother, Frank had destroyed a crucifixion portrait in Alan's room. Alan had since replaced that portrait with a poster of a horse. During a therapy session, Alan also reported one of his childhood experiences that may have been the root of his repressed fascination with horses. The instance goes back to a time when Alan was on the beach and a man on a horse gave Alan a ride. Alan's father was so

furious at the man that he pulled his son off the horse and knocked his son down on the beach. Alan recalls how sad he was as a six-year-old boy whose father did not care about his passion and left him alone and sobbing.

Additionally, Dysart connects Alan's sexual repression to the way in which Alan's family introduced him to sexuality. Alan reveals how tormented he felt when he encountered his father in an adult movie theater: Frank was furious with his son, who was accompanied by Jill Mason (Jenny Agutter), a girl who had helped him get a job in the equestrian center and showed interest in him later. Frank's fury at his son with being in the theater suggests the father himself might be sexually repressed. Indeed, the father's influence on the son leads to multiple forms of repression. Frank's behavior, along with his wife's introduction of love to their son as a matter of devotion and marriage, results in more repression. During another therapy session, Alan shows how guilty he felt after having sexual intercourse with Jill. He resents having sex with her because he fantasizes about having a sexual relationship with the horse, Equus. The aftermath of the sex felt cruel to Jill, but Alan repressed his own feelings of guilt and developed a sexual attraction for horses. For Alan, such a relationship meant union with the god he worshipped. Alan's ambivalent feelings of sexual attraction and spiritual connection with horses accentuate his perception of horses as god-like figures. These gods shall not see Alan's soul, and when these gods view him having sex with Jill, Alan blinds Equus for he "shall see no more." (*Equus*). For Alan, blinding the horses may also hint that these beasts are ready to sacrifice themselves to wash away humans' sins.

Equus critiques not only the kinds of family relationships that lead someone like Alan to be in a psychiatric institution, but also the psychiatric profession itself, which does not seem to help patients become better citizens of society. Instead, the psychiatric ward reinforces conformity. In his struggle with enforcing normalcy, the psychiatrist Dysart

resembles the patient, Alan. Frank Cunningham examines how Dysart's analytic process is troubling, arguing:

Dysart also begins the long process of exorcising these besetting Nature Gods from Alan; but during the therapeutic process he becomes progressively more troubled at the thought that he may be "taking away his worship" and substituting for Alan's "passion" mere adjustment to the God of Normal, those mechanical and institutionalized values against which the boy may partially have been rebelling.⁵

Dysart contextualizes Alan's cruel behavior toward the horses in terms of repression caused by the boy's antagonism toward institutional values grounded in the church and channeled through the family. Despite Alan's extremism, the psychiatrist regrets helping him to abandon his faith in horses. Dysart's attitude is revealed in a bloody dream in which he appears to murder children. The scene illustrates how tormented the psychiatrist becomes upon acting against his own conviction that Alan is someone to envy.

Marat/Sade

The play *Marat/ Sade* was written by playwright Weiss in 1963 and adapted for film by Peter Brook and Adrian Mitchell in 1964.⁶ *Marat/ Sade's* full title is *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*. As the title suggests, the play bears similarity to *Equus* in so far as both works depict a painful, bloody event—stabbing horses in *Equus* and stabbing Marat in *Marat/Sade*. Whereas the political discourse in Lumet's film *Equus* (1967), is sexualized, in *Marat/Sade* the political discourse is based on class and ideological struggle. In the play, the playwright dramatizes the major forces in French society in 1808—at the height of the Napoleonic era—through a confrontation between two major figures, Jean-Paul Marat and the Marquis de Sade. In its own way, the psychiatric ward in *Marat/Sade* reflects a particular moment in the political history of France during which Charlotte Corday assassinated the revolutionary figure Jean-Paul Marat by stabbing him in his bath in 1793. In

the asylum of Charenton, Sade proposes a therapy for the inmates, which consists of promoting art by allowing the inmates to perform the play within the play, *Marat/Sade*, for an audience. These inmates are interned for being either mentally ill or politically problematic. In the play, most of the actors (except for Coulmier, the bourgeois director of the hospital, and Sade, who is motivated by nihilism) represent the people of France, who are for the Revolution. However, a wooden graveyard that lies underneath the patients' feet forms the setting of the play and suggests these people are not considered part of the history of France.

Indeed, the psychiatric ward provides a social space where the concepts of revolution, life, and death are omnipresent not only throughout the setting, but also via exchanges of dialogue between Marat and Sade. The latter equates patriotism with lunacy given that kings send their people to war in order to protect their own wealth. Sade argues that it is useless to think of the Revolution and its potential to solve problems. For him, the Revolution has created problems no one is able to resolve. While he is for change, Sade claims that he is against the Revolution because he believes only in himself. The asylum metaphor and the context of the French Revolution may also refer to the tumultuous decades of the sixties and seventies, especially as the play was adapted by British theater director, Peter Brook, who introduced the work to the English-speaking world. The film adaptation, which is faithful to the original play script in many ways, suggests the play speaks more to the era of Weiss than that of the French Revolution, especially with regard to the battle for Civil Rights during the anti-Vietnam era of the 1960s and '70s in America. The following lines are suited for fostering such a global analysis. Sade mocks Marat's ideals: "You still believe that justice is possible/ You still believe all men are equal."⁷ Although the statement underestimates the ideals of the Revolution, it may allude to the racial discourse during the sixties in America.

Unlike Sade, the revolutionary Marat believes in the ideals of the Revolution. He literally declares, "I am the Revolution."⁸ Marat is an important figure in the play because

with his revolutionary mood, he stands for the people and their pain anywhere in the world. Sade critiques Marat's revolutionary mood because Sade is skeptical about the Revolution. In his opinion, the poor will win nothing from the Revolution. Both Sade and Marat's positions on stage serve as metaphors for human reality off-stage. Except for the specific rationales on which the dialogue between Sade and Marat is based, madness prevails in the play to portray the inmates as the wretched population. Sade argues that the asylum may best reveal that the people who carry the Revolution end up being miserable. In scene 28, *Poor Marat in your Bathtub Seat*, Sade notes:

Why all these calls to the nation/ It's too late Marat/ forget your call/ It contains lies/
What do you still want from the Revolution/ Where is it going/ Look at these lost
revolutionaries.

[Pointing to the FOUR SINGERS *who lie stretched out on the floor, scratching themselves, yawning and trying to get the last drop out of the empty bottle.*]

What will you order them to do/ Where will you lead them.⁹

Sade explains that the asylum underlines the revolutionaries' disillusionment. He ridicules Marat's leadership as a way to critique the authorities for using the law as a tool to oppress and control people's freedom, by deciding for them what they should do.

Like the Revolution, madness is uncontrollable in *Marat/Sade*, not only through the reality of the psychiatric institution in terms of the hysterical behavior of the inmates, but also through the political debate between Marat and Sade reflecting two ideologies, Marxism and nihilism. In the aforementioned scene, these ideologies do not seem as consistently antithetical due to an instance of confusion in which Marat is caught. Upon hearing Sade, Marat becomes confused about his views on speech and writing. Marat declares, "Why is everything so confused now/ Everything I wrote or spoke/ was considered and true/ each argument was sound/ And now/ doubt/ Why does everything sound false?"¹⁰ The confusion jolts any seemingly stable separation between the two main characters, Marat and Sade and

their respective ideologies. Indeed, Sade's argument about the Revolution shows that Marat's position of leadership is shaky.

At the same time, one learns from Sade that Marat is engaged in meaningless writing. Sade argues: "Give up Marat/ You said yourself/ nothing can be achieved by scribbling/ Long ago I abandoned my masterpiece.../ in my dungeon years ago/ it vanished as everything thought and planned/ will disappear."¹¹ Unlike Sade, Marat introduces writing as a combination of thought and action. Marat notes, "When I wrote/ I always wrote with action in mind/ Kept sight of the fact/ that writing was just a preparation/ When I wrote/ I always wrote in a fever, hearing the roar of action."¹² Marat believes in the power of words which have the potential to move the crowd. Most importantly, Marat refers to political writing. The character adds: "After each pamphlet was published/ I had to go into hiding."¹³ The statement provides evidence that the political debate in the psychiatric institution echoes Marat's risky involvement in the actual French Revolution. Confusion recurs in the epilogue when everything ends with shouting and fighting as the stage direction describes: "*Suddenly the whole stage is fighting.*"¹⁴ Perhaps such a description of the patients reveals how the play does not primarily focus on ways of correcting violent inmates because it is mainly concerned with political history. Despite the state of hysteria in which the inmates are involved, they (the singers) declare, "The useless debate the political brawl/ are over there's one man to speak for us all."¹⁵

None of the above works is immediately enjoyable because the representation of madness in each is disturbing, but all share an aspect of the asylum metaphor. Common to these works is the ability of their respective authors to influence the audience's perceptions. Baccar based social criticism and political "insanity" on the life of a schizophrenic protagonist. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* critiques American society mainly through two oppositional characters, Nurse Ratched (who embodies the status quo), and the rebellious

patient McMurphy. In *Equus*, Alan's tragic act of blinding six horses invites us to think about the societal roots of such lunacy. The filmmaker Lumet launches social criticism based on the divine madness that Alan experiences. He interprets divine concepts, and these interpretations lead to lunacy and sexual repression. The film suggests that if these (mis)conceptions are taught to a child and if his imagination of the divine sacrifice can follow him through his adulthood, disastrous actions may be the ultimate result. In a similar way, the play *Marat/Sade* has historical and political purposes despite the absurdity and irrationality performed by the inmates. Both *Marat* and *Sade* suggest opposing ideologies which are reflected in individual and collective political theories—with *Sade* representing individualism and *Marat* standing for collectivism.

While the original text of *Zemni* and the play of *Baccar* both critique the medical institution in Tunisia, a significant gap separates the work of playwright *Baccar* from that of psychotherapist *Zemni*. Both the play and the case study highlight the impact of authority as exerted by family and the psychiatric ward on patients, yet the play fails to provide the detailed analysis of the events and factors that led to the protagonist's mental illness in the meticulous way the case study does. In the play, a critique of the ineffectiveness of the psychiatric institution is predominant and is given dramatic expression through the relationship between a schizophrenic protagonist and a rebellious psychotherapist, whose behaviors dominate the play. My concern here is to demonstrate how *Junūn* dramatizes incompetence at the medical institution where both doctors and patients are silenced and oppressed. I will argue that *Baccar's* play is a strategic appropriation of the case study designed to highlight political oppression in Tunisia.

Madness in *Junūn* and *Zemni's Diary*

Junūn tells the story of Nūn (Mohamed 'Ali Jem 'a), who appears to be suffering from

schizophrenia.¹⁶ Committed to a mental institution, Nūn seems silenced and repressed until one day in June of 1998 when he encounters “She,” a middle-aged psychotherapist (Jalila Baccar), who takes note of him and decides to treat him differently. The psychotherapist knows that the conventional method of treatment based on medication does not seem to be helping Nūn in any way. She also realizes that it will be a challenge for her to treat him with an alternative method that aims to change the asylum’s traditional method. To help Nūn, and to understand the factors that have contributed to his schizophrenia, the psychotherapist investigates his relationships with his siblings. She focuses on his relationship with his deceased authoritarian father and on the conflicting relationships within the family. Helping the patient outside the ward is not just difficult, it will eventually cause the psychotherapist to lose her job while also failing to reform the mental institution. However, due to the psychotherapist’s efforts and to Nūn’s willingness to help himself, he gains a sense of autonomy and expresses himself freely by the end of the play. He also yearns to survive and procreate. In *Junūn*, Baccar utilizes the mental institution as a metaphor for all of a Tunisian society that has been silenced in the same way as Nūn. The author supports this idea by depicting Nūn as schizophrenic, and by showing that he is part of a government system in which both the family and the hospital are by no means less schizophrenic than he.

Junūn focuses on the schizophrenic state of the protagonist Nūn to question not only the asylum’s incompetence and social dysfunctionality, but also the oppression exerted by the Tunisian state authorities. The protagonist’s father embodies the repressive political regime, both being sources of dysfunction. The metaphor of the asylum may be understood in light of Brecht’s set of distancing techniques. The stage craft and the actors’ skills, in addition to the reference to real Tunisian people who were oppressed (such as the Tunisian poet, Mnawar Smadah), make visible social and political criticism. One can extrapolate from the asylum’s systematic failure the implication that the psychiatric ward acts as a small-scale version of

Tunisian society.

Unlike with the play's treatment of madness, based on her experience with N., Zemni provides an understanding of madness as a form of social pathology, but more importantly as the outcome of sexual repression. In *Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia: Account of Psychoanalysis Without Sofa*, author Zemni presents a psychoanalytic case that she conducted during the 1980s involving a patient named N. The patient appeared at al-Rāzi mental hospital in Tunis. His diagnosis shows that he suffers from schizophrenia. In the *Diary*, psychotherapist Zemni explores the possibility of reforming the asylum. For her, reform consists in instituting mental health treatment that should take place both inside and outside the mental institute. Most importantly, her analysis argues against the sedation of patients and long-term confinement. Zemni's case study explores how an investigation of N.'s behavior in his cultural environment provides evidence for her thesis that madness is neither a biological nor a definitively chronic disease. Based on her study, madness does not require locking a patient in a psychiatric ward for a long time.

The case study shows that the symptoms of schizophrenia can be cured by treating the patient with a focus on individual and family psychotherapy. For example, at face value, N. hates women, but because Zemni gives particular attention to the patient's past family environment, she discovers that N. was also subjected to incest and sexual abuse. On the basis of her experience, she considers "madness" to be a social pathology that is manifested in family and asylum environments. N.'s case shows not only that a modern therapeutic method is able to help with mental problems, but it also underscores the analytic ability of the patient to point out misconceptions about "madness."

In explaining to what extent Baccar's play differs from Zemni's case study, I will reflect on the playwright's editorial choices in her adaptation of Zemni's work, particularly in light of broader discussions about silence and repression in the context of Tunisian society.

My purpose here is to show how (and to what end) the playwright retained, excised, or modified certain features from the original work. What will be particularly useful in Zemni's work on schizophrenia is the psychoanalytic perspective that helps to explain N.'s behavior and what brought him to the mental health institution in the first place. The representation of silence and sexual repression in Zemni's work, for example, illuminates the reading of *Junūn* that disregards this form of oppression. Baccar's adaptation shows that she is inspired by Zemni's case study. The adaptation dramatizes the psychiatric institution in order to show it as a microcosm for a social system that withholds critique.

Framing the Context of Madness in *Junūn* and Zemni's *Diary*

Baccar shows interest in the immediate context of the psychiatric institution in Tunisia in so far as it helps to dramatize the individual story of Nūn. The dramatist makes the choice to leave out the historical context in which the psychiatric institution and the field of psychiatry developed, inside and outside Tunisia. Introducing reform by one psychotherapist may lead to the criticism that utilizing the findings of one person only is insufficient because it can discard cross-cultural findings made by others. However, displaying how different the psychotherapist "She" is from everyone else in her institution helps the author to dramatize a reality that is recognizable, while still different from everyday life. An emphasis on how remarkable this psychotherapist is makes her appear almost heroic; indeed the depiction of the psychotherapist able to transform a patient's life is heroic. In the play, Nūn does not receive any personalized treatment until he encounters the psychotherapist character. In *Junūn* while the medical institution as a whole fails, almost everyone who works in it is indifferent. With the exception of "She," who is interested in reforming the archaic medical system, every other doctor resists change and treats all patients in the same way. Unlike other professionals, "She" realizes that in addition to the medical diagnosis, understanding the

patient's life among his family is crucial to helping him to recover. Most importantly, by taking his relationships with his family members into consideration, she challenges the archaic rules of the hospital, going so far as to visit Nūn's home in order to investigate the impact of his relationship with his siblings, and particularly the importance of his father to his (Nūn's) mental state.

Although the psychotherapist is part of the institution, she defies its pharmacological approach by refusing it. Instead of drugging the patient and treating him as a medical case identifiable only by a number, the doctor insists on treating Nūn as an individual. In a dramatic monologue, she argues: "I did not really know how/ But I was determined to save him/ To save him from the fatality of disease and shutting up/ And break down the logic of the patient who is but a number/ A case to talk about and not a human being to talk to."¹⁷ It is crucial to understand this quotation if one is to see how Nūn's dilemma is linked to the practice of treating all patients alike and silencing them through medication. Instead, the psychotherapist aims to cure Nūn using talk therapy. She believes each patient at the hospital must be treated differently. The citation above reveals that the doctor challenges an obsolete medical system that considers schizophrenia to be chronic. Her main argument derives from her belief that this disease cannot be genetic only, and to prove her thesis, she tries to investigate Nūn's case based on both biological and environmental factors (cultural, political, religious, etc) that might explain his illness. By resisting the usual treatment of the mentally ill in al-Rāzi, the psychotherapist reveals the limitations of institutionalizing patients and only treating them inside the ward. For this reason, the psychotherapist character demonstrates how Nūn will not recover if he stays isolated in such a dysfunctional setting.

Unlike Baccar's focus on the national context of psychiatry, the case study of Zemni demonstrates that this field of study is broader. It is important to understand the historical context as outlined by Zemni in order to learn why the psychotherapist and her patient in the

play resist the psychiatric hospital in Tunisia. Baccar's concept of resistance is informed by Zemni's study that fits into a worldwide concern for breaking silence in the hope of making change in medical institutions and society. Zemni contextualizes the field of psychiatry, situating psychiatry in Tunisia. Zemni's *Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia* is also useful with regard to providing not only a broad perspective, but also as an ambitious work that fits into the general strategy of taking the initiative in changing the field. Most significantly, by clarifying the historical context, Zemni's work describes ways in which silence about the psychiatric institution's structure has for decades continued to harm patients worldwide. Zemni's detailed study invites us to look at the scope of psychiatry from different view points to unveil the complexity of the field and to show how research about the psychiatric institution concerns everyone. In a similar way, the patient Nūn could be anywhere.

Zemni's work helps the audience understand the choices made by Baccar with regard to experimentation with psychiatry. Baccar discards, however, the context in which the psychotherapist character is trained. The playwright dramatizes the conflicts between hospital staff members, without providing such a context. This dramatic choice makes the initiatives taken by "She" in the play remarkable. By providing national and international contexts to understand the changes that affected the field of psychiatry with regard to madness, the psychotherapist Zemni demonstrates her familiarity with the initiatives to reform psychiatry not only in Tunisia, where she was a practitioner for over a decade, but also in other European countries, such as France and Italy during the late 1970s and 80s. Zemni explains that, among other things, experimentation with psychiatry is what mostly motivated her to propose a different mental health treatment. She also explains that research about psychiatry was conducted in Tunisia, Italy, and France in new ways at the time. Zemni mentions that in France, both psychiatrists Felix Guattari and Jean Oury argued that the structure of the mental hospital during the seventies was based on imprisoning patients.¹⁸ Author Zemni explains

that both psychotherapists advanced the notion that patients should participate in developing their own health treatment. For instance, Guattari and Oury proposed that dosages, free movement around the hospital, and the length of stays in the asylum, can be negotiated with patients. Zemni also introduces a similar method developed by Dr. Franco Basaglia, an Italian from Trieste. The latter introduced the concept of de-institutionalization. Basaglia wrote an article in 1964 in which he noted that the exclusion of inmates annihilates their individuality.¹⁹ His experimental approach constituted a radical transformation of the psychiatric healthcare structure which consisted in doing away with institutions and replacing them with mental health networks. Basaglia's perspective indicates that the psychiatric ward is a metaphor for social repression. What is worth noting in Basaglia's approach to mental illness is that destroying the mental hospital meant destroying repression. He was not concerned with redefining the concept of mental illness per se, but he did look at the treatment of mental illness in ways that were not conceivable until the 1980s. The new way consisted primarily in opening the doors of the psychiatric ward to set the inmates free. For Dr. Basaglia, it was crucial to refrain from treating inmates as captives.

In Tunisia, Zemni states that similar influential questions regarding the nature of mental illness and of conventional practices, including medication and enclosure at the traditional psychiatric institution, were being discussed in conferences of the time. Zemni refers to the impact of those ongoing discussions in the psychiatric ward in the seventies and eighties as the "Razi Spring." Most pertinent to this analysis is that psychotherapist Zemni would probably agree with Guattari and Oury on reforming the mental institution. However, Zemni advocates optional treatment outside the walls of the hospital when needed. Her approach to reforming the institution is not radical because she recommends patients turn to the mental institution in emergencies. Unlike Dr. Basaglia, the Tunisian psychotherapist was intrigued by the concept of mental illness. Dr. Basaglia's influential ideas aimed to eliminate

asylums by creating mental health networks, without considering a redefinition of the concept of mental illness itself. Zemni's case study, however, looks at mental illness, suggesting that it is neither a chronic nor hereditary disease.

Most importantly, both the play and the case study attempt to demonstrate that the reality at the al-Rāzi mental institution is a symbol for the decay and repression in Tunisia. Baccar uses narration helps to visualize the sedated condition in which patients are trapped.

The Reality of the Asylum in *Junūn* and *Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia*

The setting of the play is mostly in al-Rāzi, which is an asylum in Tunis well-known for its archaic and ineffective system. In the play, al-Rāzi Hospital is depicted as overly reliant on the use of medication to silence patients. It also groups patients together in a single, isolated room under the same treatment plan regardless of each individual patient's case. In scene 19, the psychotherapist describes the hospital: "A large room/ disposable plates scattered all over/ spilled remainders of food / scattered cigarette butts/ The smell of rotten pasta/ young and old inmates altogether/ standing/ sitting/ laying/ going back and forth/ fidgeting/ singing/ conversing/ expressing a sound of joy/ or silent/ absent-minded."²⁰ The ward's conditions often lead to over crowding, which creates violent and inhumane conditions that affect patients' mental health. While patients in this institution are grouped together in a confined space, they do not connect to one another. Their internal isolation may illustrate the medical staff's inhumanity since their treatment creates robot-like figures, who move under pharmacological effects like bodies without souls. As the audience is led to believe, this explains, at least in part, why Nūn's mental state becomes worse in the ward, where his anxiety increases. Nūn expresses fear of being like another patient whom he describes as "a wandering soulless corpse."²¹ Nūn's fear shows his awareness that the hospital isolates patients from each other and weakens them.

A more detailed analysis of the ward in Zemni's original work helps the reader to understand how Baccar formed the asylum metaphor, which expands on the psychiatric ward's defects. Similarities between the two works involve the grouping patients together and the use of sedation. In *Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia: Account of a Psychoanalysis Without Sofa*, Zemni takes al-Rāzi hospital as resembling a "medieval institution." Based on her ten-year work experience in the asylum, she shows how al-Rāzi is an example of ineffectiveness and archaism: "In what is pompously called a living room, about thirty patients are standing or sitting; still or walking back and forth. They are silent with a vacant look on their faces. They hold a cigarette butt as if it were the last minute in their life."²² Grouping thirty patients together in one single room, without using enough material, or employing a sufficient number of mental health professionals,²³ suggests that the asylum failed to provide the required care for those patients. In her description of the patients, the psychotherapist proposes that they are not only depressed, they are also desperate. An emphasis on silence and the physical as well as the psychological imprisonment of these patients hints at Zemni's condemnation of the patients' sense of loss, trapped as they are and confined in those miserable conditions at al-Rāzi.

In the case study, N. explains that his life represents an escape from several metaphorical prisons, including the psychiatric ward and his own home. The psychotherapist notes that the patient takes the beach to be a place of refuge. Zemni notes, "N. feels a real well-being upon taking refuge on the beach where he spends most of his time."²⁴ The psychotherapist interprets the beach as, "[A] flashing glimpse of hope: the sea, there, very near, blue, sweet, tirelessly soothing to the ear of those who feel unwanted."²⁵ In contrast to the vastness and hopefulness that characterize the beach, the psychotherapist compares the structure of the patient's home to that of the hospital, noting they are similar in terms of confinement and coldness. She remarks, "The house... lacks warmth: a long house that is

also drafty, dark and dilapidated. It is desperately empty of beings and in that it resembles very much a pavilion in an asylum.”²⁶

In a similar way to the play, Zemni’s case study proposes to reform the system by modifying the hospital structure. Both playwright and psychotherapist critique that structure for holding patients back from expressing themselves. Zemni’s detailed analysis illustrates how keeping patients in the asylum, in separate buildings, for a long period does not resolve their mental health problems. For instance, she proposes to reform the layout of the aforementioned living room by designing multiple corners to engage patients in various activities. The psychotherapist explains that during therapy sessions, each of these corners serves to help patients express themselves. For example, the room would be devoted to knitting, dance, singing, performance, and more. However, the psychotherapist’s project was challenged by complaints from doctors, who expressed their unwillingness to send their patients to the lobby room due to the shortage of nurses to walk patients from their own buildings. Zemni suggested letting the patients come by themselves. Once this problem was resolved, other challenges were raised by the patients’ doctors, who claimed that some of the patients’ families disapproved of the mixture of both men and women in the same room. While Zemni expressed her excitement about the different layout of the room because she observed that the patients had so many things to tell and to perform, soon her expectations were thwarted and what she named the “Razi Spring” ended.²⁷

The aforementioned structure of the hospital exemplifies how Zemni compares the patient’s ward to a space of confinement and isolation, emphasizing the prevention of reasonable quality care (letting the patients express themselves); Baccar depicts oppression and misery by focusing more on the patient’s home. Criticizing the psychiatric institution without pursuing the critique further might indicate that Baccar’s choice to de-emphasize the hospital is driven by her preference to focus primarily on the dysfunctional family as it

represents Tunisian society. Baccar conveys that Zemni's study is not limited to the psychiatric ward by showing that the mental institution's structure is duplicated in the patient's very family. Zemni's work illuminates our understanding of the play by creating the sense that the ward is a prison, where patients are not allowed to express themselves through talk therapy and, by extension, the family structure then becomes indicative of how Tunisian society can become a prison since free expression is also absent there.

Madness as a Sign of Individual and Social Fragmentation

Although both Baccar and Zemni portray schizophrenia as not congenital, Baccar dramatizes the causes of schizophrenia differently. Based on the description of Nūn's mental state, the playwright suggests that fragmentation concerns not only the patient, but also society. While Baccar retains the critique of the hospital and the family, she shifts the focus from sexual oppression—the main focus of Zemni's text—to individual and social fragmentation. To be more specific about Nūn's case in *Junūn*, the psychotherapist character, "She," reports that the doctor who diagnosed Nūn described his enduring personality's disintegration as an indication of schizophrenia. The latter consists of losing touch with reality and of living in a world of illusion and isolation. In the play, dementia is also described as a mental disorder in which the mental condition of the patient, Nūn, manifests itself through the brain's lack of control over the body. In an attempt to describe his sense of complete separation from his body and his loss of control over his speech, Nūn stammers, "My body no longer belongs to me...I am not in cotrol [sic], I cannot conrotl [sic] it."²⁸ The playwright depicts the character Nūn as a schizophrenic patient with a speech disorder that manifests at times of psychological crisis. As Nūn communicates his inability to control his body parts, it becomes evident that his fragmentation is both verbal and physical due to his inability to articulate words such as "control" appropriately.

Nūn's personality disintegration can also be seen in his mood changes and hallucinations in two situations. The first portrays Nūn's contradictory shifts of mood. In scene 1, the psychotherapist explains, "[Nūn] fled and they brought him back to the hospital/ They gave him medicine/ And he ran away again to avoid taking medication/ He made a mess in order to return to the hospital/ And to take medication/ She knows this cycle very well."²⁹ The character's movement in and out of the ward is a sign of incoherence and instability. In this scene, "She" juxtaposes the patient's dysfunctional family with a series of disruptions that outline the patient's life in a few lines, explaining in her capacity as narrator:

Nūn is twenty-five years old and unemployed/ He had quit school at the age of twelve/ entered the rehabilitation house before the age of fifteen/ been sent to prison at the age of seventeen/ entered military service at the age of eighteen/ and been committed to al-Rāzi—an asylum in Tunis—about the age of twenty-four/ The family/ The Father was a security agent/ died two years ago/ The mother delivered eleven/ two of them died/ the eldest brother is in prison/ The eldest sister is married and lives abroad/ At home Nūn remains along with three sisters/ A brother is in the rehabilitation house and two other brothers were smuggled into Italy.³⁰

The patient's disintegration reflects the family's difficulties, especially its disunion. The description of the patient's family environment raises questions about the father's government job, which has dynamics of control and power. The mother's misery results from her hard work raising eleven children, bearing the outcome of her husband's loss, and the pain of separation each time one of her sons or daughters runs away from the family (or the country). The second example portrays Nūn experiencing auditory hallucinations, hearing voices that come to him from unknown sources. He also describes his mental state in terms of two separate voices within him: "a voice that wants to murder someone while the other voice watches out for the first one."³¹ The multiplicity of voices and images in Nūn's head disorients him, making the act of murder appealing to him. "I must murder, assault, and rape in order to feel relieved."³² The psychotherapist's treatment intends to help the patient identify the forces that drive him to be violent in order to be relieved.

While the play dramatizes how schizophrenia manifests itself through the

protagonist's narration of Nūn's emotions and actions, the playwright leaves out the reasons that might explain why someone diagnosed with schizophrenia might find physical and sexual violence appealing. In this specific dramatization, Baccar retains her focus on what might cause schizophrenia, but she transforms Zemni's argument, which considers N.'s schizophrenia to be an expression of sexual oppression.

Like Zemni, Baccar introduces the patient's family as the locus of psychological oppression. However, Baccar shifts away from Zemni; sexual abuse is excised from Baccar's work and is not regarded as the main source of N.'s schizophrenic behavior. Baccar provides an alternative to the psychoanalytic perspective by delving into the social dynamics of schizophrenia. Considering the patient's transport to the asylum for the first time after laughing intensely and crying during his sister's wedding, Baccar takes an entirely different approach from what Zemni's text suggests. Unlike *Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia*, *Junūn* invites us to pay attention to Nūn's conflicting feelings by hinting at the patient's symptoms of schizophrenia and sadness with regard to the loss of his father.³³

While Baccar retains the disruption at the wedding, she provides a different explanation from Zemni. This change may be explained by the rupture of cultural norms. In the third scene, Nūn recalls the event when the doctor character expresses curiosity about the reason why he had been hospitalized. In an attempt to explain, Nūn retells an incident during the wedding,

On the day of my sister's wedding/ I was called to serve as a witness for the bride/ I do not know what happened/ I burst out giggling as they start reciting al-Fatiha/ As they said, "In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful"/ I burst out laughing/I laugh, laugh, laugh/ I laugh and I cry/ I laugh and I cry/ Until I was nearly choked/ So they locked me down here/ This was one year ago.³⁴

At face value, crying seems at odds with the happiness of marriage, hence, the discordance between action on the one hand, and thought and emotions on the other—a possible symptom of schizophrenia, as the patient's doctor noted. Indeed, the inappropriateness of Nūn's

intermingling laughter and tears, which disrupts the *Qu'ran* reading during the wedding ceremony, results in his being sent to the asylum. For the wedding vows to be made, Nūn has to be removed from the scene. It may be worth noting at this point that the reading of an extract from the Qu'ran during a ceremony of marriage expresses an act of blessing. The recitation is culturally essential in order for a wedding to be successful; the *Qu'ranic* verses, according to conventions of Tunisian society, should be uttered in a state of complete seriousness and propriety. This applies equally to all persons involved in the marriage ceremony, especially the bride, the groom, and the witnesses. In the play, Nūn's mixed display of emotion endangers the propriety of the marriage, by extension the blessing, and hence the entire ceremony. Because Nūn's behavior threatens to nullify the marriage vows, he is expelled.

Zemni's text, however, broadens the reader's understanding of the patient's dilemma. The case study attempts to understand the reasons that could be behind the desire to murder or rape someone. In her own terms, the psychotherapist Zemni explains, "It was by means of violence that the subject gained access to the sentiment of his own existence."³⁵ Most relevant to the asylum metaphor, violence in Zemni's work is a form of expression for asserting one's existence. The psychotherapist in the case study also provides a different analysis of both voices that control the patient's actions, and the schism between the patient's body on the one hand and his thoughts and feelings on the other.

Unlike *Junūn, Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia* looks at the concept of madness from an existential perspective. Zemni argues, "Madness is not a disease, it is an existential knot."³⁶ By making such a claim, she aims to critique how the mental institution defines madness in terms of chronicity. If the knot is existential, it would not be easy to untie it with medication. Moreover, if madness is an existential problem, then the psychiatric institution will be unable to help the patient resolve such an issue. Instead, Zemni's approach is based on

her conviction that treatment of the symptoms of mental illness is possible if individualized therapy is allowed outside the institution. Zemni's definition of madness is intriguing because it challenges the way it is conceived in the medical field. Based on her experience, she argues that the asylum can help inmates with short-term treatment only. However, the psychotherapist's definition of madness lacks clarity due to the vagueness of what an "existential knot" could be. Less problematic, perhaps, is her definition of madness as a social pathology. For her, madness may create (or originate from) different forms of societal disorder, including dysfunctional institutions such as the hospital, the family, or rather what she calls the "pathological family cell."³⁷ From here, Zemni points out the importance of reforming the psychiatric institution by confronting the psychological oppression that is perpetrated by the family. Zemni demonstrates how the ward is unable to cope with patients as unique individuals, and how it is, subsequently, incapable of resolving the patients' mental health problems. In the case study, Zemni does not give up her struggle against the stigma of "madness," the system of the mental institution, and the family. She continues with her treatment of N., both inside and outside the asylum, to show how the family's implementation of its cultural agenda leads to oppression and so-called madness.

Comparing the ways in which Zemni and Baccar interpret madness suggests that by staging a Tunisian tradition, Baccar shifts away from the topic of sexuality and makes the choice to alter the psychoanalytic analysis and replace it with a cultural investigation. In the play, the psychotherapist mentions trans-sexuality in passing. For instance, the script hints at Nūn's sexual status as being non-identificatory and floating by evoking the character's relationship with women and men in scenes 3, 11, and 15. In scene 3, the psychotherapist finds out that Nūn suffers from syphilis and she argues this disease must be treated promptly. Based on his father's condemnation of women, in scene 11, Nūn interprets this disease as a punishment he is doomed to suffer. Disease contextualizes Nūn's hatred for women and

undergirds his inclination toward homosexuality. Although the non-identification with women (and the correlative association with men) provides evidence for the patient's bisexual identity, during talk therapy the psychotherapist character does not show any interest in discussing sexual orientation. In scene 15, Nūn confides to his psychotherapist: "I want to have a boyfriend/ A strong man/ Didn't I tell you that I hate women/ Didn't I tell you about my friend/ The hunter/ He is so muscular [literally referring to his arms muscles in terms of pomegranate.]"³⁸ Due to cultural constraints, I believe, Baccar avoids the discussion of homosexuality which is taboo in Tunisia. Baccar shows the psychotherapist swiftly switching the topic, asking Nūn why he called her in the first place. Denying the patient's anxiety over homosexuality also occurs at the end of the play, when Baccar depicts the patient as someone who wants to live and procreate.

Since Zemni provides a different explanation for N.'s first hospitalization than that put forth by Baccar, her work serves after the fact as a kind of literary criticism that helps explain Baccar's play as an alternative. Thus, the reader/viewer begins to understand what the playwright has left out, and then asks why she has done so. As the psychotherapist puts it, the patient's traumatic experience is not only related to "the incestuous impulses" with regard to his sister, but also to his relationship with his father in terms of "superego impulses."³⁹ According to Tunisian tradition, when the father passes away, the brother can say a prayer during his sister's wedding vows. It was beyond N. to represent both the figure of the father and to imagine that he were the husband of his sister at the same time. According to Zemni's analysis, on that day, N. felt he could have been the potential husband were the incest story no longer kept secret between he and his sister. The psychotherapist argues that N.'s past sexual relationship with his sister is one of the main reasons his dissociative identity disorder activated.⁴⁰ Based on Robert J. Campbell's definition, a primary personality and the alter personalities form the components of a *DID*. The dissociation can be either full or partial. In

the case of Zemni's patient, the intrusions of the father and the sister are partial. Unlike Campbell's note with regard to the most frequent symptom, amnesia, the patient N. remembers almost everything, including events from his childhood.

The psychotherapist also notes that the twin inability to be the sister's partner and also to effectively stand in for the absent father causes N. to develop tendencies that depart from conventional gender roles assigned by Tunisian culture. Zemni dwells on the complexity of N.'s sexual identity, in part because it makes his dilemma accessible to the reader: because he had been a victim of sexual abuse, the man becomes a perpetrator. Indeed further instances of victimization followed the original abuse. N. describes his syphilis as arising from a very specific origin: "This is a disease that I contracted the only time I've followed a prostitute."⁴¹ The patient attempts to justify his fear of women based on an incident of sexual intercourse with a prostitute that could have cost him his life. Based on the patient's body language, Zemni argues that the upcoming psychotherapeutic sessions will help to unveil the original fear of women: "At that time, the tone rises, the face becomes contorted and, suddenly, expresses intense emotion the origin of which will be revealed in the following sessions."⁴² The psychotherapist's analysis is accurate since N. soon realizes that while it is true that his father's death had troubled him, the main problem is associated with his sexuality. The patient declares, "'It is true that the death of my father disturbed me, but all is related to my sexuality."⁴³ Indeed, several months later, the patient notes that as a child he had been victimized by older girls who fondled him. He then unveils his incestuous relationship with his sister in detail. The psychotherapist concludes: "The patient had associated his misogyny and real phobia with an incestuous relationship with his sister."⁴⁴

As the patient puts it, everything is related to his sexuality. Lack of sensation resulted from the incestuous relationship N. had with his sister and caused him to have less control over his body. N.'s vulnerability extends outside the context of his family. The patient

recalls:

I remember when I was young I also used to do things that I was not able to control. For example, one day in Carthage, I threatened a stranger, who had "invited" me to his place; to say everything to his wife did he not give me fifty dinars. At the appointed hour, the stranger brought me the money, which I threw it back in his face and I left.⁴⁵

The psychotherapist notes that N.'s confession emerged after the sister, with whom he kept the secret, visited their family. The psychotherapist's conclusion reveals that N.'s earlier observation regarding the impact of sexuality on his life is pertinent mainly after his assertion of lack of control over his body. The patient confesses: "I reached the point that I no longer felt my body so much so I surrendered to its tyranny."⁴⁶

The quotation above also demonstrates that N.'s bodily experience will again make him a victim of sexual oppression. Indeed, the patient was a victim of male sexual assault. Based on this fact, Zemni connects the patient's feelings of sexual ambiguity to his questioning his sexual identity. Notably, N.'s openness and inquiries about sexuality emerged after he accepted the death of his father, this acceptance led to an awareness of his body. Before that, N. lived in his head and appeared confused about his body. As N. puts it:

"I feel like I am a woman, I am gentle, sensitive, I like neither violence nor war. I'm a man in my head and a woman in my body. Whenever I happen to love a woman I feel that these are two women making love and I am witness ... Do you accept me with the feeling of being a woman?"⁴⁷

The psychotherapist responds to the patient's reflection on his sexual ambiguity, explaining there is a distinction between biological sex and the feeling of whether one's gender corresponds with one's biological sexual identity. She alleviates his feelings of culpability by telling him: "Accepting femininity does not remove anything from his quality of being a man."⁴⁸ By pointing out the differences between the two, she invites the patient to accept his feelings of femininity as an integral part of his masculinity.

In the Tunisian context, Zemni's writing can be considered outspoken because in her reflection on sexual identity, she helps N. express himself despite constraints set by social

models. By doing this, she helps N. to break not only an internal silence within himself regarding taboo issues, but also an ongoing silence within a conservative culture. In her essay on performativity in *Writing the Body* (1997), gender theorist Judith Butler explores similar ideas about sexual identity. The relationship between performance and gender is central to Butler's analysis. She argues that there is uncertainty about the way one may conceive gender. For Butler, gender is flexible and not culturally determined:

Gender is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed... If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. The distinction between expression and performativeness is quite crucial, for if gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction.⁴⁹

For Butler, there is no such a thing as a true "act" of gender. She discusses gender as an expression of performance and of consciousness. I consider the two approaches to gender, Zemni's and Butler's, to be quite different. It can be doubted that Zemni's motivation is to help N. accept his homosexuality and live with it based on the idea that performing gender is the real matter and social regulations are merely fictional impositions. In saying that, "Accepting femininity does not remove anything from his quality of being a man,"⁵⁰ Zemni depicts N. strictly as a man, despite the fact that he mentions his feelings of ambiguity with regard to his own sexuality.

Furthermore, during the same therapeutic session, the patient notes that the sight of a young man on the beach had moved him. However, the psychotherapist avoids discussing homosexuality based on N.'s comment. By "the quality of being a man," the psychotherapist essentially means that there are some behaviors that qualify men as being male. Such qualities may be culturally-based, because male identity can be a cultural construct that differs from one society to another. The psychotherapist reassures N. by telling him that

feeling that one performs like a woman is fine, but again her words insinuate that such behavior does not endanger the quality of being a man. Not only does she avoid addressing homosexuality, but she also swiftly changes the focus of the conversation by offering an interpretation of N.'s dream relating to a woman.⁵¹ This leads the reader to draw the conclusion that the psychoanalytic approach as used by Zemni does not help her escape the socio-cultural, gender-based discourse. Due to oppression against illicit forms of sexual identity, including homosexuality, the psychotherapist chooses to avoid such topics. Being silent about these forms of sexuality as performed by N. works against the very grain of the talk therapy on which Zemni bases her work.

By reading the case study in light of Butler's approach, the interpretation of N.'s ambiguous sexuality can be taken to a different level because N. engages in three different expressions of sexuality which include his relationship with his sister, women, and men. Performing gender with flexibility helps him rethink his relationships with both men and women in his society. Unlike Butler's approach to sexuality, Zemni's narrative gradually unfolds in accordance with the traditional ways of gender representation. In her case study, perhaps despite the author's intention to explain sexual ambiguity without delving into homosexuality except in so far as the patient mentions it, the deconstruction of gender is accomplished through performance. Performing sexuality leads to a complete transformation of the patient in the sense that he becomes aware of his ambivalent sexual identity. Nonetheless, Zemni's psychoanalytic case breaks two taboos, incest and homosexuality. Unveiling N.'s incest is key to comprehending how the patient's internalization of sexual deviation will account for his ultimate post-traumatic disorder.

The Figure of the Father: A Metaphor for Social Repression

The psychotherapists in both *Junūn* and *Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia*, focus attention on the histories of their patients' mental illness. However, the two works diverge in terms of their focus on the character of the father. The psychotherapist Zemni introduces the complicated concept of depersonalization.⁵² While the play emphasizes how Nūn hates his father and wishes to get his corpse out of the grave to stab him, in the case study N. struggles with accepting the loss of his father. In *Diary of Discourse on Schizophrenia*, Zemni says that the patient lost his sense of reality after his father died. The fantasy of occupying the role of the father made the patient lose faith in his own identity and his existence. Zemni also notes the ambivalence of the patient's feelings toward his father: N. fears and hates, yet idealizes his father.⁵³ Baccar retains the focus on the figure of Nūn's authoritarian father, but she abandons the concept of depersonalization because she is concerned with the figure of the father as a symbol of the oppressive head of the family and the state.

In *Junūn*, for the psychotherapist character, Nūn's case is not only a personal problem in the confined space of the mental institution, but also a form of social deviance that can be understood, diagnosed, treated, and cured by taking both the family and society into consideration. In his dysfunctional family environment, Nūn has to face psychological violence that is mainly mediated through the absent authoritarian figure of the dead father. An emphasis on Nūn's relationship with his father is justified by the impact the man had on his son's mental state. Nūn tells his psychotherapist that his father sent him to a juvenile detention center (a location meant to reintegrate trouble-making teenagers into society). The patient also explains that his father did so because he thought this center was more capable of straightening Nūn out than he had been.

As the doctor unfolds the patient's case, her treatment allows him not only to express himself, but also to reflect on his relationship with his father. Nūn explains that his father's character had many contradictions, including the fact that he was both an alcoholic and a

practicing Muslim. The patient adds that when his father was alive, he became extremely talkative when under the influence of alcohol, yet he expected Nūn to be silent. Nūn's description of his father's contradictions highlights his lack of respect and also his repression.

[My father] returns home drunk/ He makes me sit next to him/ And starts to talk/ Talks talks/ It is surprising how eloquent he is/ He talks about everything/ While I am silent/ Never did he ask me what I think/ What I want/ What I hate/ It does not come across his mind/ That everyone has his own view point/ And has the right to say his opinion/ To express himself.⁵⁴

Nūn explains how he is dominated by his father's actions. He also points out that such behavior is a form of abuse and despotism. Nūn paints a picture of himself as an oppressed son, who had been fearfully silent. His father's opposition to plurality of viewpoints contributed to imposing his image as a model that the son had to follow. This form of psychological oppression had damaging psychological effects on Nūn. As stated in the stage directions, Nūn becomes tense upon recalling his father's attempts to silence him. He then realizes that the psychotherapist is different from his father, who had never allowed him to express himself freely.

Most problematic is the image of his father that continues to reemerge and permeate Nūn's world. Nūn's discriminatory remarks against women are also reminiscent of his relationship to his father, who warned him to avoid women, describing them as "disgrace coming out from Satan's deeds."⁵⁵ This point is central to the doctor's assessment, which hinges on the connection between Nūn and his father. In scene 13, Nūn realizes that the voice that inhabits him is indeed his father's, describing it as "a voice that is living inside his head."⁵⁶ Nūn recognizes that his schizophrenic state is the outcome of his father's behavior toward him. As a result, he wishes to take revenge against his dead father by removing his corpse from the grave and stabbing him, which also helps him find relief. In scene 6, based on the relationship with his father that was governed by domination by means of enforced silence, Nūn observes, "The child whose mouth you shut grows up frightened and loses self-

confidence. This is why I want to talk now, randomly, I want to talk without using flowery speech, I want to communicate, to heal, to live.”⁵⁷ The psychotherapist perseveres until she notices a change in Nūn’s sense of autonomy. The statement above illustrates how the patient eventually achieves this high level of awareness about himself. In this scene, Nūn postulates that speaking equals living.

Madness and Politics

While *Junūn* is literally about schizophrenia, Nūn’s mental images suggest a more political allegorical interpretation. Indeed, the patient’s mental disorder appears to stand for the mad state of Tunisian society. For instance, Nūn describes the pictures hustling into his head in terms of “blood...streams of blood...flooded rivers...scarlet...boiling...flooding the country.”⁵⁸ This set of bloody images floating in Nūn’s head refers to the violence that is everywhere in his country. The statement above also proposes that Nūn internalizes the social and political situation in Tunisia without being able to react to these devastating conditions. The inability of the protagonist to react to a bloody flood may not only represent the socio-political disorder in Tunisia, but also hint at the inability of many Tunisians to make any change. Of course, such violent and disturbing imagery does not comfort the reader or the viewer, and instead forces the person to think about Tunisian society. The description of Nūn’s mental state demands that the audience think about the scene at hand and the work in its entirety. The playwright’s interweaving of the reality of her country and the fantasy of her patient is thus conveyed through the disturbed mental state of the patient confined in a psychiatric institution.

Further evidence highlights what a mad state does for its own people, underlining how the political system produces people who are unstable. The play suggests that the system produces people who are unable to say what they think because they have been silenced. For

example, Nūn describes himself as “A standing corpse without a head.”⁵⁹ This metaphor implies the inability of Nūn to think and act, which is typical of a repressive political regime that keeps the Tunisian people from thinking critically at all levels of society. The psychotherapist character attempts to interpret, in an objective way, why the patient feels that way. In scene 20, the psychotherapist argues that the major factors in Nūn’s inability to think, point toward his insecurities. He is furious with anyone and any incident that has shaped his misery. In a long monologue, the psychotherapist narrates multiple reasons for the patient’s rage:

Nūn is revengeful/ Revengeful of his father, who crushed him and threw him away/
Revengeful of his brother, who controls him/ Revengeful of his mother, who did not
know how to support him, or to show him affection/ Revengeful of the country that
abandoned him/ Revengeful of the poverty that discarded him/ Revengeful of the
ignorance that imprisons him/ Revengeful of the disease that exhausts him.⁶⁰

The psychotherapist weaves together all of the factors that have caused her patient to be resentful toward his family and country. In this description, she explains Nūn’s wish to take revenge on his family members for betraying him. She also emphasizes the subtle revenge that Nūn seeks to take against the influence of many state institutions for their failure to resolve problems regarding poverty, ignorance, and disease. Jaïbi understands these afflictions as “chains.” In an interview in 2009, the director mentioned that “Nūn represents an individual, who tries to tear the chains that deprived him from asserting his individuality.”⁶¹ Hence, Nūn’s resentment toward individuals and institutions is also a form of resistance to different types of incarceration in Tunisian society.

Nūn experiences the pervasiveness of oppression on an individual basis because oppression affects everyone’s life in a police state. He displays awareness that the figure of his repressive father is metaphorically everywhere in his society. The protagonist declares, “They are all the same/ The father/ The brother/ The doctor/ The nurse/ People in the street/ In the mosque/ On the beach/ All of them want to control you/ To dominate you.”⁶² Nūn

realizes his father's authority fits into a repressive pattern that is wide-spread in his society. Nūn's observation may also be understood in the context of the ongoing historical political repression silencing citizens in Tunisia from Independence (1956) to the Arab Spring (2011), and perhaps beyond.

The discourse of repression culminates in the figure of Smadah (1931-1998), a Tunisian poet militantly opposed to French colonialism, and later to President Habib Bourguiba's regime. More evidence that the psychiatric institution is a metaphor for the ongoing political repression in Tunisia comes from Baccar's reference to Smadah. Indeed, he was known to have written nationalistic poetry as a form of political resistance. In his struggle against French colonial power, he wrote a collection of poems entitled "Dawn of Life."⁶³ This collection was censored when it appeared in 1955, but it was published later in 1972. Smadah was also persecuted for political reasons during the era of President Bourguiba. This claim is based on historical fact, since Smadah wrote a specific poem in 1969 while he was in the same psychiatric ward as Nūn, at the al-Rāzi Hospital in Tunis.

The poet was moved into al-Rāzi for being an opponent of the Tunisian political system when Bourguiba was in power. Smadah's punishment was manifested in police brutality, which led to the poet's mental illness and his subsequent confinement in al-Rāzi. The playwright shows through the portrayal of Nūn and a citation from Smadah's poem, "Words," that difference, pluralism, and free speech are threatened within the Tunisian socio-political system. In scene 6, when Nūn is in therapeutic treatment and no longer silenced, he realizes how "The word can have an extraordinary power/ Irresistible power/ a Word is more powerful than the sword [literally 'the stick']"⁶⁴ Upon evoking the liberating power of words, the psychotherapist recites Smadah's poem, which calls for resistance for the sake of free expression, and emphasizes the power of words. The last line of the poem enforces Smadah's message: "So speak, suffer, and die for the sake of words."⁶⁵ The playwright may

have incorporated this instance of intertextuality for its usefulness in illustrating that people who are forcibly taken to be mad like Smadah could in fact have discernible talent. Not only is Smadah representative of the silenced and marginalized, but of Tunisia as a whole during the eras of both President Bourguiba and Zine al-Abidine ben Ali. Smadah's poem speaks out against silence and oppression. Despite the actual silence about oppression itself in Tunisia, both Smadah and Nūn have faith in the authority of words to battle the stigma of mental illness and social repression. By comparing Nūn to Smadah, the psychotherapist seems to confirm her understanding of Nūn's needs not only as a patient, but also as a Tunisian citizen who seeks to express himself. The audience is thus invited to view Nūn in light of a poet who was persecuted because of the potential power of his voice.

The Aesthetics of Breaking Silence: Distanciation Techniques from Theory to Practice

The asylum metaphor in *Junūn* can be seen not only in the content of Nūn's mental images and Smadah's case as illustrated above, but also in the dramatic structure. An analysis of narration and dramaturgy in *Junūn* reveals some techniques that are omnipresent in Baccar's play in terms of text and performance. The asylum metaphor may be understood as operating in order to estrange the audience. This effect is achieved by the use of multiple devices of distanciation including microphones and the unconventional usages of chairs and curtains. Additionally, distanciation can be seen in terms of narration. A critical reading of *Junūn* may be facilitated by hindering identification with characters, using the third person deliberately. Here I will first explore distanciation; second identify the specific techniques and devices mentioned above; and finally also explain why director Jaïbi and playwright Baccar have made such narrative and dramatic choices.

Distanciation may be defined as a tool of estrangement. Brecht's term *Verfremdung* is usually translated as "alienation," "displacement," or "separation." Sean Carney notes how

intriguing the particular translations of this term can be, arguing, “One wonders if the choice of ‘alienation’ is deliberate distancing (an estrangement) of the concept from its formalist roots, a means of emphasizing *verfremdung*’s political consequences rather than its artistic implications.”⁶⁶ Whether the more accurate translation for *Verfremdung* is “alienation,” “distanciation,” or “estrangement,” it is important to note that this theatrical technique operates by disrupting the identification of actors with characters and/or audience with characters/actors. Most importantly, for Brecht this theatrical technique has a social function. In a context similar to that of the work discussed here, Brecht explains (speaking about *Mother Courage*):

But even if *Courage* learns nothing else at least the audience can, in my view, learn something by observing her. I quite agree with you [an interviewer of Brecht named Friedrich Wolf] that the question of choice of artistic means can only be that of how we playwrights give a social stimulus to our audience (get them moving). To this end we should try out every conceivable artistic method which assists that end, whether it is old or new.⁶⁷

Hence, the use of any dramatic technique is justified if it aims to make the audience critique society represented by the actions and opinions of the characters. The purpose of employing distanciation is to encourage audience members to think about a performance critically, and perhaps as a result, to become an agent of change outside of the theater.

Through distanciation, the audience dispenses with the emotional involvement with the stage that the illusionary theater sought to encourage. Brecht criticizes how the Bourgeois Theater’s performances “always aim at smoothing over contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization... If there is any development it is always steady, never by jerks; the developments always take place within a definite framework which cannot be broken through.”⁶⁸ Brecht’s Epic Theater, by contrast, exposes an arrangement of events based on contradictions rather than one following a predictable course. His theater proposes that development occurs in unpredictable and non-linear ways. Distanciation is a technique by which he accomplishes this unsteady development. For Brecht, the purpose of the technique

is to remind the audience that they are watching a play. This is to say, the audience should not become part of the experience of watching the play by becoming unreservedly emotionally involved.

Brecht does not deny that the actors may experience a dialectical relationship between emotional involvement and intellectual engagement, noting:

The contradiction between acting (demonstration) and experience (empathy) often leads the uninstructed to suppose that only one or the other can be manifest in the work of the actor... In reality it is a matter of two mutually hostile processes which fuse in the actor's work; his performance is not just composed of a bit of the one and a bit of the other. His particular effectiveness comes from the tussle and tension of the two opposites, and also from their depth.⁶⁹

Distanciation does not mean coldness and pure reason by means of a type of acting that excludes empathy—the separation between acting and experience does not happen due to the tension between emotion and reason that is experienced by actors. Instead, Brecht further explicates what he means by “empathy,” pointing out that the processes of both acting and experiencing in general do not involve a separation between reason and emotion. He argues:

It [the epic theatre] by no means renounces emotion, least of all the sense of justice, the urge to freedom, and righteous anger; it is so far from renouncing these that it does even assume their presence, but tries to arouse or to reinforce them. The ‘attitude of criticism’ which it tries to awaken in its audience cannot be passionate enough for it.⁷⁰

Brecht's statement suggests that the epic theater does not exclude emotion; instead Brecht's theater invites us to understand what emotion means for the actor and the audience. The Epic Theater arouses emotions that make the actor aware of demonstrating a character instead of inhabiting the character. This type of acting (the double roles of the actor) is not an end in itself, but another tool to confront the audience with something different from what they already know, to take them by surprise, forcing them to observe events on stage critically.

Among the distanciation techniques in *Junūn* is the use of microphones, which may be considered symbolically as giving a voice to the voiceless. The use of microphones reveals the mechanism of amplifying voice on stage in a way similar to practices of interviewing,

which produce voices that do not sound natural compared to real world conversation. Exposing the ‘apparatus’—both in a mechanical and societal sense—points out the artificial nature of performance. This artificiality compels the audience to think about contradictions by destroying dramatic illusions. Observing the stage craft allows for distancing to be effective. It wakes up both the actor and the spectator, calling attention to the discrepancies between reality and illusion. In the prologue to *Junūn*, Bacchar specifies the stage directions: “In between two microphones, which stand on tripods, actors are standing next to each other.”⁷¹ When the doctor holds the microphone to her patient on several occasions, the instrument strikes the spectator as odd because it gives the voice a different quality than in a real-life situation.

Additionally, scene 2 opens with stage directions stating that the psychotherapist walks toward Nūn, places a microphone in front of him, straightens his head, and goes back to stand in front of her own microphone. Following this stage direction (and importantly, the especially slow movement of the microphone), Nūn informs his psychotherapist that he believes his dilemma lies in his taking medicine, and therefore he has to quit taking medication entirely. The doctor, however, attempts to convince the patient that he still has to be on medication. In this scene, the emphasis on the microphone disrupts identification with characters and compels the reader or spectator to assume a critical attitude toward the characters’ conversation since it does not appear to be natural. By exhibiting the apparatus, the play converts language to a tool not only to describe the events that take place on stage, but also to perform actions that can be heard clearly, pondered by the audience, and perhaps transformed into action—even encountered outside the theater.

The use of the third-person voice, which is prevalent in the play, also illustrates the technique of distancing. The play alternates between use of the first and third person to refer to oneself to create distancing. The phenomenon of using a pronoun to refer to oneself is

not largely studied in narratology and literary studies, but is known in some cases as “illeism.” This term is mainly used in theology to refer to characters when they tend to self-aggrandize or self-deprecate. The playwright uses this phenomenon differently in the monologues spoken by the patient and in dialogues between the characters. The alteration between first and third-person is possible in monologues to convey insanity. For instance Nūn observes, “The child that you shut his mouth/ grows up frightened/ loses self-confidence.”⁷² The technique of distancing Nūn from himself helps to illustrate schizophrenic behavior.

In addition to the patient’s use of third-person to convey disconnection, the character of the psychiatrist refers to herself as “She.” Despite the fact that she is heavily involved in the dramatic action, the psychotherapist sometimes undertakes the role of the narrator to report what Nūn tells her by referring to herself in the third person. For instance, she repeats the same statement Nūn uttered earlier: “He told her, I must murder, assault, and rape in order to feel relieved.”⁷³ The personal pronoun may represent a sense of identity estrangement.

Another pertinent example appears in scene 14, when the doctor is forced to take one week off after raising questions about the usual treatments employed in her institution. The psychiatric ward takes this measure against the psychotherapist, notifying her that she should think about whether she wants to accept and conform to the regulations of the institution, or to quit. Of this series of actions she reports: “They told her it is a professional mistake.”⁷⁴ The use of the personal pronoun “her” allows the narrator to detach from the character and reveal her thoughts to herself about the situation in which she is objectively involved. By using this pronoun, the narrator not only attenuates her own subjectivity, but in so doing also urges the audience to consider that even a psychotherapist can be subjected to repression for thinking differently.

Narratively, the use of third person serves to control the pace of the play. A relevant example appears in the prologue when the psychotherapist tells the story of Nūn as a series of disruptions. As a main focalizer⁷⁵, she notes:

Nūn is twenty-five years old and unemployed. He had quit school at the age of twelve, entered a juvenile detention center, was sent to prison at the age of seventeen, entered military service at the age of eighteen, and been committed to al-Rāzi—an asylum in Tunis—at about the age of twenty-four.⁷⁶

Condensing the above occurrences helps the audience to understand that Nūn’s mental illness is related to authority perpetuated by several institutions, including school, the juvenile detention center, the military service, the prison, and the hospital. Recitation of these events summarizes a span of twenty-four years in a few lines. The occasional use of the third person narrative voice keeps the actor from identifying with the character since the narrator “She” is no longer the psychotherapist character when acting as the narrator. The instance where one character undertakes the role of narrator in order to reveal something about himself/herself—or another character—is a frequent stylistic device in the play. In scene 4, Nūn’s sister, Waw (played by Salha Nasraoui) shows her concern for her brother to the psychotherapist: “Waw prefers him to be at home.”⁷⁷ By referring to herself, Waw creates a distance between herself as a character and her role as narrator. It is as if Waw is holding a mirror to reveal herself *to herself* and to other characters at the same time. The third-person self-reference in this case also makes an emphatic statement about one’s core values. In this scene, Waw shows her love for her brother and her hatred of seeing him confined to the psychiatric institution. She believes family is central to Nūn’s being.

Additionally, shifting between first-person and third-person not only makes the actor alternate between the role of a narrator and a character, but also allows the audience to maintain distance from the character by contextualizing the narrated events without relying on the character’s judgment. In scene 15, which involves transference in the Freudian sense⁷⁸, the psychotherapist speaks in the first person. Understanding that Nūn was furious at being

rejected, she says: “Tell me from where you are calling/ I will come to take you to the hospital.”⁷⁹ In the following scene, however, the psychotherapist shifts to third-person and then back to second-person to narrate the circumstances that led to her resignation from work: “They told her/ The administration retrieved Nūn’s file from you/ They accused you of being responsible for Nūn’s disobedience of the doctor/ And of his revolt against the institution.”⁸⁰ By talking about herself in the third-person and the second-person, the narrator essentially observes herself. The multiplicity of voices in the play also reveals how the descriptive mode sometimes becomes more dominant than the performance mode. In this regard, narration slows down the pace of performance and incites critical thinking as the audience becomes critically detached from the story as they watch.

There are still other devices that bring about distancing, such as the chairs game. In scene 7, Nūn and his siblings play this game. All the characters on stage are moving chairs and they are themselves moving from one place to another. They do not fit in anywhere. This scene distances spectators from actors and characters because it is both curious and disturbing to attend to actors and chairs that are moving and being moved for unclear reasons. In her article, “Junūn by Fadhel Jaibi in Hammamet: Against Silence, Against Forgetfulness...”⁸¹ Asma Drissi, a Tunisian art critic, explains: “As for the two scenes that occur amid the family, the one of the “chairs” and that of the “plates,” sparked many questions among the audience. These are not accidental scenes in the way that they convey an environment in which a schizophrenic lives; that is a noisy world, with dialogues among the deaf, without love.”⁸² The unfamiliarity of the chairs game scene creates ambiguity as to whether chairs are part of the set. Instead, they mirror a discourse that communicates disorder.

The above scene also depends on the acceleration of rhythm of the slowly moving chairs and bodies, which suggests serenity, to very quick and violent movements, representing not only violence, but also the absence of verbal communication which is

replaced by moving objects. The sudden rhythmic change takes the audience by surprise and highlights their ability to think about what seems absurd to them. The chairs game returns at the end of the play, depicting a schizophrenic world in which loud noise, disorder, and violence are pervasive. Most significantly, the playwright and the director's dramatic scene challenges the reader (or the viewer) to become actively engaged in understanding the text and the performance with its complex system of signs that aim not only to communicate disorder, but also literally to break silence.

Moreover, the use of curtains in *Junūn* may not merely be understood as announcing the beginning and the closing of a given scene. Distanciation can also be illustrated through raising and lowering a number of curtains. Raising and lowering the stage curtains mainly in the last four scenes of the play exposes the theatrical fabric, which reminds the audience that they are watching a play. Displaying the curtains helps to point out the theatrical space without preventing the audience from viewing the stage hardware. This technique maintains a transparent effect in that it unmask not only offstage space, but also and even the dim wall on which visible utility pipes are hanging in the theater location in Tunis. The theater's back wall appears in the final scene and resembles an abstract painting when several curtains are lowered to the ground. The exhibition of the wall is also appropriate to the production's goal since it finally unmask a dim image. The unspoken task behind the uncovering of the theater wall is to break the societal silence about Tunisian society.

Jaïbi thus makes an unfamiliar and remarkable use of stage curtains. In Tunisian newspapers, many articles have mentioned *Junūn*'s configuration of curtains. The theater critic Lotfi al-Arbi Sannussi wrote an article in *Al-Sahafa* (The Press) in which he emphasizes how critics discussed "the game of raising and lowering the stage curtains"⁸³ as a way of representing the uncovering of Nūn's inner being.⁸⁴ According to Sannussi this discourse is dependent on images rather than language. Abd-al-Halim Massouadi, another theater critic,

observes, “The curtains lying behind the main stage curtain played a primary role through being raised and lowered. Perhaps, the most important role of these curtains lies in revealing the condensation of Nūn’s monstrous neurotic world.”⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the theater critic, Kamel ash-Chikhaoui’s observation regarding the curtains is different from that of Sannussi as he explains the curtains’ movements in terms of the social implications of the scene. Ash-Chikhaoui argues: “Raising one curtain after another is a technique to uncover the implications of family and social circumstances that led to the state of Nun.”⁸⁶ Based on these interpretations, raising and lowering the curtains may be understood in many different ways, but above all, this technique certainly raises the curiosity of the audience about the events that take place on stage, mainly because unveiling the theatrical “apparatus” is disruptive, making the audience aware that they are attending a play. They are thus invited to think about its implications.

As indicated in the above thematic and stylistic analysis, the main goal of Baccar is to offer the adaptation as a piece of social criticism. Unlike earlier interpretations with regard to the use of curtains, however, Baccar’s primary goal is to make a political statement. In *Junūn*, Nūn’s mental state creates a provocative image that the playwright uses to depict how “schizophrenic” her society can be, as it is based on the psychiatric institution’s world. Baccar describes Nūn in his given socio-political circumstances as someone who struggles not only against his low self-esteem due to the impact of an authoritarian father on his personality, but also against the psychiatric ward as a traditional institution that does not resolve patients’ problems since it does not take family issues into consideration. This implies that only upon being given his dignity will Nūn gain a new life. The talk therapy Nūn receives inside and outside the asylum helps him to gain self-awareness and achievement of free expression. Most significantly, the change in Nūn that is dramatized invites the audience to think critically about the socio-political conditions in Tunisia. Mehta positions this play as

a political allegory of the fight between authoritarianism and freedom of expression.”⁸⁷ Viewing this play as a representation of socio-political oppression contributes to an overall understanding of *Junūn* as a compelling narrative that is not only about psychological abnormality, but also about institutional failure under the repressive Tunisian regime that silences children in family units and patients in the psychiatric institution.

This study has explored the degree to which Baccar’s authorial choices convey the metaphor of the psychiatric ward as a mad society, in which madness becomes a social rather than an organic disease. By reading these two works side by side as representations of madness in terms of social pathology, both the psychoanalytic case and the play are seen as breaking the silence of oppression practiced against the mentally ill in society. Taking a broader view on madness, Mehta explains how *Junūn* treats madness as a form of political dissidence that fosters creativity. Mehta also shows how the play is a maternal protest against Tunisian institutions such as the family, hospital and the army, all of which are patriarchal. By investigating the figure of the father, Mehta investigates immediate connections between the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and resistance as expressed in *Junūn*. By deconstructing the play in its social and political context, the critic argues that the so-called madness in *Junūn* “represents a search for exemplarity, self-expression and self-definition within society’s “carceral networks” of confinement, oppression, and regulation.”⁸⁸

The political message of the play, however, prevails in the protagonist’s images and the references to the Tunisian poet, Smadah. These references highlight the importance of free expression, but by citing the entire poem Baccar appears also to pay tribute to the poet, recognizing his resistance against colonial oppression and post-colonial disillusionment with Tunisian political leaders. In these endeavors, Baccar follows in the steps of Smadah by being not only an author, but also a militant against the oppressive Tunisian regime. Thus, Baccar connects Nūn’s story to the collective story of all Tunisians under the same oppressive

political system, without the focus on psychoanalysis that characterizes the source text. A final biographical note may also bring the poet and the playwright together, in that both are self-made individuals. Baccar is a gifted actor though she did not pursue theater studies. In a similar way, Smadah was raised in a poor family and never had the opportunity to go to school, but he became a poet by educating himself. Equally exceptional about *Junūn* is the fact that Zemni's patient N. attended the real-life performance, *Junūn*.

Starting with an intuitive sense by studying the play *Junūn*, this chapter compared the play to both the case study and other works that reinforce social criticism. While all the texts mentioned earlier discuss conformity and silence in different cultures through the asylum metaphor, what is particular to the *Junūn* is achieving an understanding of how the protagonist is transformed from someone who is repressed by his society to a person who becomes more confident and expressive. In the spirit of resistance in the play, the character's speech gains an existential and poetic dimension. By expressing himself, Nūn becomes aware of his old self—repressed not only by his father, but also by every other authoritarian father-figure in his society. The therapeutic work also has an impact on this patient by transforming him from a silent and repressed individual to an eloquent poet. The analysis of *Junūn* also highlights that institutional inadequacies suppress everyone. Similar to Nūn, the psychiatrist is silenced. She is fired for challenging her institution. Her commitment to free expression in reciting Mnawar Smadah's poem shows how through her experience with Nūn, she also gains understanding not only of her patient, but also of herself and her society. Exploring schizophrenia as a metaphor for Tunisian society through theatrical techniques also makes Baccar's work significantly different from the previous ones. These theatrical techniques stem from the idea of distancing that permeates almost all Familia's productions. Perhaps *Junūn* provides the best example of conveying how the director brings about distancing techniques onstage, for instance, through the games of curtains and chairs to represent a

schizophrenic society.

The social political context described in *Junūn* echoes the political and cultural scene in which the next play *Khamsūn* (literally “Fifty,” and later titled “Captive bodies,”⁸⁹ or “Bodies hostages,” 2006) will be discussed. The next chapter provides an extensive analysis of the events that led to the production of both *Khamsūn* and *Les amoureux du café désert*.

1. Néjia Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène: Récit d'une psychanalyse sans divan* [Diary of discourse on schizophrenia: Account of psychoanalysis without a sofa] (Paris: Harmattan, 1999), <http://livre.fnac.com/a873747/N-Zemni-Chronique-d-un-discours-schizophrène-recit-d-une-psychanalyse/>. Zemni's book is originally written in French.

2. Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (New York: Viking, 1962). The film is based on Ken Kesey's novel under the same title (1962).

3. Jerome Klinkowitz, “McMurphy and Yossarian as Politicians,” in *A Casebook on Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, ed. George J. Searles (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 111–25; George B. MacDonald, “Control by Camera: Milos Forman as Subjective Narrator,” in *A Casebook on Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, ed. George J. Searles (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 163–72, 115.

4. George B. MacDonald, “Control by Camera: Milos Forman as Subjective Narrator,” in *A Casebook on Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, ed. George J. Searles, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 170.

5. Frank R. Cunningham, *Sidney Lumet: Film and Literary Vision* (1991; reprint, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 25.

6. *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, dir. Peter Brook and Adrian Mitchell, Schillertheater, Berlin, Germany, 1964.

7. Peter Weiss, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* (Woodstock, Ill.: Waveland, 1965), 56.

8. *Ibid.*, 16.

9. *Ibid.*, 84.

10. *Ibid.*, 84.

11. *Ibid.*, 82.

12. *Ibid.*, 83.

13. *Ibid.*, 83.

14. *Ibid.*, 101.

15. *Ibid.*, 100.

16. The American Psychological Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1994). The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* identifies schizophrenia based on a diagnosis of exclusion. The exclusion criteria account for a variety of cases, such as paranoia and catatonia, which may present in ways that appear similar to schizophrenia. By exclusion, Nūn's doctor asserts that the patient has symptoms of schizophrenia such as hallucination and apathy.

17. Jalila Baccar, *Junūn* [Dementia] (Tunis: Dār al-Janūb, 2007), 52.
هي: "ماهيش عارفة كيفاش/ اما يلزمها تمنعه/ تخرجه من حتمية الربط/ ومنطق المريض حالة نحكيو عليها/ و موش انسان نحكيو معاه."
18. Néjia Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène: Récit d'une psychanalyse sans divan* [Diary of discourse on schizophrenia: Account of psychoanalysis without a sofa] (Paris: Harmattan, 1999), 22-3.
19. Franco Basaglia, "The Destruction of the Mental Hospital as a Place for Institutionalization: Thoughts caused by personal experience with the open door system and part time service," *First International Congress of Social Psychiatry* (1964): 1-5.
20. Baccar, *Junūn*, 147.
هي: "صاله من جديد/ أصحنه بلاستيكي مبعثرة/ بقية مأكلة ميزعة/ قعامر سواقر منشرة/ ريحة مقرونة قارصة/ ومرضي كبار و صغار/ واقفين/ قاعدين/ متكين/ يمشيو و جيو/ يجعجعو/ يغنيو/ يحكيو/ يزغرو/ ولا ساكتين/ غايبين."
21. Baccar, *Junūn*, 56.
نون: "جئة هايمة بلا روح."
22. Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène*, 16. Zemni describes: "Dans ce que l'on nommait pompeusement la sale de séjour, une trentaine de malades, debout ou assis, immobiles ou marchant de long en large, silencieux, le regard absent, fixaient leur mégot de cigarette comme si c'était le dernier fil qui les rattachait à la vie."
23. Ibid., 22. Zemni points out that the therapeutic activities, which she conducts with the mentally ill patients in company of two other care staff, account for the lack of human and material means in al-Razi. Zemni describes these activities as comb-overs of a rigid way of watching patients rather than treating them with any therapeutic efficiency: "Compte tenu du peu de moyens matériels et de l'encadrement humain réduit (une psychothérapeute et deux soignants pour trente patients l'après-midi), ces activités étaient plus le cache-misère d'un gardiennage musclé qu'elles n'offraient une efficacité thérapeutique quelconque."
24. Ibid., 34. Zemni notes, "N. éprouvait un réel mieux-être a se réfugier sur la plage ou il passait le plus clair de son temps."
25. Ibid., 34. "Pourtant une lumière d'espoir clignotait: la mer, là, toute proche, bleue, douce, berceuse infatigable à l'oreille des mal-aimés."
26. Ibid., 34. "La maison . . . était sans aucune chaleur: une maison toute en longueur, toute en courants d'air, sombre et délabrée, désespérément vide d'êtres et en cela fort semblable au pavillon asilaire."
27. Ibid., 150-51. Further discussion about the above-mentioned room reveals how miserable the conditions to which inmates are exposed actually are. The psychotherapist describes the location in terms of "a nightmare."
28. Baccar, *Junūn*, 98.
نون: "بدني ما عادش بدني/ ما نحكمش، ما نحكمش فيه."
29. Ibid., 31.
هي: " هرب ورجعوه للسبيطار/ عطاوه الدواء/ وعاود هرب باش ما ياخذش الدواء/ عمل زبله باش يرجع للسبيطار/ وياخذ الدواء/ دومة تعرفها مليح/ " (بكار، ص 31)
30. Ibid., 30.
هي: نون/ ٢٥ سنة// بطال/هرب من المكتب عمره اثناش/دخل للإصلاحية قبل الخمسطاش/ للحبس مع السبعطاش/للجيش في الثمنطاش/ وللرازي ما فاتش الأربعة وعشرين/ العائلة / البود يوناني/ مات عنده عامين/ الأم جابت حداش/ ماتولها زوز/ الكبير في الحبس/ الأخت الكبيرة معرسة البرة/ في الدار قعدولها نون و ثلاثة بنات/ واحد في الإصلاحية/ واثنين هجو لبر الطليان.
31. Ibid., 26.
نون: "واحد في يحب يقتل/ والآخر يعس."
32. Ibid., 27.
نون: "يلزمني نقتل/ نذبح/ نزرر و نستفعل/ باش نتفرهد."

33. Baccar, *Junūn*, 37. In the play, Nūn's sister, Waw, tells his psychotherapist that his tears and laughter are indicative of his sadness due to the loss of his father.

34. *Ibid.*, 37.

نون: "نهار عرس أختي/ عيطولي باش نشهد ... / ما نعرفش آش صار/ شدتني كريس وقت الفاتحة/ هو ما قالو/ أعوذ بالله. من الشيطان الرجيم بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم"/ وأنا طرشت بالضحك/ نضحك/ نضحك/ نضحك و نبيكي/ نضحك و نبيكي/ حتى تقطع علي النفس/ جابوني لهذا/ توّه عام."

35. Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène*, 28. Zemni proposes that N. is violent because he wants to assert his existence: "[C]'était par la violence que le sujet accédait au sentiment de sa propre existence."

36. *Ibid.*, 169. Zemni notes, "La folie n'est pas une maladie, elle est un noeud d'ordre existentiel."

37. *Ibid.*, 24. Zemni describes the family as "[c]ellule familiale pathologique."

38. *Ibid.*, 131.

نون: "أنا نحبّ صاحب/ راجل فحل/ موش قلتك نكره النساء/ ما حكيتلكش على صاحبي الصياد/ هو رمّانته."

39. Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène*, 130. Zemni distinguishes between the patient's "impulsions incestueuses" and "impulsions surmoïques."

40. Dissociative identity disorder: "(*DID*); formerly known as multiple personality disorder (*MDD*); one of the *dissociative disorders* (q.v.), characterized by the presence of two or more relatively distinct and separate subpersonalities in a single person. . . . Greater awareness of the disorder has permitted identification of a relatively specific historical antecedent with which it appears to be associated: child abuse, most commonly neglect or any physical and sexual child abuse. Symptoms of *DID* include amnesia, depersonalization, hearing voices of the alter personalities, periods of nonresponsiveness (Trance states), flashbacks, etc. ("Dissociative identity disorder," *DSM-IV*).

41. Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène*, 36. "Cette maladie, je l'ai contractée l'unique fois où j'ai suivi une prostituée."

42. *Ibid.*, 36. "Là, le ton monte, le visage crispé, exprime brusquement une intense émotion dont les séances suivantes vont révéler l'origine."

43. *Ibid.*, 49. "C'est vrai que la mort de mon père m'a bouleversé (*zaazaani*) mais tout vient de ma sexualité."

44. *Ibid.*, 49. "Le patient avait associé sa misogynie, véritable phobie, aux rapports incestueux avec sa sœur."

45. *Ibid.*, 47. "Je me souviens que lorsque étais jeune je faisais aussi des choses que je me contrôlais pas. Par exemple, un jour à Carthage, j'ai menacé un étranger qui m'avait 'reçu' chez lui de dire tout à sa femme s'il ne me donnait pas cinquante dinars. A l'heure dite, il m'a apporté la somme. Je lui ai envoyé son argent au visage et je suis parti."

46. *Ibid.*, 49. "Je suis arrivé à ne plus sentir mon corps tellement je m'abandonnais à sa tyrannie" (49).

47. *Ibid.*, 158. N. tells his psychotherapist: "Je me sens femme, je suis doux, sensible, je n'aime ni la violence ni la guerre. Je suis un homme dans ma tête et une femme dans mon corps. Quand il m'arrive de faire l'amour avec une femme, j'ai l'impression que ce sont deux femmes qui font l'amour et que je suis spectateur. . . . Peux-tu m'accepter avec ce sentiment d'être une femme?"

48. The psychotherapist argues: "Accepter la féminité qui est en lui n'enlève pas rien à sa qualité d'homme" (*ibid.*, 159).

49. Judith Butler, "Performance Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and*

Feminist Theory, ed. Catie Conbay, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 411-12.

50. Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène*, 159.

51. Ibid. The patient reports his dream of being in a house where he was screaming. He could not find the key to go out, but through the window he saw a woman and asked to her to open the door from outside. The woman told him that she cannot break in but required him to look for the key inside the house. N. did and after he found it, he went outside and he danced with that woman. The psychotherapist interprets the above dream, suggesting that N.'s difficulties can be resolved based on his own efforts. She also views the dance as a harmonious relationship with women underlying N.'s reflection on his femininity.

52. Depersonalization is a "nonspecific syndrome in which the subject feels that he has lost his personal identity, that he is different or strange or unreal. Derealization, the feeling that the environment is also strange or unreal, is usually part of the syndrome. Other frequent symptoms are mood changes (e.g., dejection, apathy, bewilderment, or a feeling of emotional emptiness or numbing); difficulty in organizing, collecting, and arranging thoughts; and cephalic paresthesiae (e.g., numbness of head or a feeling that the brain has been deadened). Depersonalization has been reported in depression, hysterical and dissociative states, schizoid personality, schizophrenia, toxic psychoses, temporal lobe epilepsy, and in states of fatigue" ("Depersonalization," *DSM-IV*).

53. Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène*, 95. N. explains how much he hates and loves his father: "Il y'a quelques jours, j'ai voulu aller au cimetière pour déterrer ses os, les mettre dans un bocal devant moi. Je lui aurais dit: à quel point tu m'as tordu! Un enfant ça comprend tout, cela a des idées de haine effrayantes, des idées de meurtre quand on ne le laisse pas s'exprimer. Si seulement son corps était encore de chair, je l'aurais déterré et frappé avec un couteau" ("A few days ago, I wanted to go to the cemetery to dig up his bones, put them in a jar in front of me. I would have told him how you got me twisted! A child understands everything, that leads to have scary ideas of hatred. Depriving a child from speech will cause him to have ideas of murder. If only his body was still flesh, I would have dug him up and stab him with a knife") (Zemni, *Chronique d'un discours schizophrène*, 90). However, N. expresses how much love he feels toward his father the reason for which he could not accept his loss: "Mon père, je l'aimais beaucoup, c'était la seule personne dont je sentais la présence. Je n'avais pas accepté sa mort" ("I really loved my father. He was the only person the presence of whom I felt. I had not accepted his death.")

54. Ibid., 62.

نون: "يروّج شارب/ يحطّني بحذاه/ ويبدأ يحكي/ يحكي يحكي/ يقطع رُحله آش يعرف يحكي/ يحكي على كلّ شيء/ وأنا مبلّغ/ عمره ما سألني على رأيي/ آش نحبّ/ آش نكره/ ماهوش داخل لطاسة مخّه/ اللّي كلّ واحد عنده رأيي/ وعنده الحقّ يقوله/ يعبرّ عليه."

55. Ibid., 96.

نون: "المرا رجس من عمل الشيطان"

56. Ibid., 118.

نون: "صوت بابا

/هنا في."

57. Ibid., 62.

نون: الفرخ اللّي تضم له فمه
كيف يكبر يطلع يخاف/ ما عندوش ثقة في روحه/ على هذاكة توة نحب نتكلم/ نحكي كيف ما جاء جاء/ لا نزين/ لا نلون/ نحب نحكي/ نداوي/ نعيش."

58. Ibid., 35.

نون: "دمومات سابلة تقيقب ... /
وديان تغلي/ هايجة حاملّة/ زادمة/ عايمة/ غامة البلاد."

59. Ibid., 35.
نون: " جثة بلا راس وانا واقف".
60. Ibid., 153.
هي: "ناقم على بوه/ اللّي كسّره و لوّحه/ ناقم على خوه/ اللّي مهيمن عليه/ ناقم على أمّه/ اللّي لا عرفت تحذيه/ و لا تحنّ عليه/ ناقم على البلاد اللّي مسلمة فيه/ / ناقم على الفقر اللّي مهمّله/ ناقم على الجهل اللّي مكثفه/ ناقم على المرض اللّي مهتّكه".
61. Fadhel Jaïbi, recorded interview with Rafika Zahrouni, Tunis, July 2009.
62. Baccar, *Junūn*, 119.
نون: "الكّهم كيف كيف/
البو/ الخو/ الطّبيب/ الفرملّي/ النّاس في الشّارع/ في الجامع/ في الشّطّ/ الكّهم يحبّو يحكمو/ يسبّطرو عليك." (
63. Munawar Smadah, *Diwān Fajr al-Hayāt* [Dawn of life] 1972.
64. Baccar, *Junūn*, 63.
نون: "الكلمة عندها قوّة خارقة للعادة/ قوّة جبارة/ الكلمة أقوى من العصا".
65. Ibid.
هي: "فتكلم، وتكلم ولتمت في الكلمات".
66. Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), 15.
67. Ibid., 229.
68. Ibid., 277.
69. Ibid., 277-8.
70. Ibid., 227.
71. Baccar, *Junūn*, 25.
بكار: "واحد بجنب الاخر/
بين زوز ميكروبات".
72. Ibid., 60.
نون: "الفرخ اللّي تضم له فمه
كيف يكبر يطلع يخاف
ما عندوش ثقة في روحه".
73. Ibid., 27.
نون: "يلزمني نقتل/
نذبح/ نزرّر و نستفعل/ باش نتقرهد".
74. Ibid., 126.
هي: "قالولها غلطة مهنيّة".
75. Gerald Prince defines the term "focalizer" as the "subject of FOCALIZATION; the holder of point of view; the focal point governing the focalization." Prince also specifies that according to Genette, the type of focalization in the above citation is external because the voice tells action as opposed to a voice that perceives (*Dictionary of Narratology* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987], 31–32).
76. Baccar, *Junūn*, 30.
هي: "نون/ ٢٥ سنة/ بطّال/ هرب من المكتب عمره اثناش/ دخل للإصلاحية قبل الخمسطاش/ للحبس مع السبعطاش/ للجيش في الثمنطاش/ وللرازي ما فاتش الأربعة وعشرين".
77. Ibid., 46.
واو: "واو تخيره في الدّار".
78. Transference: "Freud's original description of transference as a repetition in the relationship to the analyst of earlier relationship has been modified considerably . . . transference may be positive, as when the patient unrealistically overvalues or loves the analyst; or it may be negative, as when the patient dislikes or hates the analyst without due cause in reality ("Transference," *DSM-IV*). It is clear that Zemni draws on Jacques Lacan's understanding of transference as "a constructive act" ("un fait constitutif") (Zemni,

Chronique d'un discours schizophrène, 155). Lacan perceives that in the manipulation of transference there is as an act of creation—"The desire of the other" ("le désir de l'autre") (ibid., 156) ("Transference," *DSM-IV*).

79. Baccar, *Junūn*, 132.

هي: "قول لي منين تكلم في/ نجى نهزك للسيطار."

80. Italics are mine.

81. Asma Drissi, "Junun, de Fadhel Jaibi, a Hammamet: Contre le silence, contre l'oubli . . ." [*Junūn* by Fadhel Jaibi in Hammamet: Against silence, against forgetfulness . . .], *La Presse de Tunisie*, 2 August 2001, 10.

82. Asma Drissi argues: "Quant aux deux scènes qui se déroulent au sein de la famille, celle des "chaises" et celle des "assiettes," qui ont suscité beaucoup de questions chez le public, tells ne peuvent point être fortuites, dans la mesure où elles traduisent l'ambiance dans laquelle vit ce schizophrène, un univers bruyant, des dialogues de sourds, absence d'amour" (ibid.).

83. Lotfi al-Arbi Sannussi, "Junūn fī Carthage: al-Jaībi Yatakhalā 'an Iḥdā Ahamm al-'Alāmāt al-latī I'tabarahā an-Naqd Mu'ssissan wa Marja'yīya Ma'zaq al-Fadā . . . Ma'zaq al-'Arḍ, or Ma'zaq an-Naqd?!" [*Junūn* in Carthage theater: Jaībi betrays one of the most important markings that criticism considered as a pillar and source; space, performance, or criticism predicaments?!"] *as-Sahāfa*, 22 July 2001. In his newspaper article, Lotfi Arbi Sannusi clarifies how critics such as Abd-al-Halim Massaoudi approach the stage curtain technique in terms of a game of "lifting and closing" ("لعبة الصعود و النزول") to symbolically access Nūn's inner state (ibid., 8).

84. Lotfi al-Arbi Sannussi, "Junūn fī Carthage: al-Jaībi Yatakhalā 'an Iḥdā Ahamm al-'Alāmāt al-latī I'tabarahā an-Naqd Mu'ssissan wa Marja'yīya Ma'zaq al-Fadā . . . Ma'zaq al-'Arḍ, or Ma'zaq an-Naqd?!" [*Junūn* in Carthage theater: Jaībi betrays one of the most important markings that criticism considered as a pillar and source; space, performance, or criticism predicaments?!]. *Al-Sahāfa*, 22 July 2001, 8.

85. Abd- al-Halim Massouadi interprets the use of screens that face each other and come behind the stage curtain in the form of abstract paintings. He argues, " لعبت الستائر دورا رئيسيا من خلال جدلية صعودها و نزولها في التوغل داخل عالم الحكاية لكن دورها الهام هو بيان الكثافة الذهنية لعالم نون الرهيب" ("Mulāmasat al-Fuṣam al-Jamā' abra ash-Shi'ryya al-ālya wa at-takashuf at-Ta' bīrī" [Examination of collective schizophrenia through a highly poetic and abstinent style], *As-Sahafa*, February 2001, 4).

86. Kamel ash-Chikaoui ("Mukāshafa Ḥada li-*Junūn* Yawmī" [Witty unveiling of daily madness], *as-Sahafa*, 4 February 2001) explains, "رفع الستارة تلوى الستارة، تقنية للكشف عن الخلفيات العائلية والاجتماعية التي أنتجت حالة "نون." (7).

87. Brinda J. Mehta, *Dissident Writings of Arab Women: Voices Against Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 196.

88. Mehta, *Dissident Writings of Arab Women*, 195.

89. "أجساد رهينة."

Chapter 4: Staging Political and Cultural Repression:

Khamsūn and *Les Amoureux du Café Désert* in Retrospect

Here I shift from examination of a metaphorical portrayal of political oppression to a more direct political critique in order to show how has Familia Theater evolved. I will explore how Jalila Baccar's *Khamsūn* (literally "Fifty," and later titled "Captive bodies," or "Bodies hostages," 2006), dramatizes the multiple political views that were the target of the repressive political system in Tunisia from 1956 to 2006. During those decades, the government sought to eradicate all forms of Islamism. *Khamsūn* may be read as an effort to establish a broader discussion in contrast to the single-mindedness of the state. This broader discussion is brought about through the playwright's staging of political Leftism,¹ as well as Islamic fundamentalism,² pan-Islamism, and Sufism (Mystical Islam). While the issue of Islamic terrorism is central to the events of *Khamsūn*, *Les amoureux du café désert* (Lovers of the deserted café, and originally *'Ushaq al-Maqhā al-Mahjūr*, 1995) written and directed by Jaïbi explores this global dilemma in a North African context only tangentially. Both plays are interconnected in the sense that *Les amoureux du café désert* aims at warning the audience that Islamic terrorism in Tunisia could be imminent, as it had already taken place in Algeria. This chapter will explore, however, how *Khamsūn* delves into the complexity of the ideological situation in Tunisia to show that Islamic terrorism is a critical issue that endangers the nation's security from within. Chapter Four will also disentangle the ways in which terrorism is presented in *Khamsūn* from the manner in which it is heard of and treated by the state in Tunisian society.

In this chapter, I will first delineate how *Khamsūn* presents the single-mindedness of the state. I focus on the ways in which the playwright counters this single-mindedness by infusing fiction with historical events. First, I will provide a context about the political history

of Tunisia. While I am going to tell a story about the complex relationship between the different ideologies of Tunisian political history, my goal is to show how *Khamsūn* visualizes repressed diverse political views through theatricality. This play engages political history by portraying important political moments through the use of costumes, colors, veiling and unveiling, lighting and stagecraft, and a chain of punishments, including torture. I focus on veiling and unveiling to show how the playwright strips this visual act of its political aspect, making an aesthetic argument. This involves breaking the fourth wall and using *gestus*. Occasionally, I refer to narration, another Brechtian technique that is widely used in Baccar's plays in order to have a similar effect; that is to break the fourth wall between audience and actors. Second, I will outline the mosaic-like approach to language used by Baccar as a stylistic form of resistance, which consists of multiple language forms by mixing standard Arabic, Tunisian dialect, and French. Baccar's predominant use of the Tunisian dialect in her writing serves multiple purposes. It is not only a device of familiar expression but also a tool to represent daily life and to challenge the government's dictum that theater should be presented in standard Arabic.

Similar to *Les amoureux du café désert*, the play *Khamsūn* is grounded in a real context. It is set on the eve of the 2006 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).³ *Khamsūn* tells of the events occurring after Juda, a secondary school teacher suspected of being an Islamic terrorist, dies in a suicide bombing on Friday, November 11, 2005, next to the Tunisian flag.⁴ In one of the early scenes *al-Muaṭṭinīn* (The Citizens),⁵ the narrator's voice, which speaks for any Tunisian citizen, mentions that this date corresponds to the historical preparations that were undertaken by the Tunisian authorities, institutions, and civil society to host the World Summit.⁶ The historical event aimed at bridging the global digital divide between rich and poor countries.⁷ Issues on the agenda included not only expanding access to the Internet in the developing world, but also encouraging freedom of speech and of

the press. Unlike the World Summit event, the act of suicide in the play is a creation by the playwright and is constructed in a way that sends tremors through the entire country, casting doubt on whether Tunisia deserves to have hosted the Summit the year before. The fictional terrorist attack can be understood as a reaction of Tunisian youths to the repressive Tunisian political regime that appears to care only for promoting a favorable image of the country to the larger world.

Contradiction in the play illustrates how portraying Tunisia as a country that allows free speech cannot redeem the image of governmental institutions that repress that very same ideal. Despite the Summit's goal to promote free speech, *Khamsūn* was banned by the Tunisian government for eight months under the pretext that the play was dramatizing Islamic terrorism. Yet a major reason for censoring the work was its outspoken tone, especially with regard to the ways in which Tunisian citizens were mistreated by police. The playwright takes risks by critiquing the political regime in Tunisia, particularly when she reacts to the way in which the previous governments handled two issues: opposition parties and Islamic terrorism. Extremist Islamist thought gained popularity not only before but also after the Tunisian Revolution. An examination of both *Les amoureux* and *Khamsūn* reveals both plays correctly forecast the post-2011 events in Tunisia, especially with respect to the rise of extreme Salafism. Indeed, after the Revolution (2011), among other trends of Salafism, a violent Salafist discourse emerged in line with the ascendance of many new political parties that had not been allowed to be active during the previous sixty years of Tunisian one-party state history.⁸

Khamsūn's first act comprises nine scenes, which outline the interrogation of suspects in Juda's death. Following the death of Juda, the police department interrogates her family, friends, and acquaintances. Juda's former roommates, Amal and Hanen; her pupil, Ahmed; and fiancé, Jamil, a butcher; are all suspected of being accomplices in Juda's suicide attack.

This first act centers on police suspicions that all of Juda's acquaintances are Islamic fundamentalists, and therefore carrying the germ of terrorism. As family and friends of the suspect are interrogated, the police invite Amal's mother, Maryam (voiced by the playwright), to interrogate Maryam. The police do not allow Maryam to see her daughter, but the older woman has a conversation with the Officer Laith. The police want to know if she can help them with any information regarding her daughter. The authorities also want to know why and how someone like Juda could commit a suicide bombing after praying at school next to the Tunisian flag. By informing Maryam that Juda seemed to have chosen to die after praying, the police investigate a connection between Juda's political and extremist religious affiliation.

Despite the police concern with restoring order in the country through immediate discipline and punishment, Maryam reminds the police that throughout the past fifty years, the Tunisian political regime had excluded and repressed not only Islamists, but also any dissident political party or movement. As a reaction to the single-mindedness of the police state, the character Maryam recounts the stories of her father, brother, daughter, and husband (Youssef), to show how each of these characters have been punished in some way by the state.

The second act is comprised of eleven scenes and functions as a flashback in an attempt to find the origins of Amal's ideological shift. Before travelling to France, Amal is expelled from all Tunisian universities for participating in the student protests that followed the historic visit of Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā (also known as the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem in September 2000. In the context of the play, the playwright weaves the individual story of Amal with a national fabricated story—the real event of Sharon's visit—in order to shift the focus from nationalistic Tunisian to pan-Arab concerns. The playwright notes that Amal's journey to France was triggered by governmental

oppression. The Tunisian state had not only banned student protest, but had also arrested many students—among them Amal, who was arrested and convicted of expressing her objection to Zionism and Imperialism.⁹

The impact of these events leads to Amal's depression, after which her parents send her to Paris to pursue her studies. Although Amal is accepted into the French education system, she senses that her Muslim Arab identity prevent her from truly integrating into French society. The resulting alienation moves her to socialize with Khadija, a French Muslim citizen of Algerian descent. Khadija takes her to a conference on Islam that transforms her life from secular to religious. This change leads Amal to become a Sufi Muslim. In the meantime, Khadija has also introduced Amal to a medical doctor, François le Petit, whose Muslim convert name is Saif. Amal and Saif become engaged, but Saif disappears several months before Amal returns to Tunisia. As soon as she lands in Tunisia, Amal is contacted at the airport and once again arrested, interrogated, and detained for one week due to information received by the Tunisian police from the French authorities. The information concerns her attending events and conferences on Islam in 2003-04, and her relationships with François le Petit and Khadija, both of whom are suspected by France of being Islamic terrorists. In the end, the character Amal is set free because there is not enough proof to establish that her past relationships necessarily mean she is a terrorist.

However, Amal's life becomes more complicated upon her return as her father refuses to see her veiled. After her left-winger father disowns her, Amal attempts to socialize with young ladies in the mosque. She meets Hanen and Juda, who accept her as a roommate. The three are teachers at a secondary school. They are veiled, but each has a different approach to Islam. While Amal is Sufi, Hanen dreams of Tunisia as an Islamic republic, and Juda wants to revive Islam but ends up blowing herself up at her school.

In addition to the life journey of Amal, the interactions between Maryam and Gaddour, (the torturer) are the core of the second act. During Amal's detainment, Maryam and her supportive lawyer-friend Mrs. Boublil meet at a bar. While Maryam converses with her friend about Amal's ideological changes, and the conflicts between left-wingers and Islamists that have taken place in Tunisia, the drunken Gaddour enters the bar singing nonsensical and yet amusing poetry in classical Arabic. After they leave the bar, Maryam decides to follow Gaddour and it occurs to her that this is her chance to hit him with her car while he is walking. However, the man slips into a street and falls before Maryam can drive over him. The next day, Maryam goes to the same bar to meet with Gaddour. To settle accounts with the man, she reminds him of the severe physical and psychological pain he had inflicted on members of her family, including her father, brother, husband, and daughter. She focuses on the torture inflicted on Youssef, her husband. However, Gaddour dismisses her reproaches. Later, Youssef himself reminds Gaddour about the manner in which he tortured him. Youssef kept a diary with his personal accounts of the torture, since he was no longer able to speak due to having developed throat cancer. Now that he is retired, Gaddour tells Maryam and her husband bluntly that if he were to perform the job of torturer again, he would attempt to find more efficient ways of causing extreme pain than what he did against the left-wingers during the seventies and the Islamists during the 1980-90s. For him, the only way to preserve peace in the country is to control all opponents of the government in every way possible, including torture.

The third act of *Khamsūn* immerses the reader/viewer one more time in the interrogation of the main characters about Juda's suicide. The lawyer assures Amal that she will be fine because the police have not found anything related to terrorism in her belongings except for some journals she has written on Sufism. At the end of act 3, Amal takes off the veil when she realizes how little knowledge she has gained. During her confession of her

“smallness” Amal compares herself to an atom. This is related to her continued spiritual growth, on which I will elaborate later.

The final questioning of characters shows that Amal is not guilty of any act of terrorism. She also considers the separation between religion and state important. Ahmed and some of his acquaintances are convicted of Islamic terrorism as they used the garage of Jamil, Juda’s fiancée, without Jamil’s knowledge, to train youths for committing terrorist acts. Jamil appears innocent of any accusations and is completely devastated over losing Juda. Hanen’s future remains vague at the end of the play, but the police believe she is accountable for accepting Juda as a roommate and for offering her kitchen to Ahmed for making explosives. This character expresses her dreams of participating in transparent elections, living in Tunisia under an Islamic republic, and being part of an Islamic nation/community. The final scene in the play is marked by the death of Amal’s father, Youssef.

Terrorism in the Play versus Terrorism in Tunisian Reality

Baccar dramatizes the complexity of Tunisian reality by weaving together factual political occurrences and fiction. Through the incident of the suicide bombing in the play, the playwright reflects on how the Tunisian state deals with the issue of terrorism in reality. Although Baccar seems to acknowledge that radical Islamism can be a real danger, she attempts to show that the government’s way of responding to that potential threat by persecuting all Islamists is ineffective for two reasons. First, by assuming that all groups are threats, the government targets and tortures many innocents. The playwright points to historical facts such as the 2003 counterterrorism law to show how this law treats every branch of Islam as a potential source of terrorists. In contrast to the government’s perspective, the playwright attempts to demonstrate, mainly through the characters Juda, Ahmed, Amel,

and Hanen, that Islamists are not monolithic, but are a complex, heterogeneous collection of groups with varied identities. By representing diverse forms of Islam, the playwright argues that while fundamentalism can lead to terrorism, not all fundamentalists are necessarily terrorists. Baccar wants to show that the oppressive policies of the Tunisian regime may have contributed to creating terrorists by the blanket accusations against and oppression of all Islamists.

Through the protagonist's suicide bombing in the play, the playwright conveys how Islamic terrorism may thrive under a repressive police-state system where democracy is absent. While Juda's act reveals that the Tunisian government is right to be vigilant toward fundamentalists, it forces the audience to realize that this government developed a reputation for being tough on terrorists in order to gain a good reputation in the international arena. This standing, however, brings disadvantages to the people by creating an environment of political oppression for all citizens. By telling the story of Juda in such a way, Baccar proposes that the state uses terrorism as a bogeyman to frighten the populace in order to distract them from the government's own misdeeds and to control every person that challenges the official government. For Baccar, this concealed oppression may inspire terrorism.

Through *Khamsūn*, Baccar immerses the reader/viewer in Tunisian political history in order to create an understanding of how terrorism arises through the lens of real political occurrences. The playwright places *Khamsūn* in the context of terrorist Salafism. It is important to contextualize Salafism because Juda's suicide, Ahmed's attempted suicide, and the police's accusations against the other characters as being terrorists altogether speak directly to the Salafist discourse. With the interrogations of Hanen and Amal, Baccar cautiously depicts how the regime does not distinguish between pan-Islamism and Sufism and treats both ideologies as terrorist. In this respect, it is important to understand the real-life Tunisian government's fifty year policy of condemning every Tunisian citizen considered a

Salafist as a potential Islamic terrorist as well as anyone else who was thought to be connected to Islamists in even the slightest way.

An Overview of the Alterations of Salafism and the Impact of Salafist Attacks on Politics in Tunisia

The Tunisian government (1956-2006) did not show willingness to distinguish between one Islamic ideology and another. Neither did it make any distinction between possible nuances within the same ideology, such as Salafism. The government interpreted Salafism as a violent movement without acknowledging the differences between violent and peaceful Salafism, and between political and non-political Salafism. Mohamed Talbi,¹⁰ a Tunisian critic and historian of Islam, whose main field of research is the Qur'ān, argues: "The Salafist Islam is a totalitarian obscurantist of the worst kind, worse than all dictatorships. Think of the Taliban!"¹¹ Author Talbi considers Salafism to be a form of dictatorship based on following a set of strict rules, adhering to orthodox interpretations of Islamic laws that are erroneously taken to be sacred. The Salafists described by Talbi are at war with those who do not subscribe to their own interpretation of Islam. Talbi critiques the Salafists' overreliance on books of Hadith which were written by the companions of Prophet Mohamed two centuries after the Qur'ān. Due to this historical gap, for Talbi, only the Qur'ān should be used as a guide for Muslims.

In line with Talbi's standpoint, Jihadi Salafists, based on their belief in Jihadism, sacrifice themselves in the name of religious devotion in order to gain victory against their enemies. Their Jihadism for the cause of Islam as they understand it represents martyrdom. The Jihadi Salafist ideology maintains that it is mainly those who are Muslims and yet deviate from Islam as defined by radical Salafism, who are subject to punishment, including death. The Jihadi Salafist discourse also attacks non-Muslims.¹²

It is worth noting, however, that Salafism does not necessarily mean Taliban. Talbi's reading of Salafism as a form of dictatorship is reductionist. Unlike Talbi, the journalist Slaheddine Jurshi argues that not all Salafists are violent, or even political. He bases his conclusion on the detentions of people suspected of being Salafists in recent years. Jurshi further explains that most Tunisian Salafists are not violent, or even politically engaged. Unlike the Tunisian police state system that did not draw lines between intellectual and scientific Salafism and the Jihadi Salafism,¹³ Jurshi argues that Salafism in Tunisia is more a religious and social phenomenon than a political one. This is to say that for the majority of the Salafists in Tunisia, Salafism is a matter of identity rather than a political issue.

However, despite the controversy about Salafism raised by Talbi and Jurshi, there is much historical evidence that gives credence to the view of Salafists as a threat to religious plurality. The 2002 and 2006 real-life events show that Tunisia was indeed the site of terrorist attacks. Below are examples of terrorist Salafist attacks that occurred in Tunisia during the last decade.

The 2002 Jerba bombing occurred when a truck exploded close to a synagogue in Jerba, Al-Ghariba, killing sixteen people—four Tunisians and twelve tourists from Germany and France. Nizar Nawar, a Tunisian citizen, was convicted of the attack. In addition to this Salafist attack against the Jewish community in Tunisia, author Jurshi, in his investigation of the history of Salafism, explains how violent Salafist attacks in Tunisia also took place in 2006 when a clash between an armed Salafist group and the police force in Selimane (a town situated thirty km from Tunis), resulted in the killing of thirteen leaders from the Salafist group and the detention of the rest. In return, the government reacted by subjecting around 2,000 Salafists to political oppression of all forms, including silencing and detaining some and torturing others.

The aforementioned terrorist attacks show that the formation of Islamic terrorist networks in Tunisia is a real threat, but one needs to note that the regime of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011) did not make efforts to distinguish between real threats and youthful fascination. There were a number of young men whose alienation from the Tunisian political sphere made them vulnerable to the charisma of figures like Oussama Ben Laden. Laurence Davidson, a leading expert on Middle Eastern history, clarifies this point:

[W]ith hundreds of millions of pious Muslims in the World, not all of them are militant Islamic fundamentalists. Nor are all Muslims of one mind when it comes to politics and political activism. Nonetheless, the grassroots organizing work of the Islamic political movements has captured the imagination of a growing number of the pious and the alienated.¹⁴

Davidson's view contextualizes Islamic Fundamentalism, as he calls it, by referring to occurrences in Iran. In a local context, the political analyst Michael Ayari, a doctor of Political Science, notes that Tunisian youths' fascination with Ben Laden has been compared to the allure of the Marxist leader Ernesto Ché Gevara. In the words of Ayari, Salafism evolved when "the New generation of young Islamists, who did not know Nahda [the present ruling Islamist party in Tunisia] well became fascinated by imagining Chechen, Iraqi, or Afghan resistance."¹⁵ This is to say that by repressing all types of Islamism the government contributed to turning some Tunisian youth toward terrorism.

Before the aforementioned attacks and due to the spread of global terrorism around the world during the 1980s-90s (bombing of US embassies in Beirut and Kuwait, the terrorist attack in Iran, and a series of plane hijackings, to note a few examples), and especially after 9/11, the Tunisian government took measures to block the infiltration of terrorism into the country. Tunisian authorities banned gatherings for religious purposes both in public places and homes, prevented women from wearing veils,¹⁶ men from growing beards, and praying in mosques. The Tunisian police also investigated every person who downloaded any religious program from the Internet. Every Salafist was viewed as a political Muslim and thus every

Salafist was thought to represent danger to the official regime. In order to eradicate all forms of Salafism, especially after the terrorist events of 2002 and 2006, the government instituted laws against Salafists.

The 2003 counterterrorism law passed by the Tunisian government stated whosoever had a relationship, close or distant, with a terrorist organization or a group thought to commit terrorist attacks, would be prosecuted. The same went for anyone who refused to provide testimony with regard to terrorist crimes. The punishment for such crimes was one to five years of imprisonment and a fine. The 2003 Counterterrorism law accused people who employed any word or symbol that was connected in any way to terrorism. This law subjected people to possible detainment and punishment even if they had no intention of committing a terrorist act.¹⁷ By passing this law, the government persecuted even lawyers trying to counsel citizens accused of terrorism. In this way, the government curtailed people's freedom to hire lawyers to defend themselves or their relatives when persecuted by the police. When the misdeeds of the government became protected by law, the official regime did not hesitate to take inhumane measures, including humiliation and torture—which became more common after the 2003 law was imposed.

The aforementioned background is useful to understand *Khamsūn* in the sense that the terrorist act in which Juda takes part is not true to fact, but the police interrogations of the suspects mirror actual practices in Tunisia in accordance with the 2003 law, which is also mentioned in the play. In the play the dramatic event is also placed in the larger historical context.

The Representation of Terrorism in *Khamsūn*

During the second interrogation of Hanen, Policeman 1 wants her to articulate her

attitude towards Tunisian politics. However, his question seems bogus as he does not wait for Hanen to respond before accusing her of belonging to one of a list of possible groups “the Nahda party—an Islamist Tunisian opposition party during the previous government—, ..., the Salafists, and the Muslim Brotherhood.”¹⁸ Then, Policeman 2 continues harassing the character Hanen: “perhaps [you belong] to Hezbollah.”¹⁹ By bringing all these parties and organizations under the same umbrella, both policemen hint at the roots of terrorism cloaked in Islamic extremism. The policeman accuses Hanen of Islamic terrorism based on her confession that she wants Tunisia to be an Islamic Republic.

Amal, too, is accused of being an Islamic terrorist during her second interrogation. The policeman Laith explicitly accuses her of belonging to “the Islamic gangs that are cloaked by the religious discourse/These gangs want to brain wash people and rob their freedom/ They politicize religion/ They poison religion/ These people reduce religion to a backward Salafist discourse.”²⁰ Laith’s accusation of Amal shows how the authorities accuse people of Salafism, interpreting this ideology as a political discourse that is degenerate and ultimately destructive. The policeman’s accusation also conveys how Tunisian authorities respond to terrorism by fiercely opposing Salafism, and by citing various Islamic Movements Nahdha (Tunisia), Hezbollah (Lebanon) and the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt)²¹ regardless of their differences and the contexts in which each movement arose. For the Tunisian regime, all of these movements are equivalently terroristic. Bringing in these international examples shows again how the playwright uses the story of *Khamsūn* to make a point about the ways in which Tunisian authorities confine their definition of all Salafism to Jihadi Salafism.

In addition to global Salafism, Baccar’s use of historical dates also bears significance in *Khamsūn*. Based on the dates, the individual stories of Juda, Amal, Ahmed, and Hanen have specific political implications. In act 1, scene 7, the policeman Laith reminds Amal about the 2003 law on terrorism. He outlines the principles of this law as a way of threatening

Amal after she informs him that she has no relationship with anybody involved in terrorism. Based on the provision which allows the sentencing of individuals simply deemed supportive—a very broadly defined concept—of terrorism, Laith seems confident he is free to interrogate, humiliate, beat, and torture the suspects as he is fully covered by provisions of the 2003 law.

The second instance in which the law is mentioned is when the narrator provides the context for a notice summoning Amal's mother to the police in order to report anything she knows in regard to her daughter's situation (act 1, scene 9). Before meeting with Laith, however, Maryam consults her friend Mrs. Boubilil, a lawyer, about the ramifications of Amal being accused of Islamic terrorism. The prologue of the scene specifies that the lawyer has already informed her friend and client that she has to wait because she cannot do anything to defend her daughter as long as the case has to do with terrorism. In the third person, the narrator states that Mrs. Boubilil hands a copy of the 2003 law to Maryam. This interlude shows how the law prevents terrorism suspects from receiving a fair trial as they cannot defend themselves and how even relatives and friends cannot help them due to the law's terms. The lawyer's actions and advice also reveal how the law has taken away the right of confidentiality between attorney and client. By describing the detailed provisions of the 2003 law, Baccar complicates the question of terrorism, inviting her audience to consider the question "who is a threat to whom?" This is to say: "Is the government truly waging a war on terror, or is it merely creating an opportunity to deprive all citizens of basic civil liberties?" By inviting the audience to think about such issues, Baccar suggests that the actions of the Tunisian regime may have contributed to the rise of terrorism.

Khamsūn: Islamic Fundamentalism is Multi-faceted

The playwright not only bases her critique on historical fact, but constructs her characters in a way that allows her to challenge the reductionist Tunisian governmental view on the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. By creating several characters—including Juda, Ahmed, Amal and Hanen—each with a different approach to Islam, the playwright offers diverse interpretations of Islamic affiliations. Although little is said about Juda and her former pupil Ahmed, the audience may think the police are right to consider them terrorists because Juda seems to have blown herself up for religious reasons, and Ahmed confesses to collaborating with her, thus leading to his conviction. Based on Amal's interrogation, Juda's relationship with Ahmed is fortuitous. Amal also reports that Juda is disappointed with the current weak political and economic conditions of Arabs and Muslims. From Hanen's perspective Juda is also unhappy with the education system in her country. For Juda and Ahmed, terrorism becomes an instrument by which they express their objection to the decline and defeat of the Muslim world and to the hostile Tunisian regime. Both characters resemble each other as they are both motivated by their history of defeat.

Ahmed's conviction is based on his collaborating with Juda, a chemistry teacher, to make explosives. At the end of the play, the character Ahmed is found guilty of training his neighbors in Jamil's garage to become terrorists. Ahmed himself confesses that he had attempted to commit a suicide bombing before Juda. During his interrogation, he states that Juda's deed thwarted his plan. He also admits his hatred of unjust politicians worldwide. Ahmed's attitudes are very much grounded in his faith in Jihadi Salafism.

At the same time, the audience may consider both Juda and Ahmed's behavior as a reaction to a repressive regime. The portrayal of Ahmed is fascinating because Baccar shifts back and forth between fiction and reality by employing indexical units that can be combined with certain events that are consistent with historical events in Tunisia. For example, the playwright makes Ahmed's birthdate November 15, 1987. This choice suggests a link

between when Ben Ali's government came to power and the rise in terrorism, suggesting government policies fostered discontent and extremism among the members of Ahmed's generation. In other words, by using that year, the playwright goes beyond generic condemnation of terrorism to force the reader/audience to explore how the regime pushed the nineteen-year-old Ahmed to fanatical religious discourse as a form of resistance against the repressive and incompetent Tunisian government. Ahmed's portrayal suggests Islamic terrorism can be motivated not only by religion, but also by political and economic decay. As an ordinary, oppressed citizen, Ahmed sees embracing Jihadi Salafism as a response and tool to combat this repression and decay.

With the characterizations of Ahmed and Juda, the play specifically describes how an extreme version of Salafism can be appealing to youths acting out of vengeful hatred. When such hatred is fed by the state's reductionist treatment of Islamists, it may produce youths who can be inspired by heroic "rebel" figures who brainwash them into blowing themselves up for an imagined higher purpose. The characters Juda and Ahmed exemplify how radical Salafists operate similarly to the previous Tunisian government as an authority that imposes its will (political agenda) on the country's political scene for as long as possible and by any means—including the imposition of unjust, civil liberty-depriving laws or rules which deprive citizens of their freedoms.

The accounts of the other main characters, Hanen and Amal, are different: each represents conflicting ideological forces in Tunisian society. Hanen is twenty-three years old and describes herself as "an ordinary Muslim citizen, who dreams of a united Muslim nation."²² In Hanen's understanding, only an Islamic state would be beneficial to Tunisians. She expresses her wish to have the official regime replaced by a political system founded on Islamic values that unites all Muslims. During her interrogation, Hanen's expression of hope for an Islamic republic causes the police to conclude that her Islam is political. As another

thought-provoking tool, the playwright has Hanen appear to use veiling as a form of resistance against the secular Tunisian political regime.

Hanen's ideological path, however, differs from Amal's, whose approach to Islam is less straightforward. The playwright depicts Amal's ideological journey in terms of oscillation between Sufism and Islamic fundamentalism based on her past and present experiences. Amal is twenty-five years old. Upon returning to Tunisia in 2004, she is arrested because she had once been the girlfriend of François le Petit, a doctor and Muslim convert subsequently accused of terrorism by the French security department. In addition, Amal was detained for wearing the veil and for attending many meetings and conferences deemed by French authorities to be linked to Islamic extremism. The Tunisian police did not find Amal guilty of any crime. However, when she goes to visit her family, her father Youssef rejects her because of her ideological shift from the Leftism she adhered to before she traveled to France to the Sufism she embraced while in Paris. After being barred from the family home—literally pushed by her mute father from his room, Amal starts to spend all her time in public places. She eventually meets Juda and Hanen who accept her as their roommate. The police accuse Amal of participating in Juda's suicide, or at least covering up the incident based on the ideological transformation she underwent while in France. In other words, the police connect their previous and newfound suspicions of allowing them to detain her once again.

The Discourse of the Veil

The way in which Baccar constructs the character of Amal as she changes her position on veiling throughout the play emphasizes the complexity of this issue which is frequently over-simplified by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Veiling is merely one aspect of certain interpretations of Islam. The wearing of the veil—what is and is not dictated by scripture, and

how it may be academically interpreted in lines of the Qur ʾān—is as complex as the Amal character, herself. Here I argue that the discourse of the veil pertains to a larger discussion. This approach again runs counter to the Tunisian authorities’ placing of all branches and practices of Islam in the same basket. *Khamsūn*’s act 2 is a flashback showing what caused the Tunisian authorities to interrogate Amal as soon as they learned of Juda’s suicide bombing. During her stay in France between 2001 and 2004, among the secular circles of Paris, Amal decided to abandon her parents’ leftist values and to adopt the veil and Sufism. As she puts it, through the lens of the other (French society) she has opened her own eyes to her Muslim identity and returned to her cultural roots.²³ In the same act, Amal sends an e-mail to her parents informing them of the spiritual path she has embraced and how she has placed Islamic Sufism at the center of her life: “Mom, Dad, I am a devotee and every drop of my blood turns to worship the One.”²⁴ By following the Sufi path, Amal set herself apart from others: both of French society and of her own family.

By using the flashback technique through narration, the playwright revisits the character’s journey: Amal has been accepted to study in a French university. Previously, she was targeted by the Tunisian police who labeled her a potential terrorist and prevented her from pursuing a college education in Tunisia. This was due to her having expressed her political ideas in the context of a protest led by college students condemning Israeli leader Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Aqsa Mosque in 2000.²⁵ The significance of the accusation against Amal can be understood through a study of the dates and names. In act 2, scene 2, when the police ask Amal for her date of birth and address, the suspect replies: “08-18-1981/ 9 Shah Avenue.”²⁶ The information gathered by the police invites the audience to link fiction to reality by unpacking the scene’s symbols as these numbers call to mind the August 1981 terrorist attack in Iran where both the Iranian Prime Minister Mohamed Javad Bahonar and President Mohamed Ali Rajai were killed.²⁷ Especially, the term “Shah” as the name of the

avenue where Amal lives makes the terrorism connection more explicit.

Amal's ideological shift raises important questions about the reaction of Muslim youth in their home country and abroad to the resurgence of Islam, especially after 9/11. In act 2, scene 1, Maryam mentions that two months before 9/11, Amal met with Khadija, a French Muslim of Algerian descent, who introduced her to volunteer associations to help the poor and marginalized in France. Until her engagement to the convert François, Amal had been on the left. After Khadija introduced Amal to François, she asked to attend a conference led by a Muslim *Sheikh* (guide), an experience that transforms Amal's life. This conference makes her realize that her left wing ideology has failed to answer her spiritual questions and thus she is moved to become a Sufi.

By embracing Sufism, Amal adheres to a new Islamic style of life that does not seem to have a political element. This apolitical aspect of Amal is incompatible with the views of the Tunisian police who wish to treat her as someone drawn to extremist political Islam. In act 1, scene 8, when the policeman interrogates Amal's mother Maryam, he points out her daughter's suspicious relationships with Juda, Khadija, and François. Maryam, however, defends her daughter by explaining that Amal is a Sufi and against violence. Maryam's statement with regard to Amal's adherence to pacifism resonates with the previous scene ("Amal's Second Interrogation") in which this character tells the police that had she known Juda would commit suicide, she would have prevented her from doing so by reciting supplications. Amal's form of spirituality disconnects her from any type of extremism. Her recitation of the Qur'ānic verse, "[I]n the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest."²⁸ provides evidence of her intimate immersion in remembrance, a common practice that pertains to the Sufi tradition which aims to find inward peace.

The manner in which the playwright musters testimony from other characters helps to make clear that Amal has been erroneously accused of terrorism. Upon being interrogated,

Hanen informs the police that Amal believes in the separation of religion and state.²⁹ Hanen's confession illustrates that Amal favors a secular state, which makes it implausible that the Islam she embraces is political. Hanen's testimony makes clear that being an Islamic fundamentalist or a terrorist is inconsistent with Amal's belief system. Baccar's depiction of Amal's complicated journey helps the audience to demonstrate how the police consider Sufism as automatically linked to terrorism.

Here I also propose that Baccar removes the political aspect of veiling and unveiling the body in order to make an aesthetic argument, forcing the audience to think. The play mirrors how the character underwent a crucial change. In the final scene, as the stage direction indicates, Amal takes off her veil. Facing the audience, Amal explains her reverting to a previous state:

I did not know anything/ I read and learnt/ I thought I knew/ I talked and talked nonsense/ But I discovered/ I was ignorant of what I thought I learned/ I kept silent/ I kept silent and felt pain/ I kept silent and meditated/ I kept silent and enjoyed/ I enjoyed and had a revelation/ I thought I was a pearl/ I found that I am an atom/ I delivered the atom to the entire universe bearer.³⁰

Amal's decision to take off the veil occurs in this final stage and reveals how she has ended up doubting her religious path. Removing the veil suggests a negative attitude that tells the audience about Amal's ideological transformation. Such a gesture with an attitude becomes a *gestus* in the Brechtian sense because even without words, the audience could tell that Amal changed. The term "atom" may be understood in light of how the character Amal conceives her presence as part of the cosmos. Her movement of whirling exemplifies her perception of herself in contrast with the universe. This is another example of using *gestus* to combine both movement and idea in the most economic way possible, using the fewest words.

Amal resists accusation by whirling. While Amal suffers atrocities from the police during her interrogation, the character also suffers from the suspicions of Ahmed and Hanen

who humiliate her by describing her mother as a heretic and therefore a threat to them, in act 2, scene 10. This judgment is based on the fact that Ahmed saw Maryam stepping out of a bar with former police agent Gaddour. Amal resists their accusations by performing the Sufi dance. For her, this is a way to transcend conflict. Amal's whirling dance invites the audience to think about how the character attempts to be outside the limits of her body. This Sufi practice may be interpreted as a denial of the body in search of a transcendental experience. Amal's portrayal also shows that the body resists containment. The whirling liberates it as it brings the focus to the inner reality rather than the outside world. Whirling may also be interpreted as a way to release tension. The joy that the audience can feel based on the beauty of Amal's dance is immediately interrupted and spoiled by Ahmed's jumping into the middle of the stage as if it were a trampoline. The juxtaposition of the two movements emphasizes how Amal's spiritual dance is parodied by the Salafist Ahmed. This scene conveys how not only costumes, but also body movements depict the conflicting concepts of different branches of Islam. This approach to representing these conflicts work against dramatic illusion. The juxtaposition of actions makes the director and playwright's production break away from only depicting reality. Their goal is to force the audience to consider the oddity of such a juxtaposition with a critical eye.

Throughout the play, Amal shows certainty about her path and by extension, certainty about her identity as a Sufi. However, her gesture at the end of the play illustrates that she realizes her individuality is very limited compared to the greater universe. The larger picture the playwright seems to highlight here invites the reader to consider that ultimately, all human beings are similar to vibrating atoms. Amal changes from one ideology to another, but at the end she understands that the origin of her creation is an atom.

Amal's discovery of who she is and that she is continuously evolving throughout the play, calls to mind a 2009 interview with Jaïbi, when the director mentioned an exercise he

uses when training actors in order to sensitize them to the way in which they are connected to the universe. Jaïbi bases the exercise on tracing the history of each individual actor from the present time to the “atom status,” which he calls “a moment of dizziness.”³¹ The reference to this moment fits with the director’s approach to the acting experience as an act of exploration. In a theater class he presented in Italy, Jaïbi explained to his trainees that the actor is a stranger to himself and through acting will come to know more about his individual experience.³²

At the same time, taking the veil off in the final scene echoes the director’s position with regard to wearing the veil. When in the 2009 interview, I asked Jaïbi why he directed *Khamsūn*, he reiterated his underlying intention more clearly by saying that he worked on *Khamsūn* with fifteen actors, in part because he did not want to see his daughter feeling obligated to wear the veil. Jaïbi maintained that he directed this play so that his daughter would never be swayed by the radical version of fundamentalism. The representation of Amal, however, does not correspond to the director’s worry about coercion because Amal is not obligated to wear the veil in France. Nor did she take it off at the end of the play by coercion. Both acts are based on her personal choice. Jaïbi’s response to veiling raises another complicated question with regard to who can cause another to either wear the veil or to take it off. At face value, *Khamsūn* uncovers the responsibility of extreme Salafists in contributing to terrorism. The play, however, also demonstrates how both the Tunisian police and family (Amal’s father, Youssef) can be as extreme and single-minded as the Salafists. The police and her family force Amal to remove the veil in an earlier scene. By doing so, the police characterize her dress code as a symbol of a potential terrorist. Her father Youssef disowns Amal and considers her veil a symbol of her rejection of his leftist values. Maryam, her mother, attempts to take Amal’s veil off fearing she will be punished by the police. At the same time, Maryam refers to her aunt’s veil as a rag, which shows that she too has a

marginalizing attitude toward the use of the Islamic headscarf. In her own way, Amal resists both the police and her parents, and finds in veiling and Sufism a way to assert herself until the end of her journey when she decides of her own volition to take off the veil—perhaps as a symbol of renouncing her Sufi path. The representation of Amal through veiling and unveiling casts doubt on the ideological agenda of veiling and grounds it in specific social, intellectual, and political contexts.

The topic under discussion deserves further examination because several instances in the play portray the veil as a form of oppression. The French title of *Khamsūn, Corps ôtages* (Bodies hostages), which will be discussed later, also suggests that the body becomes a hostage when veiled. In act 2, scene 4, the playwright uses the flashback technique in order to describe how Juda, Amal, and Hanen change the clothes they wear at home and put on their veils each time Ahmed visits them. The scene is intriguing in the sense that the narrator considers the three ladies' Islamic garments make their bodies devoid of femininity. The narrator portrays the characters' clothes in terms of a traditional long fabric which the past Tunisian generation used to swaddle a new born baby.³³ The analogue rests on the concept of covering the body in a way that conceals it and restricts its movements. In the opening of the scene, the narrator highlights that the veiling of the body is a symbol of oppression as can be inferred from the term “swaddled.”³⁴

By incorporating the social and political as well as the individual history of the veiled female characters in *Khamsūn*, these stories help to broaden the debate on veiling in contemporary Tunisia. The changes Amal goes through during the play can be tracked via her use of veiling. While being raised by a secular liberal family, she is unveiled. When she embraces Sufism in France, she also embraces wearing the veil. Finally, she chooses to unveil at the end of the play, when she realizes she has conceived too little knowledge about the world and herself to claim veiling is the right clothing or the expression to best identify

her inner self. Her veiling and unveiling also helps to explain the impact of veiling on the relationship between her parents and herself. Upon her return to Tunisia, Amal's Sufism both embarrassed her father and led to her being not only interrogated but also imprisoned by the Tunisian police. In *Khamsūn*, in addition to Amal, both Juda and Hanen are also veiled but are portrayed differently at various stages in the play. Together, these three characters help to express how tremendously diverse Muslim women and Islamic trends are. The question of whether characters in *Khamsūn* should be veiled or unveiled from the standpoints of family, police, and the particular female character, is complicated and requires the reader to enter a broad the discussion on Islamic veiling. Baccar's representation of Islamic clothing fits into a larger discussion launched by scholars both long before and long after her play appeared.

Similar questions regarding veiling, veil abolition, and new ways of interpreting Islam, belong to the larger context of nineteenth and twentieth century intellectuals and reformists who attempted to reconcile tradition and modernity. In his *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (The Liberation of woman, 1899), the Egyptian writer and lawyer Qassim Amin, advocated the abolition of the veil as a necessary step to foster social and cultural change. Advocating unveiling took place in a context marked by the decline of religious teachings and the rise of secular education, trends advocated by Muslim scholars who were educated in the West and thus influenced by French or British colonial education systems. Amin was one such French-educated Egyptian, and his book gave expression to British colonial discourse, emphasizing the backwardness of Muslim societies in an overgeneralizing and dehumanizing tone by pointing to the backwardness of people in the East wherever they were—though excluding the Turks to some extent.

In response to Amin's argument, critic Leila Ahmed pints out that “[t]he peculiar practices of Islam with respect to women had always formed part of the Western narrative of

the quintessential otherness and inferiority of Islam.”³⁵ The author explains that Amin expresses contempt for Muslims, particularly, to Muslim women. She also contextualizes how Amin’s description of women was in line with the Orientalist male-dominated discourse, which played a major role in shaping specific interpretations of Islam and of Muslim women to the extreme that some Greek priests proposed that these women had no souls. Misconceptions about Muslim women continued, and with “the colonial discourse of Islam” as Ahmed calls it, the same idea prevails. Muslim women, especially veiled ones, unlike Western women, were almost always oppressed in colonial narratives. Ahmed examines the writings of Amin to understand the reasons behind Amin’s contempt for women and she notes that his thoughts regarding women’s education were as conservative as any other patriarch in his society since he proposed that any level beyond primary school was not necessary. For Ahmed, his call for abandoning the veil does not reflect reasonable thinking that incorporates women’s emancipation and education into the dialogue. Instead, as Ahmed notes, Amin’s text shows how he blindly adhered to Western views on women, his argument reproducing the rhetoric of colonialism, which legitimized treating the colonized as inferior due to their religious practices. Moreover, for Ahmed, many of the details that Amin mentioned do not pertain to all Egyptian women of his time or to women from different social classes from his. Ahmed argues that veiling in Amin’s eyes became a reflection of the British view of the veil as an icon of Islamic oppression of women.

Ahmed uses Amin’s argument to criticize those who proposed that the status of non-Western women improved due to their abandoning the misogynist practices of the native culture and substituting customs of the European culture at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of early twentieth century. To counter Amin’s argument from within the same Egyptian intellectual sphere, Ahmed bases her argument on reformists, including Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) who maintained that Muslim women were not first granted freedom and

liberty by the Europeans. He believed that because Muslims did not follow the right path, their deeds caused the state of inequality between men and women. Abdu advocated a return to the essentials of Islam. To support Abdu's views, Ahmed discusses other changes that were taking place in Egypt at the time. She argues that there were economic (especially in agriculture), social, and intellectual transformations that affected the social status of women who belonged to the middle class, but in the long run that all classes benefited from these changes.

Ahmed's discussion of veiling triggers further questions that one needs to address: is Amal's unveiling, for example, contingent on Western discourse? If so, how? And if not, what other discourses are implied? Are there then any ideological or political implications to the choice made by Baccar and Jaïbi? The representation of the veil in Jaïbi and Baccar's theatrical productions is not as straightforward as the idea of veiling in Amin's work. However, the way in which Ahmed approaches veiling and the social status of Muslim women teaches us to contextualize the discourse of veiling in Tunisia as the debate on veiling unfolds in the play. I do not presume to provide any definitive answers to these questions because meticulous study reveals that *Khamsūn* defies any argument that could pigeonhole the playwright and the director in this respect. The representation of veiling does not suggest that veiled women are necessarily oppressed. Amal, for example, chooses to wear the veil and to unveil later. Her unveiling does not necessarily mean she is not a Muslim any more, or that she is less Muslim than she was. Her unveiling merely suggests an inward return to true Islam.

An understanding of the cultural and political transformations that occurred in Tunisian cultural and political history from Independence to the present time, may help to explain the on-going debate of the veil and on the role of women in society. President

Bourguiba, for instance, was secular and like Amin he was a French-educated lawyer. Both considered veiling as a sign of women's backwardness and both took subsequent unveiling as a symbol of attempting to catch up with modernity. Ousted Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011), was also against the use of Islamic clothing, but in contrast to his predecessors, his reasoning was that Islamists were too visible as an opponent. Attacking Muslim practices was a way to block opposition before the Islamists could get stronger and take over. Hence the veil discourse in Ben Ali's time was not associated with blocking modernity—as understood by Bourguiba. Rather, this discourse came to be strictly associated with political Islam that disturbed the Tunisian government.

In her 2000 *Veil and Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, Fatima Mernissi examines the subject from linguistic, historical, and religious perspectives. Mernissi argues that the earliest Qur'anic verse (53 of chapter 33) on veiling was revealed to Prophet Mohamed in “an epoch of doubts and military defeats that undermined the morale of the inhabitants of Medina.”³⁶ The verse, she explains, also fits in the context of teaching Muslims good manners as it was directed toward guests who were invited for the wedding of the Prophet of Islam with Zaynab, who did not leave on time. Because the Qur'an is a book revealed to Mohamed not only on faith but also on morals and daily matters, this verse was revealed to him, stating that a *hijab* (a curtain) should separate Mohamed from Anas Ibn Malik, one of the guests who stayed late. Mernissi, however, does not rely only on the literal meaning of the veil. She explains that the term *hijab* has three dimensions: visual, spatial, and spiritual, and so it can be considered as a form of protection or separation. The author also reminds the reader to be cautious about spokesmen from the different Islamic schools of thought and identifies the most conservative and rigid school as that of the Hanbali, which imposes many restrictions on women. Most importantly, Mernissi investigates the debate on the veil from the beginning of Islam, explaining that throughout the

centuries the original meaning changed, becoming a symbol of segregation between men and women. Mernissi also notes that the resurgence of the veil debate in the twentieth century demonstrates a context “when Muslims in search of identity put the accent on the confinement of women as a solution for a pressing crisis.”³⁷ She argues that in today’s context, the veil has to do with protecting women and the Muslim community, as symbolized by women’s bodies, from the West.

In addition to arguing that the veil discourse has been manipulated to the advantage of the patriarchal Muslim society, Mernissi also implies that veiling is a sign of a lack of emancipation, when imposed by Muslim men and Muslim societies. In this respect, too, Katherine Bullock, in *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veils: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes*, responded to Mernissi’s *Veil and Male Elite*, arguing that Mernissi reinforces the western views on veiling to show how males impose the veil on women to oppress them. While Bullock’s critique seems valid, the accusation she levels at Mernissi of treating women’s choice to cover their head with a scarf as un-liberal perhaps missed the point that Mernissi wanted to make, especially, in her *Veil and Male Elite*. The latter work does not argue that Muslim women should not have the freedom to wear the veil. Additionally, I do not agree with Bullock’s views on veiling in capitalist societies as an act of emancipation from the tyranny of imitating the ideal image of the appealing thin female. As a sociologist, Mernissi is rightly concerned with oppressed women who wear the veil since Muslim males around them and the Muslim community in which they live force them to do so. To Mernissi, this obligation emerged from a manipulation of the religious, social, historical, and linguistic contexts in which the veil was prescribed in the Qur’ān. While Bullock’s argument provides a positive view of the veil insofar as it saves women from enslaving themselves to the ideal of thinness, it remains unconvincing. If she meant to undermine the stereotype of the veiled woman as oppressed, then she needs to focus on these

women who wear the veil to show that the veil liberates them instead of shifting the argument to account for how misguided liberal women are who are concerned with beauty, thinness, and displaying their bodies. Displacing the problem does not help to solve it. Bullock's view of the veil becomes problematic because it does not advance the argument, or enrich the discussion. If Bullock focuses on thin unveiled women, a counter argument for that, I suppose can be made about overweight women who veil themselves in order to hide their body and maybe their hair and subsequently, feel better about themselves in terms of societally imposed ideals of how women should look. Also, not competing with the Western female sort of "ideal" woman is not necessarily a sign of female emancipation. It is best to leave these questions aside and address instead why Bullock and Mernissi diverge. As a sociologist, Mernissi focuses on veiling from a sociological perspective, regardless of her childhood memories as Bullock takes those, irresponsibly, from an ethical viewpoint for childhood trauma. On the other hand, Bullock examines the Qur'ānic vision to support her argument that Islam is not against women and that the veil is not intended to reinforce oppression.

Theater scholar Margaret Litvin saw Baccar's *Khamsūn* in the 2009 Arabesque festival in Washington D. C. Based on that and on Jaïbi's views regarding veiling, she commented on Bullock's critique of Mernissi regarding the veil and the effect of being pro-Western, citing Tunisian interviewer Jamel Arfaoui: "*Khamsoun* risks simply reinforcing European and American viewers' expectations about Islam, religious violence, and the veil."³⁸ Although, as the critic stated, Jaïbi claimed he produced the play so that his daughter would not be swayed by Islamism, or forced to wear the veil, this statement shows how plays by Baccar and Jaïbi may be misunderstood. It is no surprise to hear secular, French-educated theater director Jaïbi make such a statement. He is not reinforcing any views but his own. One has to be cautious about hasty assumptions given the multiplicity of ways of thinking in

Tunisia, which usually oscillate between conservatism and liberalism, depending on people's education, family background, and individual convictions.

In *Khamsūn*, the suicide of Juda and the accusations against the aforementioned characters serve to critique the Tunisian government for the role it played in attempting to eradicate Islamic fundamentalism while curtailing fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression, political affiliation, and religious practice. It is worth recalling that Baccar sheds lights on Tunisia's preparations to host the World Summit on the Information Society in November of 2005, during which time ironically *Khamsūn* was banned in Tunisia and had to premiere in France. (It was only later staged in Tunisia.) As the Tunisian government with its censorship machinery was able to allow and ban any theatrical production, the Ministry of Culture first banned *Khamsūn*, but Baccar and Jaïbi challenged the decision of the Censorship Committee. *Khamsūn* provides a particularly important and revealing example not only of the dynamics of censorship in Tunisia but also of the relationship between the Tunisian government and (Tunisian) artists, and the resistance displayed by Baccar and Jaïbi against the repressive Tunisian regime.

The Context of Censorship and Theatre in Tunisia: *Khamsūn* under Political Repression

Theatre in particular suffered from the repressive control of the Tunisian government. Historically speaking, the Ministry of Culture's main goal was to promote culture and art rather than free speech. In this respect, theatre critic Mohamed al-Madyouni notes,

The theater's administration followed theater events through "the Committee of Theater Orientation," which first held the responsibility to certify that dialogue in plays has to be written in standard Arabic. Gradually, however, this committee would become responsible for and in control of issuing official endorsement of any text not only before it is completed but also before it could be presented to the public.³⁹

After Tunisia's independence, the Tunisian government seemingly wanted Tunisian theater to assume a cultural role, but a close look at the Tunisian government's concerns with culture reveals that the role that was assigned to theater was mainly ideological. The Ministry of Culture's role in promoting modern theater had been two-fold. When this ministry made a budget to fund Tunisian theater, it also set the stage to gradually and indirectly bring theater under the control of the state. In 1966, the euphemistically named Theater Orientation Committee was established and tasked with verifying the use of the Arabic language. The use of Fusha (classical Arabic) was encouraged by "the purists" of language as Djedidi calls them. The purists are opponents of the use of the Tunisian dialect because they assume only standard Arabic serves as a sign of high culture. The language choice deserves further consideration and will be revisited later in this chapter from the perspective of Baccar and Jaïbi.

The Tunisian State had retained legal rights to control any cultural event and production. This means that the regimes under Bourguiba and Ben Ali were authoritarian, and yet functioned within a legal framework. In this respect, the State retained legal rights to control any cultural event and production. The acquisition of this permit made every performance subject to two levels of control. The first law passed on July 5, 1966, concerns the necessity to obtain a permit for the script to be performed. The second law, issued on March 12, 1969 requires a permit for both the script and the performance before the premiere. In other words, a double permission is needed for the script.⁴⁰ Yet, these restrictions were merged later into one law that requires one permit for both the text and the performance. Permits were granted by the national review board, a commission of the Ministry of Culture, wherein the Ministries of Interior and of Religious Affairs were also represented.

The censorship committee laws are an extension of the ambivalent intentions of Habib

Bourguiba's regime. In 1962, President Bourguiba, who led Tunisia between 1956 and 1987, delivered an elaborate speech on Tunisian theater, which Maḥmoud al-Majri documented in its entirety *Min Wathā'iq al-Masraḥ al-Madrasi al-Tūnsi: 1954–2007* (From the Tunisian Theater School Centers' Archives: 1954-2007). Bourguiba declared:

Dramatic arts represent an instrument, among other means, to cultivate the people and refine their sensations . . . Theater is also an indication that features the prosperity of the nation and “a means of advertising” for the country abroad . . . We have to establish theater associations among high school pupils to cultivate the seed of this art in their hearts from an early age.⁴¹

This speech highlights Bourguiba's interest in including theater in school curricula. Perhaps this interest was related to the fact that he was an amateur actor himself. However, the speech was controversial as he explicitly stated that the aim of official support of theater was to advertise Tunisia. In this context, the theater critic, Ahmed Hadhiq 'Urf argues,

The conflict between the objectives of the authority and the desires of the new discourse becomes exposed: the state power wants to use theater as a propaganda tool. . . . the power of state calls on the theater to be concerned about abstract values while this theater insists on the details of daily life.⁴²

'Urf's critical perspective, moreover, applies to any of Jaïbi and Baccar's plays since they are imbued with Tunisian reality and daily life for the purpose of critiquing the social and political life in their country. This explains why Baccar is committed to writing mostly in the Tunisian dialect.

Khamsūn was also censored. In the 2011 interview by Jean-François Perrier, Jaïbi describes the struggle he and Baccar experienced to present *Khamsūn* in Tunisia in terms of a battle waged against the Tunisian official regime that censored the production. The play was banned because it boldly probes subjects that are viewed by the regime as taboo. Presenting a performance about the repression of opposition parties, the history of torture, and the threat of terrorism was unprecedented. Mixing fiction with historical fact, names, dates, and places did not please the censorship committee. One of the problematic issues that caused *Khamsūn* to

be censored includes the use of words such as “flag.”

The use of the word “flag” was censored by the theater committee due to how the flag in the play represents the dissatisfaction of the character Juda with the Tunisian government culminating with her choosing to commit suicide next to a flag. The Censorship Theater Committee required Baccar and Jaïbi to modify the term. At the end of the debate between the director-playwright pair and the Department of Censorship led by the Minister of Culture, Baccar made one modification to the play script insofar as the term “flag” was concerned. The couple compromised by replacing “flag” with “the clavel flower.”⁴³ In the performance, however, they kept used “flag,” which better conveys the theme of political criticism.

Baccar’s tactics of critique include the use of proper names to convey double meaning. In the opening monologue, Baccar introduces the history, geography, and culture of Tunisia, using euphemisms that imply tactful skepticism about an idealized view of Tunisia. Here an anonymous narrator summarizes the entire history of Tunisia in terms of all the civilizations the country experienced, highlighting the rich and peaceful aspects of the country. Peace and stability are immediately undermined by the end of the opening scene. The playwright does this in *Khamsūn* by relying on the alternate uses of certain words. The specific word choices make the underlying message clear. By using terms that have meaning beyond their literal ones, Baccar tactfully critiques the social and political conditions in her country. In this way, *Khamsūn* moves gradually from euphemism to bold critique. For instance, the narrator identifies the country as “the home of the friend and the foreigner/stranger.”⁴⁴ The playwright chooses the Tunisian term *al-Habib* (the Friend) when she could have picked another alternative. By doing so, she attempts to establish interaction between the narrator and the audience. While the Tunisian term for friend is “Lahbib,” in this context it is a dialect version of the name “Habib” in reference to Habib Bourguiba. As Baccar describes the fifty year span of Tunisian history, the use of both terms summarizes this

history in reducing the span of fifty years to two political figures.

The playwright may still deem Bourguiba a friend of Tunisia in comparison to Ben Ali. My observation is based on Baccar's personal views regarding Bourguiba in the play and outside the context of the play. In the context of *Khamsūn*, her devastating critique of fifty years of Tunisian history necessarily include the politics of Bourguiba, which makes the above interpretation of Bourguiba as a friend of the nation less likely. However, in the play (act 2, scene 6), during a conversation between the lawyer and Maryam about the lawyer's aunt, who happened to be among the first ladies to remove the sefseri (a veil to cover the entire body) in 1955, Maryam mentions that the incident occurred before the return of Habib. When the lawyer asks her to whom she refers, Maryam states that there is no other Habib than Habib Bourguiba.⁴⁵ This is the second time the term Habib appears to mean something beyond "friend." At this point, Maryam's statement calls to mind the opening of the play and suggests that Habib in the first scene must refer to Habib Bourguiba. The reader/viewer of both scenes in *Khamsūn* cannot fail to miss making such a connection. In this way, the playwright is able to communicate her critique by playing with commonly understood terms. The use of proper names might be viewed as a way of winking at the audience, inviting them to wink back and recognize each single word differently by drawing on the cultural and historical context of Tunisia.

In real life, the figure of Bourguiba is usually approached with ambivalence. To put it briefly, Bourguiba is highly regarded for his liberation of Tunisia from colonial French power and his liberation of Tunisian women by abolishing polygamy and issuing many laws which protected them by granting them freedom to educate themselves; marry whomever they want; initiate a divorce; etc. President Bourguiba is also known to have not enriched himself during the years he was in power. For example, he never owned a private mansion. However, Bourguiba's repression of the opposition generated hatred. This repression was carried out by

all means including torture. In a television broadcast, Baccar herself expressed her love and hatred for Bourguiba, speaking for many Tunisian citizens. In this program, while the citizen Baccar states she admires the charismatic leader, she also states she can never forgive some aspects of his politics. Baccar's ambivalence helps to situate the context of the terms juxtaposed in the opening monologue of *Khamsūn*. Additionally, the use of terms that have a double meaning is also an attempt to circumvent censorship. The covert label "the foreigner/stranger," for example, might be a reference to President Ben Ali as it would be impossible to refer to him by name without risking the censorship of the play and other possibly dangerous consequences for troupe members. At the same time, the playwright employs other stylistic and thematic strategies in order to express her political protest. For instance, the double title of the play is fraught with criticism mainly about repression through longevity and torture.

Both titles of *Khamsūn*, (*Fifty*) and (*Bodies Hostages*), voice political dissent. By choosing a title that literally means "fifty," Baccar hints at the fiftieth anniversary of Tunisian independence. At first glance, *Khamsūn* depicts Tunisian political history from 1956 to 2006. As the country has only known two presidents during that half-century, *Fifty*, then speaks directly to longevity in office and how that can allow oppression to become the norm.⁴⁶ *Fifty* refers to celebrating Independence Day to show how quickly the suicide bombing committed by the character Juda is forgotten. Four months after the 2005 attack occurred, the country celebrated its fiftieth Independence Day on March 20. The connection between the two events—*independence and suicide*—might be interpreted through the use of the Tunisian flag in the play. While this flag must have burnt given that Juda set off a bomb next to it, the ending scene is marked by an Independence Day celebration which implies that the flag is honored and intact. The title thus calls on Tunisian citizens to reflect on their half a century of independence, and to ask themselves what has changed during that time. The play's

international/French title *Corps ôtages* (Bodies hostages) which was chosen by Familia Theater a short time before the play premiered at the Odeon,⁴⁷ is more ambivalent than the original title. *Corps ôtages* hints at the repression of the body by means of veiling, humiliation, and torture as the play suggests. The French title also reinforces the multiple themes of the play that address the body, including suicide bombing, veiling, and torture. The title in French would make more sense to the Parisian audience than the title *Khamsūn*, which is more appropriate in the Arab-speaking context where people are aware of the meaning of “fifty,” as we have seen. Additionally, it is unclear why the representation of Islam should make the play appealing to a Western audience, especially since *Khamsūn* is complicated, and if it pleases one group, it may not please another. The play also incorporates many factions of the society: police, civil society including lawyers, and a range of Muslims and Islamists. The character Youssef, for example, is liberal and he raised his daughter Amal to embrace liberal values—he is an excellent representative of Western views. Baccar and Jaïbi do not seem to favor him, since he ended up ostracizing his own daughter. This critical portrait can be a counter argument to Litvin’s criticism. Youssef is portrayed as a member of the radical Left who taught his daughter how to respect others’ differences, but when Amal became Sufi and decided to wear the head scarf he disowned her. He represents the liberal person who, in practice, does not abide by the values he preaches. Moreover, because the play incorporates both violent (Juda’s suicide bombing and Ahmed’s attempt to produce bombs) and non-violent Islamists (Hanan and Amal), it becomes difficult to pigeonhole Baccar and Jaïbi, or to say that *Khamsūn* aims to please a Western audience. Instead, the play is clearly rooted in Tunisian political and cultural history. Even in the context of Tunisia, the play is controversial as it represents all factions of society, without excluding one part or another. Yet the play must have satisfied some Tunisian audience who at that time could hardly express themselves about Islamists, fundamentalism, or torture. Therefore, if it aimed

to please anyone, it must have very much pleased the 9,000, mostly Tunisian audience members in Carthage in 2007.

The title *Corps ôtages* not only refers to the practice of veiling as a symbol of oppression, but also to the tradition of enacting torture on that body. The playwright uses a gruesome account of the history of torture perpetrated during the governments of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Amal's mother, Maryam, tells the story of her Leftist husband Youssef who was subjected to torture in the 1970s during Bourguiba's presidency. According to the play, Leftists such as Youssef were the target of Bourguiba's regime because as differed from him on their views of what should constitute a modern Tunisia. Youssef's leftist ideals are based on secularism, material dialecticism, free expression, and equality—between men and women and among citizens of the world. However, the main disagreement between Bourguiba and the Leftists arose from his holding power and control not for two terms, but rather for life.

The police-state system used prosecution, imprisonment, and torture to handle anyone who refused to cooperate. By referring to the fifty years of independent Tunisia's history, Maryam shows she is disturbed by Ben Ali's regime, which continues to torture opponents of officialdom, especially Islamists. The playwright's depiction of Youssef and Amal shows how for fifty years the regime refused to open a dialogue with any opposition party. By revealing the history of political parties' repression and the consistent use of torture in Tunisia, the playwright attempts to ground her resistance against the politics of her country in historical fact.

The Bold Tone of Criticism: Unveiling the History of Torture

Baccar expresses her resistance to the Tunisian political regime through the representation of torture. In *Khamsūn*, Gaddour, the torturer, illustrates how the repression of

the body is enacted by means of torture. The longtime torturer had served the official political structure by ensuring control and conformity through the use of fear and humiliation for over fifty years. Gaddour kept and tortured prisoners during both Bourguiba and Ben Ali's governments, serving the hostile regimes over generations and sometimes torturing people from—the same family. In act 2, scene 11, Maryam repeatedly reminds Gaddour of how he tortured her husband, pointing out that he is interrogating her for the fourth time. In his diary, Youssef had described how he was tortured repeatedly over the twelve years he spent in prison. Among other actions, Youssef writes how Gaddour broke his knee, using a metal ruler.⁴⁸ Following this horrific experience, Youssef needed to have four surgeries, which resulted in the paralysis of his lower body. The tyranny over Youssef's body during Bourguiba's era reflects the oppression of his political ideas.

Youssef's daughter, Amal, too is affected by Ben Ali's oppressive measures against the Islamists, but to a lesser degree than her father. During her second interrogation, the lawyer Mrs. Boubilil has noted that Amal is in pain. Physical violence permeates the characters' interrogations. While the oppressive system had not changed its practices for fifty years including, most notoriously, its tradition of humiliation and torture, it refuses to be subjected to critique either by Leftists such as Youssef or Islamists such as Amal. Amal's mother, Maryam, has not only documented the circumstances under which her husband suffered torture but also considers her daughter a subject of political hostility when Amal is accused of Islamic fundamentalism. Maryam believes the political dilemma is the product of fifty years of repression, and utters a statement that describes the political tension during those years. In her own words, which appear originally in French, the language inherited from the colonial past of Tunisia, Maryam states, "I refuse to be the hostage of two types of fundamentalism."⁴⁹ This statement, which underlines Maryam's state of disillusionment, helps one understand why she describes herself as a victim of the Leftists. Her husband had

been imprisoned and tortured due to his adherence to leftist ideas.

The Rise of Salafism in post-Revolution Tunisia and *Khamsūn* in Retrospect

Looking at the play in retrospect, one can say that Baccar not only urged Tunisian society and its politicians to reconsider their past and present policies, but also predicted that the repressed Salafist ideology would emerge in the future. The fear of Islamic Terrorism, particularly Salafism, was not misplaced. Today, the threat of Jihadi Salafism in Tunisia has become a reality in which a minority of the Jihadi Salafists who hold ultraconservative views act violently. *Khamsūn*'s concerns were certainly to be seen during the 2011 Tunisian Revolution, the start of the “Arab Spring.” With that uprising, it is impossible to read the pre-2011 Baccarian cultural productions with an exclusively pre-revolutionary perspective. After the Tunisian Revolution, *Khamsūn* may be interpreted as a prophetic statement.

In the last few years, Salafist groups in Tunisia have occasionally represented a threat, mainly to other Muslims who are judged by them to be heretical. These Salafists have also been a threat to non-Muslims. For example, the violent 2012 protest at the U.S. embassy in Tunisia exemplifies Salafist anti-American violence in response to the film, “Innocence of Muslims” which Salafists considered an anti-Muslim effort that depicted hatred and disrespect for their faith and their prophet. Based on news reports, after they breached the U.S. embassy’s high outside walls, these Salafists expressed their anger by burning the American flag and raising their own flag—not the Tunisian one—on which the Muslim profession of faith is written.⁵⁰

This local historical Salafist action calls to mind the fictional incident in *Khamsūn* where Juda blows herself up while situated next to the Tunisian flag. In retrospect, it seems that Juda burned the flag not only because she was unhappy with Ben Ali’s regime, but also

because she might have wanted to see her country's flag be revised, namely, into a flag emblematic of Salafist thought. Outside the context of the play, however, the anti-American Salafist event invites us to think about an attempt to wrench tyranny from the hands of a dictator to the hands of a tyrannical mob of violent Salafists. As Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton put it: "The people of Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Tunisia did not trade the tyranny of a dictator for the tyranny of a mob."⁵¹ Referring to the Fundamentalist Islamic movement that took place in Sudan during the 1990s, author Davidson echoes Clinton: "[T]hese [fundamentalist] movements, based on religious tenets and supposed divinely ordained values, do not readily tolerate opposition."⁵² The very concept of the reversal of tyranny is at the heart of Baccar's, *Khamsūn*. As much as the play critiques how the Tunisian government does not differentiate between Muslims who represent a real threat and those who are merely orthodox believers, *Khamsūn* also makes clear the extent to which Salafists can be a real threat to everyone in Tunisia, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The alcohol controversy also suggests a way of revealing the play in light of the religious discourse that has permeated the social and political scene since the Revolution. The play condemns violent Salafists mainly through the police force's attitude toward Salafists and through the liberal characters, including Maryam, her husband Youssef, and her friend Mrs. Boubilil. act 2, scene 6, describes how both Maryam and Mrs. Boubilil drink alcohol, laughing and reminding themselves that they should enjoy their drinks before it becomes banned.⁵³ Boubilil expresses her fear of Islamists ascending to power in Tunisia; they will curtail people's freedom to drink alcohol based on Islamic law. The bar scene in the play predicts the Salafists' attempt to ban alcohol in post-revolution Tunisia. Salafists attacked alcohol vendors in the capital on October 28, 2012, critically injuring a police guard.⁵⁴

In addition to alcohol, which became a divisive issue after the Revolution, the tradition of veiling returned also as Baccar's play foretold. Juda, Hanen, Amal (initially),

Maryam, Mrs. Boubilil, Youssef, and the police force are all against veiling, but each has a different view and reason. Mrs. Boubilil regards the veil as a political symbol because to her Islamists can only be political.⁵⁵ During her conversation with Mrs Boubilil about her aunt, Maryam states that a Muslim female does not need to veil herself.⁵⁶ Maryam uses the term “rag” to refer to the veil as a repulsive, unnecessary religious accessory. The term Baccar chooses for the veil recalls President Bourguiba’s 1955 reference to the hijab as “an odious rag.” Bourguiba literally removed women’s veils in his 1955 procession. At first glance, Bourguiba’s action is similar to Youssef’s attitude. Both of them fail to examine the veil objectively. However, Bourguiba and Youssef oppose the veil for different reasons. For Bourguiba, the headscarf is emblematic of oppression and decline, while for Youssef it is a symbol of betrayal. Youssef decides to sever his relationship with his daughter because he takes her veiling as a betrayal of his leftist ideology.⁵⁷

The second scene reveals how Youssef’s response to his daughter’s choice is based on his disappointment that Amal has abandoned her leftist upbringing and by extension he felt she abandoned him. But the previous Tunisian government had also issued a law banning the wearing of the veil in public. As stated earlier, this is The Circular 108, a historical event that is also mentioned in the play.⁵⁸ Under this law, the police were allowed to humiliate and punish women who wore the veil, the height of enforcement occurred during the ‘80s and ‘90s. During those decades, the burqa and *niqab* were not even part of the veil discourse, probably because women were already afraid to wear the simpler veil.

While there is no reference to the *niqab/burqa* debate in *Khamsūn*, the concern about veiling shows how the play correctly forecast a renewed debate on the issue. Clothing played an important role in the change that happened in post-2011 Tunisia. At issue was the predominance of Islamist clothing, including the *niqab* and *burqa* that have sparked debate on religious dress codes in schools since November 2011. At that time, Tunisian Salafist

students wanted to impose a certain type of veiling inside schools. By means of sit-ins, these Salafists prevented thousands of students from taking exams under the pretext that female Salafist students should be allowed to wear the *niqab* (the veil that covers the face except for the eyes) and the Burqa (a veil that looks like a net and covers the eyes, as well) if they wished. The protesters were able to delay exams at Manouba University in Tunis. Suzanne Daley, a foreign correspondent for the New York Times wrote, “Here a handful of ultraconservative Salafist students and their busloads of supporters, many from the poor interior of the country, are pitted against an urban faculty [Manouba] with a strong sense that this bare-bones campus with its overgrown paths is no place for prayer rooms or women who veil their faces.”⁵⁹ Daley’s report shows that after the Revolution, the political scene changed in that it allowed plurality, thus allowing room for the Salafists, a group of people that includes an extreme Islamic minority, to be active.

The Salafist protest at Manouba University impacted the life of scholars, students, and their families across the country. In his recent work *Chroniques du Manoubistan* (The Manoubistan diary),⁶⁰ Habib al-Malakh describes the rioting Salafist Manouba students and their condemnation of the Dean, Habib Kazdaghli, for slapping a student who was banned from wearing *niqab* in class. This is to say when the Salafists entered the Tunisian political sphere, their Jihadi discourse represented a real threat to everyone, particularly during the unstable transition time following the Revolution.

The playwright’s struggle to counter the official regime on the one hand, and the terrorism the Salafists might engage in on the other can be viewed not only in terms of unveiling the notorious practices of the government and exercising vigilance toward Salafism, but also in the style in which Baccar conveys her critique. Baccar’s hope for plurality and her wish to end tyranny seems to be expressed through the medium of language.

The Use of Language From a Political Perspective

The politics of using *Fusha* (standard Arabic) versus *Lahja* (colloquial Arabic) is discussed in “Arabization and Linguistic Politics in the Maghreb,”⁶¹ where critic André Miquel contends that the linguistic division in North Africa is no longer between Arabic and French. Instead, it concerns classical Arabic and French on the one hand, and Arabic dialects and Berber on the other.⁶² Miquel describes French and *Fusha* as more prestigious than dialects in the sense that others perceive them as more representative of a higher socio economic status. Baccar, however, does not seem to be concerned with the dichotomy of Arabic and French, given that Arabization proposes to replace colonial French with native Arabic as a trademark of cultural independence and establishing that the identity of Tunisia is no longer tied to its former colonial ruler. Nor is the Berber dialect an issue in Tunisian culture and literature in the way it has been in Algeria. Here the issue is mainly about the predominance of the Tunisian dialect in Baccar’s writings.

At the same time, writing in the local dialect does not make Baccar a pioneer since Tunisian theater has been “polyglot”⁶³ since the 1920s, as Hafedh Djedidi notes. An extensive debate over Arabization and Tunisification during the 1970s was conducted by a number of scholars, including Gilbert Grandguillaume. Grandguillaume states that advocates of Arabization and Tunisification may use the connection between Islam or the Qur’ān and the Arabic language to control national languages. Further, these advocates use this correlation to impose hegemonic policies regarding language and identity. In his chapter “Arabization in Tunisia,” Grandguillaume examines multiple perspectives regarding Arabization and the politics of language in Tunisia. The critic notes that Mohamed Mzali, minister of education in Tunisia from 1969-70 and from 1971-73, and prime minister from 1976-80, explains: “The Tunisification is above all a spirit, essentially an act of faithfulness, an action to forge a Tunisian youth that have faith in the essential foundations of their nation:

the Islamic religion, the Islamic civilization, the Arabic language, and the national history.”⁶⁴ The term “Arabic language” in the above quotation refers to classical Arabic, for the politician Mzali argues that the Tunisian dialect is not a language in itself since it is not codified in terms of morphology and syntax.

Tunisification, or Tunisianité (Tunisianity), is viewed differently by critic M. Nassef for whom Tunisianity meant “authenticity, Islam, and Arabic language.”⁶⁵ For Nassef, authenticity counters the process of acculturation and aims to preserve a Tunisian personality that calls for the revival of the Islamic-Arabic heritage. At the same time, Grandguillaume’s study demonstrates how complex the problem of Arabization is mainly because it cannot be applied to higher education. The critic explains that the impossibility of Arabizing education at all levels is due to the lack of teachers of Arabic. In a discussion of the 1973 budget at the National Assembly, Micaud noted that Tunisia had sufficient Arabic-speaking teachers to Arabize the primary school curricula, but was not able to Arabize science in the secondary schools.⁶⁶ For Micaud, Arabization cannot be realized on a theoretical basis. It must be applied in different stages.

Fushā ’s Distancing of the Audience Versus the Tunisian Dialect’s Ability to Establish Closeness

The issues of Arabization and Tunisification are not alone in influencing the use of language in politics. The debate about the use of the Tunisian dialect or standard Arabic becomes visible in the speeches of the two previous presidents of Tunisia. Unlike the ousted Ben Ali, whose speeches were all in Standard Arabic except for his last one, Bourguiba customarily addressed the Tunisian people in dialect: “In his speech of July 29, 1968, President Bourguiba gave the Tunisian dialect his blessing. He said that TA (Tunisian

Arabic), the language of the people, is “our everyday language” whereas “classical Arabic has very little to do with our life.”⁶⁷ Both the last speech of Ben Ali and Bourguiba’s statement show that Tunisian political leaders recognize that using standard Arabic distances them from the people. This explains why Ben Ali used the dialect to appear closer to the angry Tunisian masses after they had already started their protests, calling for his departure in December 2011. Unlike Ben Ali, it seems that Bourguiba was aware of the impact that the Tunisian dialect would have on his relationship with the Tunisian people from the beginning. In the same way, Baccar’s awareness of the fact that Tunisians express themselves in dialect while their use of standard Arabic is limited to when they are reading and writing, makes her favor dialect both for the page and the stage.

From a linguistic perspective, both Baccar and Bourguiba’s viewpoints echo the definition of dialect by the linguist M. A. K. Halliday: “A dialect is any variety of language that is defined by reference to the speaker: the dialect you speak is a function of who you are.”⁶⁸ In Baccar’s writings and Bourguiba’s vision of nationalism, “who you are” refers to Tunisian identity, which challenges the notion of pan-Arabism. Writing in dialect disrupts “Ummah,” which refers to the idea of the Arab nation whose defining and unifying constituents are the Arabic language and the religion Islam. This concept of unity through language is also conveyed by Grandguillaume: “the Arabic language guarantees national unity.”⁶⁹ By writing in dialect, Baccar refuses to surrender the linguistic specificities of Tunisia.

The question of Arabization and Tunisification is also at the center of Tunisian theater. Theater critic Djedidi notes that out of 193 performances in classical Arabic presented between 1995 and 2000, 126 performances were aimed at children and only 67 at youth and adults. He also indicates that 395 performances during the same period were presented in dialect.⁷⁰ Djedidi’s study demonstrates that the number of performances in the

Tunisian dialect amounts to 76% compared to 24% of performances in classical Arabic where the audience consisted of children. The purpose of presenting theater in Fusha was to help children master the language. According to this data, dialect gained more prominence than classical Arabic in theatrical performances from 1995 to 2000. Djedidi also highlights the heterogeneity of the Tunisian dialect in contrast to Fusha (Standard Arabic) which is regarded as pure and prestigious by its advocates. He points out that the Tunisian dialect itself comprises a mixture of Arabic, Berber, Turkish, and Italian.

Djedidi's aforementioned description of the Tunisian dialect as a composite of languages and registers helps explain the use of specific terms in *Khamsun*. In the epilogue of the play, the playwright provides glimpses of the gastronomy of the country, referring to the main typical dish, known to be of Berber origin: *the coucous*⁷¹ (Semolina also known as couscous worldwide). Consciously or subconsciously, the playwright uses this term, which has been part of the Tunisian dialect since Tunisia was inhabited by Berber nomadic tribes. While it is only an assumption that the origin of the dish is Berber, it is not clear where coucous originated. The term coucous appears in medieval works such as the records of the fourteenth-century traveler Ibn Battuta. The etymology of word in the Tunisian dialect itself can teach us about the principle of linguistic plurality.

Baccar's *Khamsun* reflects linguistic pluralism by combining dialect, standard Arabic and French. Mixing languages and registers in the play script is a reflection of the code-switching practice and the dialectical variety that is common in daily speech in Tunisia. The main question about language use in Baccar's play is not whether French is used and to what end. Very few words in the play are French. Instead, her writing raises questions as to why she favors the use of the Tunisian dialect over the use of Fusha. In fact, Baccar uses the Tunisian dialect as an instrument of resistance because, as stated earlier, the use of dialect in theater is discouraged by the governmental Theater Censorship Committee. The use of dialect

by the playwright also gains significance in reflecting daily life realistically. Her works would be detached from reality if they were performed in standard Arabic, because this is not the language in which Tunisians express themselves when they speak on a daily basis. Most importantly, the use of the Tunisian dialect in addition to the limited use of Fushā, and the even more restricted use of French, may reflect a pluralistic view of language that mirrors the political plurality championed by the director/playwright pair in this play. One may argue that by merging classical and dialectal Arabic, Baccar attempts to challenge religious discourse, which maintains that classical Arabic pertains to the exalted Qur'ānic language. Mohamed Maamouri, a Tunisian advocate of Arabization, for example, views Arabic as “[t]he only pure form of language which is the language of religion as well as of a good part of contemporary literary creation, has been complemented by a contemporary variety, modern standard Arabic (MSA), that is less formal and has a higher rate of frequency.”⁷² As mentioned earlier, the connection between Arabic and the Qur'ān has been widely discussed in religious and political circles.

However, to take the analysis beyond the ambiguous and perhaps the superfluous question of prestige, the writings of Baccar in her mother tongue may be viewed as an attempt to restore the use of the Tunisian dialect so as to gain identity and stylistic significance. The use of Arabic dialect in Baccar's works counters the dominance of classical Arabic, a language that enjoys substantial status both in written and oral forms in the Tunisian education system, media, literature, and government administration. The reasons for making the Tunisian dialect, which is primarily spoken and rarely written, as important as classical Arabic, have to do with the playwright's attempt to show how this dialect, in terms of content and structure, is able to teach us something about a constantly evolving Tunisian culture.

Intermediary Position of Arabic

From a stylistic point of view, the blend of both standard and dialectal Arabic is not only a matter of code-switching, but also of occupying an intermediary position between the formal and informal styles of Arabic for expressive reasons. Perhaps, Mohamed Maamouri best describes the linguistic situation in Tunisia. The Tunisian linguist explains,

The competition between TA [Tunisian dialect] and MSA [modern standard Arabic] led to another type of Arabic which occupies an intermediary position between the formal and the informal; it is at the same time a form of simplified MSA and a form of "elevated" TA, or both at the same time. Its morphology and syntax are simplified and its lexicon is almost equally divided between the two types of language. This intermediary form, which Scholar Maamouri calls "educated Arabic" (EA), is understood by almost everybody.⁷³

What Maamouri calls “educated language” in reference to the intermediary position between Fusha and dialect, S. Somekh names “third language.” Particularly revealing in this respect is Somekh’s article, “The Concept of ‘Third Language’ and Its Impact on Modern Arabic Poetry,” in which he notes that “The term al-lugha al-thaliltha” (“The Third Language”) gained currency in the world of Arabic literature mainly in the 1950s although its underlying concept is apparently much older.”⁷⁴ Most importantly, this term describes how a certain style of writing may at simultaneously obey the rules of classical Arabic and those of Arabic dialects. In this context, Somekh notes that Tawfiq al-Hakim, the well-known Egyptian dramatist, already raised the issue of “Third Language” by writing plays such as *al-Şafqa* (The deal, 1956) and *al-Warṭa* (Dead trouble, 1966) combining simplified standard Arabic and dialect. In *al-Şafqa*,⁷⁵ the playwright “exploits the inherent ambiguity of non-vowelled Arabic script” to be read as standard text and staged as dialectal text.⁷⁶ In *al-Warṭa*, al-Hakim, “uses a number of forms and functionals which are exclusively dialectal.”⁷⁷

By using the Tunisian dialect, Baccar engages the audience in the most comfortable form of daily communication. However, there is more to this dialect than mere comfort in a shared way of communication. Djedidi notes that the use of the Tunisian dialect has further significance. In his work *Théâtre tunisien dans tous ses états* (The Tunisian Theatre in All Its

States), the author argues that “Fadhel Jalbi [sic] has no other choice but to attribute the language in which Tunisians express and liberate their drives to his characters, being inspired by the city daily life.”⁷⁸ Djedidi refers to the subtlety of the dialect that cannot be replaced by the use of Fushā. He also implies that it is not possible to express matters of daily routine in the classical Arabic of al-Mutanabbi,⁷⁹ Whereas the dialect sometimes uses an elevated style while also employing popular language that can be casual as well as obscene.

Impact of Double Meaning of Terms through Repetition and Juxtaposition

The theatre of Ja'ibi and Baccar is rooted in diglossia, a situation in which these artists compose their scripts in an intermediary language not only by bringing together the classical and different types of colloquial Arabic to an innovative style of writing, but also by exploring the richness of the dialect. *Khamsūn* exemplifies the use of an elevated form of language that draws on a poetic aspect of the Tunisian dialect. Baccar uses dialect to show how it is packed with meaning, a single term can be fraught with complicated connotations. For instance, in the epilogue of *Khamsūn*, when the narrator repeats “smells,” the term produces emphatic effect. When the word is used once, the audience recognizes the word *al-Rawāyah* (the smells) to mean specifically a bad smell. When, the term is repeated, it functions as a form of protest against physical filthiness, perhaps related to some streets in the country.

The term “smells” gains an aesthetic force on stage due to repetition and juxtaposition. The repetition of the word may also refer to the uncleanliness of politicians’ hands because of corruption. While the narrator speaks of a foul smell in order to stir up an effect on the audience to sensitize them to the bad environmental and political conditions in Tunisia, he/she immediately stabilizes this effect by modifying the word “smells,” using it in possessive phrases rather than by itself. The list of smells include those of jasmine and musk

roses that not only have a pleasing fragrance but also serve as cultural symbols for different areas in the country, and sometimes for the entire country. The juxtaposition of the terms jasmine and smells, and both the fragmentary and repetitive use of the term “smells,” defamiliarizes the familiar cliché of “Tunisia: the country of Jasmine.” The presentation of the term “smells” in an unfamiliar way makes the audience perceive the poetry of the language used by Baccar as it creates a vision other than what the automated perception produces, despite the fact that it draws on every day speech.

Colloquial Obscenity

In addition to the importance of the Tunisian dialect as the language of the people, there are other aspects to it as reflected in both family and police institutions. For instance, the dialect is better suited to describe aggressive interactions. Because the theatrical works of Baccar and Jaïbi aim to dramatize Tunisian social and political conditions without beautifying them, their productions contain both verbal and physical aggression. The latter sometimes replaces the former. For instance, in act 2, scene 3, Amal enters, her eyes brimming with tears, and reports to her mother that her father pushed her away and closed the door behind her because he did not want to see his daughter anymore as she had embraced Sufism and abandoned his leftist ideals. The act of pushing Amal and shutting the door speaks to an aggressive discourse, implying that the mute Youssef would have used violent slang had he had the ability to speak. The aggressive interactions described thus far took place in dysfunctional families in which parents, as in the case of Amal’s, do not respect their children’s religious freedom. In the play, aggression and sometimes even violence, is also reflected in the dialect used by police authorities during the interrogation scenes. A prime example would be the frequent use of profanity. When Amal speaks to the policeman, using a French expression to relate her profession, the man curses the French language, noting that it

was due to French that he failed at school. Then, in the same scene, the police agent humiliates Amal by accusing her of pretending to be unaware of Juda's suicide, cursing at her one more time at the end of the scene, and pushing her outside the office. Similarly, the questioning of Hanen by the police is fraught with violent language. The scene opens with the police forcing Hanen to remove her veil, cursing her head and calling the veil "an odious rag." As the scene itself progresses, the policeman's cursing in dialect becomes more vulgar and harsh, from treating her veil as a rag, to treating her as a daughter of a prostitute. When these words are heard on stage, they affect the audience differently than when heard in a police station or in the street. The audience has the choice to take these expressions as offensive, and therefore become angered and perhaps leave the theater, or the attendee can take this language as an aesthetic choice to make a specific point in the performance. Through the use of the dialect in this manner, Baccar attempts to increase the awareness of the audience. This aesthetic choice, is common not only in *Khamsūn* but also in other theatrical productions of the Familia Troupe. It is, however, not restricted to this troupe as it calls to mind the first word of *Ubu roi* (Ubu the King) which was "Merdre," (a term coined by Jarry and a slight alteration to the French word associated with defecation), which may also be viewed as giving offense for an aesthetic purpose, yet differing from Baccar's use of vulgarity.

In saying 'merdre,' Père (Father) Ubu is acting profanely, and by saying this term, he commits a curse. In 1896 during Jarry's time, this obscenity threw the audience into an uproar. The implications of Jarry's language suggested that the attendees could not grasp the reason why they were insulted as soon as the play opened. Martin Esslin explains: "The public was indeed stupefied. As soon as Gémier, who played Ubu, had uttered the opening lines, "Merdre!" the storm broke loose. It was fifteen minutes before silence could be reestablished, and the demonstrations for and against continued throughout the evening."⁸⁰

The effect of this verbal obscenity emphasizes that a word such as ‘Merdre’ can have intense power and effect because it is so unexpected. Not only did this expression shock the audience, it created an atmosphere of debate and changed theater aesthetics. The implications of such vulgar speech suggest that the use of obscene language gained fame for Jarry and this expression, ultimately, marked the beginning of theater reform. One may consider *Ubu roi* as a play that marked the end of realistic drama to initiate a new era of antirealism and symbolism, and to become a source of inspiration for the Theater of the Absurd. Esslin notes, “And so a play that had only two performances in its first run and evoked a torrent of abuse appears, in the light of subsequent developments, as a landmark and a forerunner...what had started as a mere burlesque of science later turned into the basis of Jarry’s own aesthetics.”⁸¹ This statement reveals that Jarry-esque language has effects both on the audience and on theater aesthetics. In a similar way, Baccar’s use of dialect when using obscenity leads to reflections on language in theater. But far from conveying absurdity, this violent discourse is actually consistent with Tunisian daily reality.

The Use of Fushā in the Play for Writing (a Scripted Letter, Diary, and Confession)

In addition to her witty use of the Tunisian dialect, the playwright does not discard standard Arabic. Her use of Fushā is not to satisfy the 1966 Theater Orientation Committee law, rather her choice applies to the Arab proverb “To every context is a saying.”⁸² Baccar uses standard Arabic when she brings in supplications, Qur’ānic verses, written letters, and diaries. Because Arabic is viewed as the language of the Qur’ān, whenever one of the characters recites a verse, Baccar uses Fushā. Before he admits he collaborated with Juda, Ahmed recites the Qur’ānic chapter, al-Kāfirūn (The Disbelievers).⁸³ In act 2, scene 4, Ahmed speaks Standard Arabic when he pays a visit to the women Hanen, Amal, and Juda,

before Juda's suicide. He recites the invocation of God calling him by using 94 of his divine names. Although it is reasonable that these names appear in standard Arabic, it is unclear on what basis they are associated with the character Ahmed. The reason this scene is problematic is that the same divine names, if used in the context in which they usually appear, would be part of a main practice of remembrance in the Islamic Sufi tradition. Ahmed's recitation of these names is perhaps a good example of how certain branches of Islam (Sufism and the scientific/peaceful version of Salafism) have many commonalities and how these branches should not create conflicts between Muslims.

In addition to this passage of Ahmed's, Baccar has Hanen use Fusha for Qur'anic recitation which has always been memorized in standard Arabic. Hanen also uses standard Arabic when she prays for divine protection, forgiveness, and mercy during her final interrogation. It is worth noting, however, that common to the Qur'anic verses recited by both Ahmed and Hanen is a prayer to the Lord to grant them (with all believers as both characters use "we" instead of "I") victory over the unbelievers.

Both the letter written by Amal to her parents during her stay in France and the diary written by her father Youssef in memory of his experience of torture during his twelve years of imprisonment, are in standard Arabic.⁸⁴ Youssef is not able to speak due to his sickness, but the playwright gives him a voice (literally a voice, as the mute character is heard at this point in the performance) so that he describes in Fusha how he has been tortured in many ways. In Fusha, too, Amal expresses that she feels like an atom and Ahmed admits that he is guilty. It is appropriate that Ahmed's confession uses standard Arabic as it calls to mind the use of Fusha in written reports for administrative purposes.⁸⁵ This shows that Arabic is institutionally supported by governmental institutions. Amal's expression of the impact of religion on her spiritual life indicates that Fusha may be a symbol of the pure sensation of self-discovery that she experiences at the end of her journey. Fusha also provides a solemn

tone to Amal's confession.⁸⁶

The linguistic diversity in *Khamsūn* has to do with the concept of verisimilitude that is dear to both Baccar and Jaïbi. The director claims that he wants his actor to be true, but not real. In her article, "Pièce Explosive à Tunis." ("Explosive Play [Khamsoun] in Tunis,")⁸⁷ Zoé Lamazou explains that Jaïbi engages in a debate between art and reality. The critic argues, "But if the play is rooted in the Tunisian reality Jaïbi denies a realistic theatre."⁸⁸ Lamazou cites the director, who claims, "I do not ask the actor to be realistic, I ask him to be true and this has nothing to do with reality."⁸⁹ Jaïbi's emphasizes how verisimilitude as a convention lends an artistic touch to his theater which saves it from becoming absurd. This can be interpreted as Jaïbi indicating that the diversity of language registers in but one aspect of verisimilitude. In a similar context, Marvin Carlson speaks of "macaronic" plays that mix up languages to provide an aesthetic perspective. For him, plays that combine languages are also concerned with "artistic verisimilitude."⁹⁰ Carlson's argument speaks to the fact that all of Jaïbi and Baccar plays represent the Tunisian reality artistically.

The Use of French: Occupational and Class Dialect

While the colonial French language is still dominant in Tunisian administration and education, Baccar's use of terms, expressions, and sometimes sentences in French does not highlight the postcolonial linguistic legacy of French in Tunisian culture. On the other hand, the critic Micaud argues that bilingualism shows how striking it is that French is still used in post-colonial North Africa, pointing out that French is considered the language of "rationality and modernity."⁹¹ Micaud's argument implies a colonial discourse that does not necessarily apply to Baccar's use of French. Although she writes in French, in most of her plays, including *Khamsūn*, her use of French is extremely limited and does not address

postcolonialism.

Instead, the playwright uses French for two reasons. At one level, her use of French echoes code-switching that is part of the daily speech in Tunisia. During the interrogation of Amal (act 1, scene 3), the character's responses to the police questions about her name, address, and profession are expressed in a mixture of standard Arabic and French. While Standard Arabic is the language used by the Tunisian administration, the French expression *Prof de Français* (Teacher of French)⁹² is an example of how people use French, especially with regard to literate occupations. The tendency to use French in occupational dialect rather than the native language is common. Other words in *Khamsūn* are not translated because they are borrowed terms. These include types of coffee such as *Direct/Express*.⁹³ Including such phrases fits into the bilingual practices of the society where the use of either borrowed or translated French words and expressions flows naturally in daily conversations that are predominantly in dialect.

Baccar also includes a few sentences in French that mark class dialect. For instance, act 2, scene 6 includes complete sentences in French which are indicative of the more literate social class represented by two characters, the lawyer Mrs. Boublil and Maryam. Maryam expresses the hardship of seeing her husband sick, her daughter veiled, and her dream that everything is possible turning into a nightmare. In her own words, Maryam says: "J'ai l'impression de vivre un cauchemar." ("I have the impression that all of this is a nightmare.")⁹⁴ However, among the intellectual elite, French is not used in a systematic way. For example, in her response to the above statement, the Mrs. Boublil uses the same French word *cauchemar* (nightmare) in a different way. She overgeneralizes the syntax of the possessive form in Arabic, which makes the term *cauchemar* sound like *cachemārī* in her question: "But what happens if you see *my own nightmare*?"⁹⁵ This use of French shows how it becomes appropriated by means of applying the grammatical rules of Arabic to the

Tunisian dialect. The odd sound of term *cauchemārī* may have an odd effect that causes the audience to smile and thus help alleviate some tension caused by a tough conversation on Islamic terrorism between Maryam and her friend.

Khamsūn exemplifies how the Familia troupe pays particular attention to exercising social and political criticism, based not only on the use of language but also on the employment of theater techniques, including the use of costumes, body movement, lighting, and props such as a metal ruler and chairs.

The Aesthetic Representation of Ideological Conflicts and Government through the Representation of Hostility in *Khamsūn*

Khamsūn represents a situation whereby the Tunisian people are stuck in the malaise caused by both the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes. The tension between the ideological forces, the secular and Islamists forces, and the police-state forces, is portrayed by the use of costumes. For example, the play opens with ten characters among whom are two women wearing black and white Islamic garments, three other ladies in black follow them, and five male characters appear all in black. The predominant color is black. The color choice opens the play in darkness, symbolic of the tragic event that occurs at the end of the prologue: Juda's suicide bombing.

These characters adjust to different parts in the play by changing their costumes on stage. The lighting technique helps accomplish the change of clothes on stage as the director does not work on beautifying the stage by making actors change their clothes in the slip stage. Instead, the use of space on stage for the purpose of changing costumes forecloses realistic acting that may make the audience identify with the characters. For instance, in the

first scene, after the narrator's voice provides information about Juda's suicide, these characters face the curtain together, raising their index fingers toward the sky; they then move towards the audience, lowering their index fingers and raising them this time toward the audience, then back to the sky. These gestures may hint at the actors' confusion about the event as they cannot decide who is responsible for Juda's terrorist attack. By moving their fingers toward the sky, the characters hint that the incident fits into a religious discourse based on a Tunisian cultural gesture that suggests locating the Lord's realm in the sky. The other finger movement seems to point at the responsibility of the audience, engaging them by suggesting that what happened to Juda directly concerns them. This technique is familiar to the reader/viewer of Baccar and Jaïbi's productions. Their attempt to establish interaction between the actors and the audience is sometimes expressed through a gaze, which is the case in their 2010 performance, *Yahia Ya 'ish* (Amnesia).

Most importantly, in the scene following the symbolic finger movements, all characters take off their Islamic clothes and appear dressed in police garments in which they tread on top of their Islamic clothes. They then ironically take a photo as a souvenir. The shift from their appearing as Islamists to being dressed as police portrays a clear power reversal. The characters keep changing their theatrical clothes in accordance with the needs of each scene. During the interrogation scenes, police power is manifested through taking off the veils of the characters Amal and Hanen. The police's action humiliates them while depriving them of the right to clothe themselves as they choose.

In addition to veils and police uniforms, the conflicts between the different ideological paths of other characters are also represented by costumes. For example, both Amal's mother, Maryam, a Human Rights activist and Mrs. Boubilil, a lawyer, are clothed in casual suits. In act 2, scene 6, these characters meet at a bar and wear dresses that reflect their liberal attitude. The opening scene of the same act portrays Maryam in plain black and grey

clothing next to her husband Youssef, while he is seated on a chair wearing russet pyjamas. Here again, the power is on the side of the police-state agents versus the Leftists, to whom Youssef belongs. The depiction of this character seated in a chair speaks to his physical disability as he is assisted by his leftist friends to sit down and cleaned by his wife with a wet towel. The story of Youssef is also symbolic of the crackdown on the leftist movement under Bourguiba's regime from 1968 to 1978. The way in which Youssef appears on stage is emblematic of his alienation and exclusion from the Tunisian political scene. The use of the pyjamas speaks to exclusion from any activity, designating a state of inactivity and lack of consciousness, yet the character does not surrender to torture.

Youssef's paralysis indicates that his body, as the title suggests, was kept hostage for twelve years in prison. The character's disability leads to a discussion of the violence etched on his body by the torturer Gaddour. Through the use of costume with other props such as a metal ruler, the audience is invited to perceive how Gaddour, the torturer, has evolved over the course of the play. In act 1, scene 7, this character is named Laith and appears much younger than when he appears as Gaddour in act 2. The same actor (Jamal Madani) plays both parts. In act 2, he is portrayed as an aged hunched man wrapped in a grey ("literally rat-like color") coat.⁹⁶ The description of this character invites the audience to observe the transformation of this character throughout time. While at a young age he was feared by all prisoners, this man has lost his power in his old age. By portraying Gaddour in this way, the playwright seems to remind the Tunisian government agents and politicians that power is not everlasting. The old-age costumes can speak to the state of misery that these people experience when they no longer have any control over the people. At another level, the construction of the character Gaddour brings the audience relief after the tension in the scenes involving torture. The characterization of Gaddour is complex. It produces fear, relief, and pity, perhaps even disgust for the torture he carried out. His rat-like colored coat, as Baccar

describes it, suggests that the audience feel pity for the man, arousing the urge to soak him in a hot tub to wash him as a way to wash away his “filthy” deeds. Baccar may also have chosen this color to designate the animalistic state of the man. The torturer’s bestiality becomes visible when a human being confronts another human being by biting him and using a metal ruler to break his knees.

Resistance to Government Hostility

Baccar argues that it is too late for the character Youssef to regain the twelve years of his life that he spent in prison. It is also too late to recover from his five surgeries. However, the playwright proposes that it is not too late to remind Gaddour of his atrocious and inhumane actions and by doing so, allow Youssef to save his dignity since nothing is left to him except that he has not abandoned his beliefs despite the torture he endured. For Youssef, there will be no reconciliation between the Tunisian regime and the Left. For instance, in the hospital (act 2, scene 11),⁹⁷ Gaddour visits Youssef, offering him a bunch of flowers. Youssef refuses them. Instead Youssef hands his diary to Maryam to read aloud to Gaddour. By doing this, Youssef transcends his inability to walk and speak via the medium of writing. Maryam reads extracts from his diary describing the ways in which Gaddour tortured her husband. Hence, the body of Youssef can be understood in light of the international title, *Hostage Bodies*. This body was detained for twelve years as a hostage. However, throughout the play, Youssef continues to resist the Tunisian regime that held his body captive attempting to compel him to confess or to abandon his ideals. He remains true to his beliefs until he dies at the end of the play.

Khamsūn shows how the issue of terrorism can be understood as the outcome of a despotic regime in the representation of the police force and Gaddour, the character who

embodies the history of torture. To a certain extent, Gaddour is reminiscent of both Laroussi in *Gassalet Ennouader* (The First Real Rain of the Fall) and Hsayra in *Famīlia* (Family) who exhibit total submissiveness to their respective managers and cooperation with the Tunisian political regime from 1956 to 2006. All three characters are robot-like figures; they do not think about their deeds. Instead, they carry out their managers' orders and the regime's laws. They function under the influence of fear. It is curious that both Hsayra and Gaddour express their fear of being sent by their superiors to the less-privileged far South of Tunisia if they do not adequately perform their jobs of superintendent and police agent/executioner, respectively. Despite the fact that they both seemingly embody power, they are also threatened by that same power.

Baccar's play proposes to counter the single mindedness of this regime by offering different perspectives on Islam. The playwright's representation of Islamic fundamentalism inheres in the way in which each character acts and approaches Islam. The play not only shows how anyone can be accused of being and persecuted as a Salafist due to the 2003 counterterrorism law, but also provides an example of repressive policies. *Khamsūn* itself fell under the tight control of the censorship department. The play not only dared to represent Islamic terrorism on stage, but also depicted, among other things, the tradition of torture to show how the government had attempted to eradicate terrorism.

In retrospect, theater critics Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson point out that *Khamsūn* raises the question, "Has a dead end been reached or, perhaps, a final break before a new start?"⁹⁸ It is not surprising that Juda's suicide next to the Tunisian flag should raise such an alarming question, warning the audience of a forthcoming disaster. In the context of Tunisian daily life, although only a minority of Salafist groups endorse terrorism, it may be reasonable to claim that *Khamsūn* predicted the rise of the Salafists and feared their acts. Baccar contextualizes the issue of Islamic terrorism based on the representation of the history

of past Tunisian regimes to show how extremist groups arising under repressive conditions become dictatorial in their turn. Both fiction and historical events converge in so far as the Salafists protested against drinking alcohol and what they viewed as anti-Islam art and film in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

The director-playwright pair employ their full awareness of the actors' body movements and costumes among other techniques to express their ideas of repression and resistance. In addition to the interplay of language and body to make political points about the repression of all ideologies and movements that do not please the official regime, *Khamsūn's* aesthetic choices make use of the trope of Islamic terrorism to critique the hostility of the Tunisian police state. Chapter Four will expand more on the repetitive, and yet deliberate use of certain tropes. In the next chapter, I attempt not only to examine plays in connection with one another but also to reflect on Jaïbi's theater from the 1970s to 2013.

1. Abd-l-Jalil Bouguerra, *Min Tarīkh al-Yassār at-Tūnsi: Harakat Āfāq (1963–1975)* [From the history of Tunisian left: Perspectives' movement (1963–1975)] (Tunis: Cérès, 1993). Bouguerra's work provides a concise documentation of the Tunisian leftist movement that was repressed under the government of Bourguiba because the leftists wanted an independent political party and refused to cooperate with the Bourguibist regime.

2. One has to be cautious about the use of the term "Fundamentalism" because it has been frequently co-opted by the press to mean terrorism. In the 1982 *Concise Edition of the Webster's New World Dictionary*, "Fundamentalism" is defined as "religious beliefs based on a literal interpretation of the Bible." Until then there was not any reference to Islam, or terrorism. In the online *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, however, "fundamentalism" is defined as "a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles <Islamic fundamentalism> <political fundamentalism>." In this chapter, I will use the expression "Jihadi Salafism" to be specific about the branch of Islamism that adheres to more specific notions of Islamic terrorism because fundamentalists are not necessarily terrorists, although they can be. Laurence Davidson, a leading expert on Middle Eastern history, provides an explanation of what Islamic Fundamentalism could mean, noting: "A Western term used to designate contemporary Islamic movements that advocate a strict observance of Islamic law and values, and the institutionalization of these through the establishment of an Islamic state in a context known as Islamic revivalism, Islamic activism, and political Islam" (*Islamic Fundamentalism* [Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998], 172). Davidson shows awareness of the original use of the term "fundamentalism" in the Christian context, and his preference to employ this term is based on its accuracy and wide usage both in the West and the Muslim world (*ibid.*, 16–17). In "Terrorism, Islamophobia, and the Media" (in *An Introduction to Islam in the 21st Century*, ed. Aminah Beverely Mccloud, Scott W. Hibbard,

and Laith Sand [Oxford: Blackwell, 2013]), Scott W. Hibbard, an expert in political science, argues that although the connection between religion and violence has shaped contemporary perceptions of Islamist movements due to Islamic militancy, the majority of Muslims do not see violence as being consistent with the core of Islam. Because his study is informed by political contemporary studies, Hibbard notes that Islamic militancy and religion are, sometimes, conflated because they are driven by political motives. He explains that conflating the two might help some individuals to be elected to the public office, to influence government policy, and to silence critics. The author also argues that Islamist militancy developed in a specific context, noting how the Western discrimination against minorities on the one hand, and the Western support to and intervention in the Middle East and South Asia on the other—particularly the American support to Afghanistan during the 1980s—contributed to the rise of fundamentalism in the region and helped to shape Western views of Islam as a religion. One has to be cautious about what these terms mean because they have become loaded in Western academic discourse. Being widely used does not justify that these terms can still be confusing and misleading. It is thus important to opt for more accurate use of terms to indicate nuances. Violence, for example, would be a decisive component that helps to identify whether or not a group of people are terrorists.

3. The WSIS, established by UN General Assembly resolution in 2001, was held in two stages. The first took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2003. The Tunisian meeting, which took place on 16–18 November 2005, was the follow-up, intended to put the Geneva plan into action. Specifying that the fictional event of bombing also occurred in November suggests that Baccar aims not only to create a link between the historical and the fictional events but also to highlight a contradiction between two viewpoints. First, the global image of Tunisia makes it a favorable destination for the World Summit meeting. The second viewpoint, however, points to the helplessness among the youth, leading to suicide bombings due to, among other reasons, a lack of free speech in the country.

4. The term “flag” appears in the original draft of the play script. However, the term is replaced by carnation in the published play due to a compromise that the playwright and the theater director had with the Theater Orientation Committee, the Tunisian government’s body that censored the plays discussed in Chapter Two. The term “flag” is maintained in the performance. Because it was not the intention of Baccar to change this term, “flag” is used in performance. Because the term “carnation” does not have the same impact as “flag,” I hold fast to the original word “flag” in this study. It is not clear why Baccar selects carnation, but one can interpret the playwright’s choice in terms of distancing theory in the sense that the term “carnation” creates estrangement. This distancing may occur at the removal of a glamorous flower from its customary environment and the displacement of the emotion that can be triggered at the view of a carnation once it is positioned next to Juda’s bombed corpse. The redirection of emotion helps to alienate the audience, forcing them to rethink the reasons that may have motivated Juda to consider suicide bombing.

5. Jalila Baccar, *Khamsūn* [Fifty] (Tunis: Dār al-Janūb, 2007), 38–39.

6. *Ibid.*, 39.

7. John W. Berry, “The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) : A Global Challenge in the New Millennium,” *Libri* 56 (2006): 1–15.

8. It should be noted that in theory the Tunisian constitution legalized other parties, but in practice (electoral campaigns) these parties did not occupy any importance. The one-party state is used to prevent other parties from achieving power, and by doing so it ends up winning more than 90 percent of the vote.

9. While there were mass student protests in Tunisia in April 2000, almost six months before Sharon performed his controversial visit to Aqsa mosque, it is unlikely that students

reacted to Sharon's September 28 visit for the simple reason that classes in Tunisian colleges usually start the first week of October. This is significant because Baccar is using and distorting history to serve her purposes. I imagine that her main objective is to connect national oppression to international one. She may want to note that Tunisia is under oppressive leadership, and yet it is not an isolated case because other nations, too, including Palestine, are under a similar state of repression. The April 2000 strikes do not serve the playwright's purposes because they were about privatization and economy, especially because Baccar's play is primarily about Islamic Fundamentalism. By bringing in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the playwright attempts to prove that Islamic fundamentalists are likely provoked by certain repressive conditions and leaders. In a similar way, Amal's fictional participation in the protests against Sharon's visit seems to gain significance in reminding the audience that Sharon, the right-wing Zionist, provoked the Palestinian uprisings. The playwright's focus on that particular event highlights the Muslim-Jewish conflict in the region. The playwright's emphasis on Sharon's visit draws sympathy toward Muslims and Islam by shifting focus from April 2000 economy strikes to the Arab unrest that took place as a result of the visit. Most important, Baccar seems to suggest that Islamic Fundamentalists operate under the assumption of feeling provoked and threatened. What she aims to establish is a link between the uprisings in Palestine, known as the second Intifada and provoked by Sharon's visit, and the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in the Arab and Muslim world. The playwright is aware that the concerns of Tunisia throughout its past fifty years are mainly secular concerns. Nonetheless, she investigates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the angle of the Muslim-Jewish differences represented by the displacement of a historic site from being a site of Judaism later destroyed by the Romans and then restored by the Muslims to become one of their holy sites. The shift of the focus from secular concerns to religious concerns that unite Muslims across a religious continuum makes her argument that Islamic Fundamentalism is an international concern and that this phenomenon cannot be treated separate in each country stronger.

10. Talbi's proposes that the Qur'ān is modern in the sense that it calls for respect of individual choices. As much as Talbi adheres to the Qur'ān, he calls for the abolition of Sharia (the Islamic laws) made by the disciples of Prophet Mohamed after his death. Because the Salafists found their reading of the Qur'ān in terms of these Islamic laws, Talbi himself is accused of being heretical. Today, the author is the target of Terrorist Salafists in Tunisia. Talbi expands on the contribution of the Tunisian regime and the colonial heritage to terrorism in his *Goulag & Democratie* [Goulag and democracy] (Tunis: Finzi, 2011). In this work, he mentions that no publishing company in Tunisia, France, or Morocco would publish the book for him before the fall of the Tunisian regime. In the end, he published it himself.

11. Mohamed Talbi, *Goulag & Démocratie* [Goulag & democracy], (Tunis: Finzi, 2011), 7.

12. Some of the Salafists believe in the concept of Jihad, which literally means struggle. The term "Jihad" implies the duty of being on defense based on old and recent historical conflicting relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially Christians and Jews (examples of ancient and modern conflicts are the Crusades and al-Qaida). Jihadi Salafists want to become martyrs based on death in the service of God.

13. Both Alani and Jurshi refer to two most well-known Salafist schools in Tunisia. These are the intellectual and the Jihadi Salafism. Jurshi makes a different distinction between the two schools by explaining that Salafism can be violent or peaceful. While Jihadi Salafism is violent, intellectual Salafism does not intervene with politics and is peaceful (Jurshi 320–21). Alani contrasts Intellectual Salafism for being concerned with preaching Islam and correcting Muslims' behavior with the more revolutionary Jihadi Salafism. Alani

also specifies that there is another group of Salafists who are known to operate under auspices of any kind of political regime (Alani 345, 356–60).

14. Laurence Davidson, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 13-14.

15. In his recent report, “Tunisie: Violences et défi salafiste” (*Moyen-Orient/Afrique du Nord* 137 [13 February 2013]), the analyst Ayari argues: “Une nouvelle génération de jeunes islamistes qui ne connaît pas bien An-Nahda et se fascine pour l’imaginaire de la résistance tchétchène, irakienne ou afghan voit alors le jour” (i).

16. During the presidency of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (1987–2011), Circular # 108 specified that any dress code that expresses connection to a cult is banned in public institutions. This law prevented all female Tunisians from wearing the veil in any public institutions and made these women subjects to police humiliation and punishment mainly when they claimed their freedom of clothing in the way they want to.

17. More information is available in a letter written by Sarah Leah Whitson, the executive director of United Nation Human Rights Committee, in which she calls the Tunisian authorities to eliminate and to revise a number of articles of the 2003 law. The goal of the committee is to safeguard human rights.

18. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 54.

بوليس 1: "النّهضة/ شعبة الحقّ/ أنصار الاسلام/ السلفيين/ الاخوان المسلمين."

19. Ibid.

بوليس 2: "لعلّ حزب الله."

20. Ibid., 46.

ليث: "اسلام العصابات التسترة بالدين/ الليّ تحب تسلب للعباد عقولها و حرّياتها/ الدين سيّسوه/ سمّموه/ و بقتوه في خطاب سلفي رجعي."

21. Davidson, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 19–29. Chapter 2, “The Society of the Muslim Brothers,” describes the impact of the fundamentalist organization Muslim Brothers on the rise of Muslim Fundamentalists today.

22. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 173.

"حنان: مواطنة مسلمة عادية"

تحلم بأمة اسلامية موحدة."

23. Ibid., 88.

"أمل: على خاطر نظرة الاخر تعاون على الرجوع للأصل."

24. Ibid., 174.

"أمّي أبي أنا عاشقة وكل قطرة من دمي أمست تسبّح للواحد الأحد."

25. Sharon’s visit is both a fictional and historical event.

26. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 19.

أمل: "81/08/18 تونس/.../ 9 نهج الشّاه."

27. “Iranians Mourn Two Slain Leaders,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 31 August 1981, p. 1.

28. Qur ān 13:28.

"ألا يذكّر الله تَطْمِئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ" (جزء من آية 28 سورة الرّعد)

29. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 174.

"حنان: أمل تأمّن بفصل الدّين عالسّلطة."

30. Ibid., 189.

صوت أمل: "لم أكن أعرف شيئاً / فقرأت و تعلّمت/ و ظننت أنّي عرفت/ فتكلّمت و ثرثرت/ لكنني اكتشفت/ أنّي أجهل كلّ ما ظننت أنّي تعلّمت/ فسكنت/ فسكنت و تألمت/ فسكنت واستمتعت/ فسكنت واستبشرت/ ظننت نفسي ذرّة/ فاكتشفتها ذرّة/ فألقيت بها لكون شامل حامل."

31. ("Un moment de vertige.") For further details, see appendix 1, interviews with the playwright Baccar and the theater director Jaïbi.

32. Details about the context in which Jaïbi describes the experience of the actor as someone who explores his individuality is available in a video at <http://vimeo.com/35684755/>.

33. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 98. The narrator describes how Juda, Amal, and Hanen each resembles a baby in the *Qmāta* (a piece of cloth used to swaddle a new born baby) (98).

34. Ibid.

35. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 149.

36. Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. "Preface." Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland. Massachusetts: Persus Books Publishing, 1991. 92.

37. Ibid., 99.

38. Fadhel Jaïbi, interview by Jamel Arfaoui, *Maghreb*, November 17, 2006.

39. Mohamed al-Madyouni et al., "Thalāthūn Sana min al-Masrah at-Tūnsī" [Thirty years of theater in Tunisia], *al-Masrah at-Tūnsī Muntalaqātuha wat-Tijāhātuha* Conference, November 1988; Dar Ath-Thaqāfa Ibn Khaldoun, 1988; Matba'at Sharikat Funūn ar-Rasm wa-n Nashr wa-s-Sahāfa, 1989, 17.

"في 5 جويلية 1966 و المتعلق باسناد التأشيرة للنصوص المسرحية و الأمر الصادر في 12 مارس 1969 و المتعلق باللجنة القومية للتوجيه المسرحي. وهي لجنة مكلفة بقراءة النصوص و مشاهدة العروض قبل تقديمها للجمهور" (المديني، مغامرة الفعل المسرحي في تونس، ص 19-120)

40. Ibid., 17.

"في 5 جويلية 1966 و المتعلق باسناد التأشيرة للنصوص المسرحية و الأمر الصادر في 12 مارس 1969 و المتعلق باللجنة القومية للتوجيه المسرحي. وهي لجنة مكلفة بقراءة النصوص و مشاهدة العروض قبل تقديمها للجمهور."

41. Mahmoud Al-Majri, *Min Wathāi'q al-Masrah al-Madrasī at-Tounsī: 1954-2007* [Documents on the Tunisian Theater Centers at schools: 1954-2007] (Tunis: Sahar, 2009), 59, 67.

ومن الشعب الهامة للميدان الثقافي شعبة المسرح فهو وسيلة من وسائل التثقيف الشعبي . . . على أن المسرح قبل كل شيء وسيلة لتهديب الشعب . . . ويصبح وسيلة من وسائل الدعاية في الخارج و مظهرا من مظاهر تمدن تلك الأمة . . . أن نبدا من الأساس بأن نسعي في تكوين جمعيات تمثيلية بين طلبة المدارس الثانوية لغرس بذور هذا الفن في نفوسهم منذ حداثتهم."

42. Ahmed Hađik 'Urf, *al-Masrah al-Tūnsi wa 'wa'iq al-Tajāwuz* [Tunisian theater: Obstacles to improvement] (Tunis: Dar al-Janub, 1997), 32.

انكشف التعارض بين أهداف السلطة ونوازع الخطاب الجديد: السلطة تريد من المسرح أن يكون أداة دعائية . . . ، السلطة تدعو الى الانشغال بالقيم المجردة و هذا المسرح يلح على تفاصيل اليومي

43. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 31.

وسيلة [البوليسة]: "علاه عالنوار/ عندها مشكل مع القرنفل."

44. Ibid., 10.

صوت: "بلاد الحبيب و الغريب."

45. Ibid., 112.

46. Talbi, *Goulag & Democratie*, 40. In a similar context of underpinning the roots of dictatorship in Tunisia, Talbi notes "Ben Ali did not create the Tunisian dictatorship, but he established a system out of it. The father of the nation and dictatorship, as well is Bourguiba" (40). Talbi's argument is based on the political repression that took place under both presidencies.

47. Rafika Zahrouni, "Titre Khamsoun," e-mail to Moez Mrabet, 22 June 2013.

48. Ibid., 151-55.

49. Ibid., 96. "Je refuse d'être l'otage de deux intégrismes."

50. ("There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.")
 ("لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ")
51. Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Arab Protests: Clinton Urges Countries to Resist Tyranny of Mob," 14 September 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/14/arab-protests-clinton_n_1885289.html
52. Davidson, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 14
53. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 110.
- الممثلة 2: "اشرب و تمتّع/ قبل ما يحرّموه علينا."
54. Tarek Amara, "Tunisian Salafis Attack Alcohol Sellers in Capital," Reuters, 2 July 2013.
55. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 116.
- المحامية: "ما تماش اسلام غير سياسي."
56. Ibid., 112.
- مريم: "ماهي [خالتها نجاة] من أصلها مسلمة/ تصلّي و تصوم/ لازم هالشويقة."
57. Ibid., 76.
- الصّوت: "يوسف قال اذا أمل تلبس الخمار/ نقطعها."
58. Ibid., 18.
- بوليس 2: "مجبور نطبّق عليك المنشور عدد 108/ اللّي يمنع منعاً باتاً اللباس الطانفي / في المؤسسات التربويّة و الاداريّة."
59. Suzanne Daley, "Tensions on a Campus Mirror Turbulence in a New Tunisia," *New York Times*, 12 June 2012, p. A4.
60. Habib Mellakh and Habib Kasdaghi. *Chroniques du Manoubistan* [Manoubistan Diary] Tunis: Cérès éditions, 2012.
61. Gilbert Grandguillaume, *Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb* [Arabization and the politics of linguistics in the Maghreb] (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1983).
62. Ibid., 7. Based on his analysis of the use of Arabic in *Arabisation et Politique Linguistique au Maghreb*, Miquel explains that the division is beyond the traditional division between Arabic and French in that it "opposes this time languages of prestige, classical Arabic and French, to other everyday languages, which are dialectal Arabic and Berber" (ibid.).
63. Djedidi, *Le théâtre tunisien*, 111.
64. Quoted in Grandguillaume, *Arabisation et politique linguistique*, 55. Mohamed Mzali, Tunisian minister of education in the 1970s, argues that "la 'Tunisification,' c'est avant tout un esprit, une fedelite a l'essentiel, une action pour forger une jeunesse tunisienne qui ait foi dans les fondements essentiels de sa nation: la religion islamique, la civilization islamique, la langue arabe, et l'histoire nationale" (ibid., 55). Tunisification in the context of education may mean a different matter that is yet in line with the idea of self-assertion. For Charles A. Micaud, "[T]he 'Tunisification' of the educational system meant essentially the adoption of the French system with the addition of enough Arabic language and culture to distinguish it from French education" ("Bilingualism in North Africa: Cultural and Sociopolitical Implications," *Western Political Quarterly* 27, no. 1 [March 1974]: 93–94).
65. Grandguillaume, *Arabisation et politique linguistique*, 56.

66. Micaud, "Bilingualism in North Africa," 94.
67. Ibid., 96.
68. M. A. K Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), 157.
69. Grandguillaume, *Arabisation et politique linguistique*, 51. Grandguillaume claims, "[C]'est la langue arabe qui est garante de l'unité nationale" (51).
70. Djedidi, *Théâtre tunisien dans tous ses états*, 6. "[S]ur les 193 spectacles s'exprimant en arabe, produits dans la période située entre 1995 et 2000, 126 spectacles s'adressent aux enfants et seulement 67 aux jeunes et aux adultes, contre 395 spectacles, pour la même période, s'exprimant en dialectal" (6).
71. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 11.
72. Micaud, "Bilingualism in North Africa," 96.
73. Ibid., 96.
74. S Somekh, "The Concept of 'Third Language' and Its Impact on Modern Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 12 (1981): 74.
75. Tawfiq Al-Hakim, *al-Ṣafqa* (Cairo: n.p., 1956), 159–62.
76. Ibid., 75.
77. Ibid.
78. Djedidi, *Théâtre tunisien dans tous ses états*, 113. Djedidi writes, "Fadhel Jalbi [*sic*] n'a pas d'autre choix que de prêter à ces [*sic*], inspirés du quotidien de la cité, cette langue dans laquelle les tunisiens expriment et libèrent leurs pulsions, c'est-à-dire le dialectal."
79. Jedidi, *Théâtre tunisien dans tous ses états*, 113. The Iraqi poet Abu at-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi (915–965) is considered as one of the greatest Arabic-speaking classical poets.
80. Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 256.
81. Ibid., 258.
82. "لكلّ مقام مقال"
83. The Qur'ān [The disbelievers], Al-kāfirūn, Ch. 109, Juz 30.
(سورة الكافرون (قران))
84. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 153–55.
85. Ibid., 186.
86. Ibid., 189.
87. "Pièce Explosive à Tunis."
88. Zoé Lamazou, "Pièce Explosive à Tunis" [Critical Play in Tunis]. *Jeune Afrique*, April 2007. <http://www.familiaprod.com/presselintelligent.htm/>. 93.
89. Ibid., 93.
90. Marvin Carlson, "The Macaronic Stage," in *East West: Cross-Cultural Performance and the Staging of Difference*, ed. Claire Sponsler and Xiaomei Chen, 15–31. (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 17.
91. Micaud, "Bilingualism in North Africa," 93.
92. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 19.
93. Ibid., 126.
94. Ibid., 111.
95. Ibid.
96. Baccar, *Khamsūn*, 118–19.
- 119) (الصّوت: "ملفوف في كَبوط جربوعي." (119))
97. Ibid., 148–55.

98. Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson, *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 212.

Chapter 5: Repetition and Difference in Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi's Theater

Whether Familia's theatrical productions are repetitive or differ from each other has been disputed by Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi's audiences. On more than one occasion, audience members stated they were either satisfied because a performance directed by Jaïbi met their expectations, or dissatisfied for the same reason. In the latter case, their discontent arose from the boredom caused by repetition. A constructive perspective on the "repetition dispute" is to ask whether repetition is by nature always also redundant. In this chapter, I argue that repetition can be intriguing. Thematic, stylistic, and theatrical readings of plays directed by Jaïbi reorient the focus on repetition to examine how the technique of reprise can be beneficial.

Repetition has multi-faceted advantages that benefit the actors, audiences, and director. Repetition, not only of words and ideas but also of theater techniques, should not be understood in terms of mere repeating of the same thing as there are always new touches when elements are repeated. In performance, these elements are conditioned by time and space. When words and ideas are reiterated, they can be perceived by audiences differently, especially when the words and ideas are contrasted to other words and ideas heard previously. Repetition necessarily implies recognition. By force of repeating similar themes, the recurrence becomes an instrument that affects the audience as well. It becomes a tool not only to familiarize the audience with the topic of the play but also to teach the audience and enable observers to disentangle what is repeated from what emerges anew. Repetition in Jaïbi's theater also helps the actor discover different aspects of him or herself while onstage. With every performance, new experiences lead to new discoveries that cannot be duplicated. In addition to the effects of repetition on the audience and actors, repetition in Jaïbi's theater aims to achieve perfection by the force of experimenting with similar themes and techniques within the spirit of the Experimental Theater. The director is aware of repetition as a way to

aspire to perfection in directing and transmitting the social, artistic, and intellectual dimensions of each performance. However, he sacrifices the goal of perfection in order to continue producing plays that aim to raise important questions.

This chapter explores several plays in support of the argument that repetition of certain themes, tropes, and character types enhances familiarity among Jaïbi's audiences. These elements are repeated, however, in a varied rather than fixed manner. Over time, the audiences have developed certain expectations of Baccar and Jaïbi's performances. In order to meet and also challenge these expectations, playwright-actress Baccar and director Jaïbi established a symbiotic relationship with Tunisian audiences. Repetition helped to form a conversational approach between the New Theater troupe—later, Familia Productions—and audiences. This chapter also explores the ways in which some of Baccar and Jaïbi's later plays (produced by Familia Productions) can be understood, to a large extent, as an expansion of their early theatrical experiences with the New Theater troupe.

Moreover, the playwright and director have continued with, rather than broken from, the main principles of the New Theater. The New Theater Troupe staged *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*.¹ Most of the writing of *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* was by Fadhel Jaziri (co-founder of the New Theater and the group's director). The other seven plays were produced by Familia Productions. These include both the eponymous *Famīlia* (Family) and *Les amoureux du café désert* (Lovers of the deserted café), written and directed by Jaïbi in 1993 and 1995, respectively. Familia Productions also produced *Junūn* (Dementia, 2001), *Araberlin* (Arab/Berlin, 2002), and *Khamsūn* (Fifty, 2006), written by Baccar and directed by Jaïbi. Both the 2010 and 2013 performances of *Yaḥia Ya'ish* (Amnesia) and the most recent performance of *Tsunami* (2013), were directed by Jaïbi and co-written by Baccar and Jaïbi.

An examination of how these plays are set in dialogue will demonstrate the continuity between both the New Theater troupe and Familia Productions' company. Focusing

particularly on Baccar and Jaïbi's plays from *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (1980) to *Tsunami* (2013), will show how the New Theater and Familia plays make effective use of common traits in light of repeated themes, tropes, and character types. French philosophers Jacques Derrida's and Gilles Deleuze's theoretical insights on repetition and recognition will illustrate how some shared thematic and stylistic principles can be recognized in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (1980), *Tsunami* (2013), and other plays. Their work asserts that while every event is repetitive at face value, each event is unprecedented not only because it has its own singularities but also because it calls to mind some other event. In addition to Derrida and Deleuze, Jaïbi himself must be aware that repetition does not mean sameness. In an interview, Jaïbi compares his experience in theater to the act of "hammering down the same nail." This figurative expression implies that he dwells on experimenting with the same principles to make his social and political criticisms, yet has not stopped hammering, as will be discussed later.

Derrida's view on repetition comes through in his critique of J. L Austin's "Speech Act Theory" in which he proposes that statements can be either performatives or constatives. In his lecture, "How to Do Things with Words" (1955), Austin argues that there are utterances that are, performatively, able to enact a change in someone's state of affairs. Austin is concerned with the purity of conventional speech acts as they occur in the real world, obeying shared and recognized conventions. Austin's theory limitations are discussed in Derrida's famous lecture "Signature, Event, Context, 1977." Derrida's critique is based on the premise that there are no original or essential utterances versus parasitic or impure ones. Derrida claims, for instance, that ordinary language does not exclude literary language. Rather, for every utterance to be recognized it has to be repeated. Derrida argues:

[I]sn't it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, "non-serious," citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, a general iterability—without which there would not even be

a “successful” performative? So that—a paradoxical but unavoidable conclusion—a successful performative is necessarily an “impure” performative, to adopt the word advanced later on by Austin when he acknowledges that there is no “pure” performative.²

Unlike Austin, Derrida does not confine the success of performatives to conventional speech acts. Derrida points out the need to deny genesis and cause concerning the relationship between oral and written communication. I draw on Derrida, who asks the rhetorical question “Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance?”³ I propose that the answer should be negative. For Derrida, every utterance has to be repeated in order to be recognized. The founder of deconstruction, Derrida presses the need to deny genesis and cause. In his critique of J. L. Austin’s theory, which privileges direct speech based on purity, Derrida argues, “[I]t might seem that Austin has shattered the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept.”⁴ By this, he implies that Austin’s theory of Speech Acts confines the success and purity of performatives to direct speech. Derrida’s argument, on the other hand, includes semiotic and non-semiotic elements that are equally important in conveying meaning as a construct that cannot be understood by tracing ideas and forms to their origins. Derrida’s concept of Différance—a term he coined in 1965—suggests that meaning is endlessly deferred or postponed to new meanings. This suggests that there is no original meaning and that no idea exists outside the system of differences. In a similar way, Derrida’s view on repetition is also non-essentialist in the sense that a text is based on differences and oppositions that can generate infinite interpretations. This chapter will show how, with each play, Baccar and Jaïbi rethink the issue of repression, touching on the most serious to the most common transformations that humans experience, such as becoming older. This point has been viewed by Carol Kino as “repeatedly live.”⁵

Similarly, for Deleuze, everything repeated is different, as in the case of old grass, for example, that dissolves in the new and gives fresh substance. Taking a metaphor from

botany, Deleuze and Guattari use the rhizome, a complex root system, to explain the relationship of interpretations to text. In his later co-authored work, *A Thousand Plateaux* (1980), with the psychoanalyst Felix Guattari, Deleuze introduces the idea of mapping to show how the rhizome resists any structure that has a beginning, root, or end. Mapping can also be modified in terms of interconnected concepts, without reference to a starting point. The connection between old and new rhizomes makes it possible that a rhizome breaks up and regenerates based on new or old lines. It does not have to be a new rhizome. The idea of rhizome refutes the concept of originality and essence in much the same way as Derrida's system of differences. Most importantly, for both Deleuze and Guattari, repetition is not mechanical, nor is it understood by tracings. Its meaning lies rather in breaking up a series of status quo situations and deconstructing them to learn how the old forms become new, without tracing the new back to the old based on lineage. Instead, everything is understood in terms of contractions: a form of multiple selves to show how things cannot be easily represented. In the Deleuzian sense, reality and representation are not the same but rather one is the reflection of the other. For example, reality cannot be contracted to fit in a representation. Representation is not a form of re-presentation, nor is it the multiple forms of manifestations of an essence, rather it is an exercise of problematization and dramatization of the reality whereby the thinker is an actor, rather than a spectator. Dramatization is the term that Deleuze suggests to express the idea that problematizing ideas is the fundamental component of thought. This is a way of putting together thoughts, or "assemblage" as used by Deleuze and Guattari. They consider assemblage an innovative work.⁶ In a similar way, the practice of weaving plays involves the physical, intellectual, and emotional awareness of the actors, resulting in infinite new experiences as stated by Jaïbi during a Master Class in Piccolo Teatro di Milano.⁷

Deleuze and Derrida have different intellectual backgrounds and goals. Unlike Derrida, whose research is grounded in linguistics and who resists methods and principles, Deleuze draws on several disciplines, including mathematics, physics, and biology, and offers methods and principles for a philosophy of difference.⁸ Another striking difference between the two lies in the fact that, unlike Derrida's focus on the semiotic approach to understanding texts, Deleuze's interest is not restricted to the individual: "The individual is, rather, a series of processes that connect actual things, thoughts and sensations to the pure intensities and ideas implied by them."⁹ Deleuze distinguishes pure differences (differences in themselves) from intensities. There is no pure intensity because each one is related to another entity. James Williams, a prominent contributor to Deleuze scholarship, states: "For Deleuze, the condition for what we commonly understand as repetition in habit and memory is, in fact, the continuity afforded by the variation of an intensity in an idea or sensation."¹⁰ Williams gives an example of what Deleuze meant by variations in intensities by referring to a daily walk routine that is different each day. The intensity with which the daily walk interacts may differ in terms of space, time, and manner (slow/fast). Another example of intensive states is that experienced by a schizophrenic patient who goes through different states of repulsion and attraction. Deleuze explains, however, that the variation of things cannot be identified in actual things and does not depend on identity. Multiplicities of moments can also help to understand that the past is not separate from the present. Habits, for instance, have to do with presence of the past in the present. Also, forgotten past moments can be triggered and lived in the present moment. The cookie scene ("the madeleine scene")¹¹ narrated in Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (In search of lost time) is used as an example by Deleuze to show how remembrance of things past occurs.¹² The way in which the cookie dipped in the tea immerses Marcel in his previous life in Combray illustrates how thoughts and imagination are charged with variable intensities.

Both theorists' models of knowledge can be used to understand how something can be repetitive and yet different in Jaïbi and Baccar's enterprises. What Derrida adds to this is that repetition gains its meaningfulness from its connectedness to previous work based on recognition. Recognition is not part of Deleuze's theory. Yet, recognition helps to demonstrate the interconnectedness between the various theatrical representations by Jaïbi and Baccar. Deleuze's idea of variations in intensities is useful to understanding the new interpretations gained from the director and the playwright's dramas despite the apparent sameness implied in the act of hammering mentioned earlier. Simply because an act is repeated does not mean that each iteration is identical. The above metaphorical expression is compelling as it speaks to delving deeply to discover new substantial ideas and forms that are not separate from past ideas. However, this detailed research of theater is not related to the past only. By being both politically engaged and vigilant, the director and playwright have also produced plays that portray their vision of the future. In this way, the metaphor of hammering down the same nail implies that there is no rupture between New Theater and Familia Productions. The term "hammering," also suggests resistance against established ideas. The interviews with Baccar and Jaïbi support this interpretation. They explain that they want their theater to raise questions rather than to provide answers.¹³ Their theater seeks neither truth nor defined or fixed answers. On the contrary, the validity of their theater lies in representing Tunisian reality through conflicts and contradictions that are capable of generating more questions with each new performance. Finally, "hammering down the same nail" for so many years may also stand for the wish to reach professional perfection.

The very phrase, "hammering down the same nail," serves well in highlighting the distinction between repetition and difference. The plays of Familia Productions converse with an early work of the New Theater, *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*. Common to *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, *Famīlia*, *Les amoureux du café désert*, *Junūn*, *Khamsūn*, and *Tsunami* is the recurrent theme

of resistance against political repression. *Tsunami* is a political drama that revives past ties with both *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* and *Junūn* based on the flood trope and the recurrent rebel character type. This character type is represented by Beya (played by Baccar) in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* and the psychiatrist “She,” in *Junūn*. Also, both Amal in *Khamsūn* and Dora in *Tsunami* are rebels. An additional character—the “cog” type—is manifested in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (Laroussi), *Famīlia* (Hsayra), and *Khamsūn* (Gaddour). The cog in the system refers to subordinate members of the state or private organization in which they perform mechanical and routine functions. Their robotic behavior makes them like a cog in the wheel. Their very role in society is to maintain a repeated function imposed by the regime.

A preoccupation with social and political criticism is inherent in all of Baccar and Jaïbi’s theatrical experiences. As discussed in the last two chapters, both the playwright and director critique the dysfunctional social and political institutions in Tunisia. The repetition of this theme, however, invites the audience to reconsider the simplistic statement that theater repeats itself. Criticism in the theater of Baccar and Jaïbi has not only permeated many aspects of Tunisian society in seemingly similar ways, but their multiple dramas resist contemporary Tunisian government in different forms—the action of resistance is repeated but the representation is varied. It would be a misconception to regard the couple’s theater as repetitive or static based on the claim that it merely reproduces a Tunisian reality that has not changed much from independence (1956) through the postcolonial era, to post-revolutionary Tunisia (2011-Present). One cannot overestimate how complex the Tunisian reality portrayed in each new performance by Jaïbi and Baccar truly is. *Tsunami*, for instance, stages dysfunctionality in the Tunisian political system in new ways. Unlike the earlier play *Khamsūn* that stirred up a discussion over the centralization of power and the alienation of all opposing political factions, *Tsunami* critiques the current Tunisian regime for extending political pluralism to a political Islam that tolerates Islamic extremism. In *Tsunami*, Jaïbi and

Baccar portray extreme factions of Salafism to warn of complete disaster in the post-revolutionary era. The story of *Tsunami* is driven by recent historical changes in the social and political scene in the Arab world in Tunisia, and to a lesser extent in Syria. The play's focus on troubling political events sheds light on the contradictions that resulted from the 2011 Revolution. One aspect of these contradictions is the division among people due to conflicts that are informed by antagonistic traits of secularism and Islamism. These conflicts were fueled by the 2011 Revolution and led to a politically divided society. In *Tsunami*, Jaïbi and Baccar refer to recent historical events, including the assassination of the forty-nine year-old leftist opposition leader, Chokri Belaid on February 6, 2013 (AFP news)¹⁴. In doing so, the playwrights are reframing the recent event in the present time. While the play reenacts real events, it also revives rather than merely reiterates the past.

The play also represents another true-life event: The training of Tunisian youths as extreme Salafists to fight against the current Syrian regime, showing how Salafism in its more extreme form has prospered under the current Tunisian regime.¹⁵ Belaid was a lawyer and secretary general of the Unified Patriotic Democratic Party. As a leftist-secular opposition leader, he was critical both of the pre-revolutionary regime led by Ben Ali and the post-2011 Islamist government. Belaid was also critical of the Tunisian government for allowing youths to be trained to fight as *Mujahidin*—(strugglers) or those who do *jihad*—and to die as martyrs in Syria.

The assassination of the character Ramzi (Ramzi Azaiez) in *Tsunami* echoes Belaid's assassination or so-called martyrdom in the recent history of Tunisia—an event that is also represented in the play. The play portrays the protagonist Dora (played by Toumadhir Zrili) who refuses to comply with the moral and social constraints imposed by her family including forcing her to wear the veil and to marry her cousin without her consent. Dora is a young rebel who stands not only against her rural and conservative family, but against extreme

Jihadi Salafism specifically and against political Islam in general. To protest dress codes dictated by political Islam, Dora unveils herself in public, acting to protest both the disappearance of her brother—who was lured by the idea of fighting in Syria to become a martyr through fighting with al-Qaida, and of opposing the authoritarianism of her uncle, who has arranged for her to marry his son without her consent. Despite her love for her family, Dora runs away; during her journey she meets people from different cultural, political, and religious backgrounds. Among them, she gets to know Hayet (played by Baccar), a sixty-year-old intellectual, militant feminist who embodies the typical Baccarian role of an advocate for human rights. An early supporter of the Tunisian Revolution, Hayet is disillusioned because she realizes that the Revolution itself has created a climate of discontent, and that her dream of political and social change in her country has also been shattered turning her dream into *kābūs* (a nightmare). The dashing of Hayet’s hopes is echoed in a child’s dream: the child tells his mother that Tunisia, which appeared to him in his dream, was erased by a huge wave. Hayet introduces Dora to Ramzi, a friend and lawyer to whom Dora gives important documents that could hold accountable members of the extremist Islamist movement for crimes against Tunisian citizens in the past. The circulation of these documents leads to important events. After she befriends Dora, Hayet is accused of helping her in her revolt against political Islamists. Silencing Hayet is a way of punishing her.¹⁶ Consequently, Hayet also receives death threats from these extremists. The documents also lead to Ramzi’s assassination. Despite the pessimistic tone of the play, *Tsunami* ends with a glimpse of hope in a dream of a bird portrayed as representing the saving of Tunisia from an impending “tsunami.”

The fear of Jihadi Salafism may be understood as a leitmotif that connects *Tsunami* to previous theatrical productions, especially *Khamsūn* and *Les amoureux du café désert*. Most importantly, for both Deleuze and Guattari, repetition is not mechanical, nor is it understood

by tracings. Its meaning lies rather in breaking up a series of status quo situations and deconstructing them to learn how the old forms become new, without tracing the new back to the old based on lineage. If *Tsunami* is woven from post-revolution incidents to condemn the ascendance of extreme Salafism, the 2006 play *Khamsūn* correctly predicted that Tunisian Salafists would present a real threat to the stability of the country. As discussed in the previous chapter, *Khamsūn* represents the suppressed ideological factions in Tunisia during fifty years (1956-2006). *Khamsūn* also suggests that the Tunisian police-state system was “digging its own grave” by producing angry youths who were ripe for Revolution. In my fourth chapter, I demonstrated that *Khamsūn* might be read as an attempt to launch a broader discussion about the single-mindedness of the state: the playwright portrays Islamic fundamentalism, Salafism, pan-Islamism, Sufism, and liberalism through a number of characters which represent these different ideologies. In other words, with *Khamsūn*, Baccar immerses her audience in the context of terrorist Salafism by means of Juda’s suicide, Ahmed’s involvement in the bombing, and the police’s accusing the other characters of being terrorists. Thereby, Baccar depicts a regime that does not distinguish between Islamic terrorism, pan-Islamism, and Sufism, treating all three ideologies as terroristic. By depicting people who were silenced and persecuted by the Tunisian government under both presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali, the play condemns the way in which the Tunisian government, especially under Ben Ali, used the fear of terrorism to rationalize legalized political repression.

Much earlier, in *Les amoureux du café désert*, the director and playwright had expressed the need for vigilance against the rise of Islamic terrorism. Jaïbi incorporated this particular theme into the larger context of examining a dysfunctional public education system and equally flawed family relationships in Tunisia. The story of the 1995 play revolves around Leila, a student who has disappeared under suspicious circumstances. When her sister

Lilia (played by Narjes Ben Ammar) announces that Leila was raped by a certain Prof. Krik, her mother Beya (played by Baccar) attempts to join a group of students who meet regularly in a café so as to gather as much information as she can about the mystery of her daughter's disappearance. The rape becomes the symbol of dysfunctionality in society, especially as Prof. Krik does not get in trouble for his criminal act. The scandal advances the events of the story, leading to a division among students between supporters and opponents of Prof. Krik. In contrast to both Mina (played by Shama ben Chabaane) and Daly (Moez Mrabet), two students support Lilia by boycotting Krik's course and by protesting such scandals at the university. Other students, including Néjib and Abdou, defend Prof. Krik. The son of the accused professor, Kiki, and his mother, Mrs. Bakhta Krik (Fatma ben Saïdane), use all the means at their disposal to protect the professor.

Conflicting stories about Leila's disappearance are told by the nine Tunisian students who regularly meet in the café to discuss their concerns, conflicts, aspirations, love affairs, and relationships, including those with the university and their respective families. They portray a generation in crisis. The playwright investigates the reasons behind the crisis of government education during the 1990s, pointing to multi-layered responsibilities that are shared by the educational system and changing family relationships. Unexpectedly, in this play Jaïbi ties the crisis of education in Tunisia to the civil war in Algeria. Taos, an illiterate Algerian woman, often goes to the aforementioned café to meet with the student Abdou, who reads her the letters she receives from her son Saïd. Early in the play, Taos receives a letter from Saïd that reports the assassination of a professor in front of his students. Following the event, Islamic terrorists threatened all schools with similar acts.¹⁷ In addition, Abdou reads in Saïd's letter detailing how his father, who considers the liberal Taos a heretic, burned Saïd's passport because he discovered his son had received letters from his mother. The religious language used by Taos's son illustrates how Islamic terrorists have influenced him.¹⁸ Saïd's

letter opens with a prayer that is more fraught with elaborate religious speech than a conventional letter's opening. Abdou reads: "In the name of Allah the most compassionate and merciful and peace be upon Muhammad seal of the prophets and grandfather of Hassan and Hussein..."¹⁹ Abdou also reports how Saïd's father forces him to accompany him to the mosque in order to attend religious debates. Abdou's reading of the letter is suspended when the noise of a train drowns out his voice. Exploiting the train's noise in the scene suspended Taos's full attention in listening to Abdou until the train moves far away and is no longer heard. Toward the end scene of the play, Taos meets with Abdou who reads her a letter that opens with a much more elaborate prayer than the earlier ones. In this letter, Saïd warns his mother that she should not expect him to return and join her in Tunisia, telling her that he is convinced of his coming martyrdom and that in that case, she will not be receiving further news from him. The letter ends with a Qur'anic verse that honors martyrs. In the stage direction it is noted that religious music permeates the scene when Cyrine, who works in the café, starts moving the chairs around the deserted café, almost following the rhythm of the music. Jaïbi draws a link between Saïd in Algeria and Abdou in Tunisia as Abdou gradually becomes a more radical Muslim. As Abdou reads Saïd's words, he begins to adopt his voice. The changes in Abdou's physical appearance mark his belonging to a group of conservative Muslims who grow their beards as an expression of religiosity. The change in Abdou is also moral as he decides to stop reading Saïd's letters to Taos as he feels he must curtail the relationship between this liberal woman and himself. His later vexed reactions to Taos holding his hand and treating him as a son, also depict his estrangement from her. Abdou explains to Taos that he is drawn to religion due to the many social problems he suffers from, especially poverty. As one of seven siblings, Abdou explains that he studies under pressure to help his mother feed the family. In religion, Abdou seems to find comfort. Growing his beard, however, caused him trouble with Taos who insults him, drawing the conclusion that

he is turning into a fanatic like all the extremists of whom she is aware in Algeria—which was under the control of extremists when she left. We do not know what happens to Abdou later in the play. Toward the end, Taos meets with Abdou one more time to inform him that her husband has sent a friend of his to Tunisia to force her to return to Algeria. Then, Abdou reads the final letter she receives from Saïd, informing his mother that he has decided to stay in Algeria, accepting his destiny to become a martyr. However, by weaving this relationship between Taos and Abdou, Jaïbi's main concern is to suggest how events in Algeria and Tunisia may converge. *Les amoureux du café désert* reveals that Tunisia is directly affected by the political events in neighboring countries, and thus is not immune to the spread of Islamic extremism.

In addition to *Les amoureux du café désert*, *Araberlin* also addresses the theme of Islamic fundamentalism. This response shows Islamic terrorism as it is perceived through the lens of the West. The playwright reorients the gaze at Islamists to a European perspective, in particular the Germans' response to the issue. Baccar's *Araberlin* not only describes the reaction against the way in which Western (German) authorities attempted to eradicate Islamic terrorism, but also as a call for vigilance on the issue of Islamic terrorism everywhere in the world. Baccar wrote this play specifically for a German festival and the targets of her satire are Germans and Europeans. *Araberlin* is an indirect political satire that holds a mirror to the Western/European audience, portraying their fears through a terrorist suspect's story. The goal of the satire is to sensitize the audience to the reality that terrorism arises when people feel their identity is threatened. This explains why the playwright bases her plot on a Lebanese-Palestinian terrorist suspect. Her choice to dramatize Islamic terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is deliberate, her aim was to remind the European community that the events of 9/11 and the rise of Islamic terrorism are rooted in that conflict. The focus on Islamic terrorism links *Araberlin* to *Khamsūn*, *Les amoureux du café désert*, and *Tsunami* in

important ways. Whereas the first two plays are concerned with fear of terrorism, mainly inside but also outside Tunisia, *Tsunami* dramatizes the urgent need to address the issue of terrorism while it is taking place in Tunisia, warning of civil war if the right measures are not taken by the policy makers. *Araberlin* by contrast examines the dilemma from a global perspective, considering how Islamic terrorism is a real threat that should concern everyone. The focus on extremists is reoriented. Rather than portraying how these extremists attack the West based on how they regard it, *Araberlin* shifts the focus from the terrorist suspect who disappears to the ways in which German society views terrorism. The portrayal of terrorism in the West whereby the Muslim/Arab becomes “the Other” also highlights the causes that ignited tensions between East and West in the first place. These issues in turn led to the rise of terrorism. Baccar suggests that the issue is larger than the difficulty Muslim immigrants have encountered attempting to integrate into German society. Her approach to the immigration problem is rooted in the East-West conflict that can be traced back to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The playwright could have adopted a historical approach using important moments in history such as the crusades or colonialism, but her focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict emphasizes her political activism as well as a personal choice that is better understood in her 1998 monodrama, *al-Bahth ‘an ‘Ayda* (Searching for Aida). This play is driven by the memories of the character (Baccar) who travels to Beirut in search of ‘Ayda to share with her, among other things, her memories of the historic Palestine before it fell into the hands of Israel in 1948. What is interesting here is the disappearance of ‘Ayda at the outset, a pattern that is repeated in many plays by Baccar and Jaïbi.

Similar to *al-Bahth ‘an ‘Ayda*, *Les amoureux du café désert* and *Khamsūn Araberlin* also starts with a disappearance. The 2002 drama tells the story of Mokhtar El-Kodsi, an architecture student in Germany who disappears before the beginning of the play’s action. He is a Lebanese-Palestinian suspected of being a member of an Islamic terrorist organization.

His disappearance (and the accusations of terrorism) throws the lives of his family into chaos as they are faced with the challenge of being related to a person accused of terrorism. The play represents the stereotypical reaction of a Western audience to the Muslim immigrant community in the West following the 9/11 terrorist attack. This reaction reinforces the idea that being Muslim is equivalent to being a terrorist. The characters include his sister Aïda, a German-Palestinian former actress married to Ulrich, a German, and their son, Kais. As the play unfolds, the audience discovers that not only Aïda and her family but also Mokhtar's fiancée, Katarina (or Katy), have all been harassed by the police, media, and even their friends.

Araberlin focuses on Islamic terrorism in Germany as a possible outcome of the political oppression and injustice that have emerged from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Beirut. The play highlights the social impact of suspecting both Muslim immigrants and Muslim German citizens of Islamic terrorism. Mokhtar's sister, Aïda, is subjected to accusation and harassment, initially by the police. In one early scene, The Search, an anti-terrorist brigade invades Aïda's home. A member of the brigade named "He" searches her apartment and becomes suspicious of an Arabic-language manuscript he finds. Aïda defensively tells him that it is simply a Muslim calendar. "He" replies, "Anything in Arabic is suspect,"²⁰ highlighting the idea that terrorism is not only about being Muslim—it is also about being Arab.

Being of German extraction does not save Katy from humiliation as Mokhtar's fiancée. During the interrogation, police officers rape her in order to force her to confess anything she knows about Mokhtar and his friends, including his ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and political views. They want to know if he prays, eats pork, and drinks alcohol. Rumors about Mokhtar start to spread, which affect even her broader relationships. After the scandal extends to all Mokhtar's acquaintances, Aïda describes how her family confronts the

media harassment of “the dozens of poisonous biased articles about them.”²¹ The harassment extends to all aspects of the family’s life: Even the teenager Kais hears terrible epithets when answering the phone.

A close reading of *Araberlin* suggests that an investigation of Islamic terrorism necessitates further analysis of world politics—not to justify terrorism, but to show how the argument that the ends justify the means tend to be useful to the wielders of power on either side. Right up to the end of the play, the reader (or viewer) is not sure whether Mokhtar is a terrorist, because nothing is actually proven against him. Judgmental reaction forces Aïda to ponder her hybrid identity, as she is both Arab and German, while she simultaneously feels furious. When her husband suspects she is mad at him, Aïda replies: “I’m mad at the whole world/ Not at anyone in particular.”²² The judgment she endures highlights global political sensibilities that divide the world along religious lines, rather than serving to bridge gaps for the purpose of social and political integration. Indeed, Aïda blames the entire world for its neutral position on injustice.

The prevalence of Islamic terrorism shows how the misuse of power, particularly regarding the ways in which the Tunisian government has handled Islamic terrorism, varies throughout the plays from being treated as a peripheral concern before the Revolution to becoming the central issue after the Revolution. Baccar and Jaïbi’s post-revolutionary play, *Tsunami*, marks a significant aesthetic shift in their depiction of the theme of Islamic terrorism to an overtly radical tone, alluding to an imminent threat. As this shift demonstrates, Baccar and Jaïbi’s thinking about the question of Islamic terrorism has evolved from a mild to a bold tone and from a local to a global perspective. In *Les amoureux du café désert*, the playwright focuses on terrorism as an international phenomenon, suggesting that it may be imported from Algeria and subsequently influence Tunisian youths, due in part to the failure of Tunisian public education and the frailty of Tunisian family structures. Because the

Islamist theme is secondary in this play, the criticism of the threat of Islamic terrorism in *Les amoureux du café désert* remains rather mild. However, in *Khamsūn*, Baccar and Jaïbi reorient their focus more directly on the responsibility of Tunisian leaders for the birth of Islamic terrorism in Tunisia, placing the blame on those who would limit freedom of expression. By limiting specific political parties, they deprive some segments of the population their due political process. The alarmist tone of *Tsunami*'s theme of destruction refers to political schism that may lead to despotism and perhaps even civil war.

In addition to the threat of Islamic terrorism, both the earlier and later plays of Jaïbi and Baccar are concerned with police abuse of power under a tyrannical leadership. The theme repeats, but the critical tone changes a great deal from one theatrical production to the next. Social and political criticism was metaphorical in the earlier plays; see for example, the discussion in Chapter Three on *Junūn* where it is argued that the asylum stands for Tunisian society. This political message has become much more direct in the later play, *Yaḥia Ya 'īsh*. The latter marks a shift in critiquing the police-state system, the depiction of which has already changed tremendously from the 1995 *Les amoureux du café désert* to the 2006 *Khamsūn*. In the 1995 play, by warning Mina that the police officers will get the truth out of her, Beya points to the ruthlessness of the Tunisian police system. Mina's reply to the older woman is not straightforward. She does not state clearly that she was raped by Professor Krik. When Mina states that she was harassed and trapped, Beya ridicules her response by wishing her good luck with the cops, adding that the cops do not joke as they have methods that would make a rock confess. Beya hints at the means the police employ in order to get the answers they want from suspects. The suggestion of police torture and the methods they use to force confession raises the issue of police inhumanity and abuse of power.

In 2006, Baccar's *Khamsūn* reintroduced the theme of power abuse by the police. The playwright moves beyond critiquing dysfunctionality to directly challenge the practice of

torture in unprecedented ways, showing how this practice infringes on human rights. The playwright also depicts the ways in which the executioner Gaddour represents the instrument of torture during the eras of both Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali. In this play, the character Youssef recounts the ways in which the Tunisian police tortured him. The description of torture is so crude that it turns the stage into a space of confrontation between the theater as a force of critique and the political power. The playwright Baccar calls on the Tunisian people to wake up by using black humor. Youssef recalls how Gaddour had flipped his body into the position of “a roasted chicken” so he could hit his knees till they broke. In his prison diary, Youssef also describes how Gaddour bit his upper arm. By providing egregious examples of torture, Baccar allows the Tunisian police to see themselves in a mirror, challenging the authorities to abolish such inhumane practices. Certainly, Tunisian authorities did not welcome the way in which they were portrayed and initially banned the drama. They allowed its staging only after it was premiered in France.

Theater critics have also reflected on the changing tone of criticism in the work of Baccar and Jaïbi. In her theater review of *Yaḥia Ya ‘ish*, the journalist and theater critic Odile Quirot remarks: “Under Ben Ali’s regime, Fadhel Jaïbi has clearly been obligated to get around censorship.”²³ With this statement, Quirot affirms that the drama demonstrates the possibility of an imminent coup awaiting the political character Yaḥia Ya ‘ish. Quirot argues that while this criticism is veiled, it raises questions about a dictatorship that filled a power vacuum. Quirot’s underestimates the play. In fact it shows a growing boldness and is the most forward of all their plays to that date. It is more daring because its critique concerns not only the Tunisian government’s control of incompetent institutions, including the media, but also the actual leadership. With *Yaḥia Ya ‘ish*, the director and playwright have begun to push past fearing reprisals from oppressive regimes. They are fighting for what they consider to be

a fair and democratic government. This representation aims to mobilize the masses against the regime itself.

The original performance of *Yaḥia Yaïsh* in 2010 was also more audacious than any previous play because it foretold the imminent fall of a leader who abused his power. The leader's subsequent attempt to escape being brought to justice remarkably predicts the real-life events that soon materialized during the Tunisian Revolution, with only slight differences. By staging *Yaḥia Yaïsh*, the director-playwright pair attempted to mock the power holders in postcolonial Tunisia, and perhaps all dictatorships that remain in power for many decades. The play attests to the the high degree of independence enjoyed by Familia Productions despite the limitations imposed on cultural life by the government. Kahlid Amine and Marvin Carlson, two prominent theater critics, argue: "This 2010 production is a call for power-holders to revise their relations with citizens."²⁴ Beyond sensitizing those who hold political power to reconsider their relation to society, the major goal of Jaïbi's play is to put an end to the Tunisian regime. Portraying the rulers themselves as the targeted audience makes *Yaḥia Yaïsh* a compelling play representing the removal of a dictator while he was still in power.

The Flood Trope and Its Meanings

The use of similar tropes in *Tsunami*, *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* and *Junūn* provides a stylistic connection between these plays. The flood trope, for example, is repeated in the three aforementioned plays, without being identically represented. The flow of water generally runs to lower ground. This current cannot be the same as it moves, which may be understood in terms of what Guattari and Deleuze identify as "Difference in itself." While the three aforementioned plays share a common trope, the image of the flood is interpreted differently.

This stylistic device also expresses the need for change in the sense that the flood brings in a radical difference and new life emerges after the devastation. In *Tsunami*, for instance, the flood metaphor in the play represents a symbolic flood that may even lead to the utter destruction of the current Tunisian regime before any real change can happen. The flood metaphor also portrays the danger of a post-revolution Tunisian society divided by two ideological forces: Islamism and Secularism. The title also implies that the post-revolutionary political situation has the potential to generate a “tsunami,” hinting that Jihadi Salafism is a rapidly rising tide that can destroy everything in its path. On July 15, 2013, Jaïbi himself proposed that the current situation in Tunisia could lead to a bloody civil war.²⁵ Through a collaborative process of writing and staging, Jaïbi and Baccar express their concerns over the current situation in Tunisia. They propose that the image of the flood best articulates their fear of an imminent disaster due to the current government’s inability to manage a new political situation in which long deprived political factions became recognized as active political parties.

More than a generation earlier, the New Theater play, *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (1980), opened with a depiction of heavy flooding that ravaged everything in its way in Tunis. This fictional event corresponds to a real flood that occurred in 1969, killing 400 people and destroying 70,000 homes. The New Theater uses this event as a symbol not only to hint at the impact of the historical flood, but also to call for rebuilding things on new ground. The play specifies that among the objects that the flood has taken in its wake are books of a library that included antique and contemporary writings.²⁶ The flood stands for renewal, announcing a new start through the act of the destruction of both classical and modern Arabic writings.

Because these writings—in disciplines such as history, philosophy, geography, and math—are destroyed by the flood, newspapers form the main written genre addressed in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*. Through the flood trope, *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* suggests that both a

complete destruction of the Tunisian media and renewal of mainstream media should take place. In this play, the call for changing the media suggests that this sector can only prosper in a free society. The lack of free expression in the press, particularly with regard to newspapers, forms the main concern of *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*. The drama suggests that the media problem is a political problem that cannot be reformed by reforming the press only. The play also demonstrates how the people who hold power cooperate with the official political system. The dynamics of the Tunisian political system, which controls everything, is portrayed through the story of a newspaper publishing company. Because the media issue is at the intersection of many fields, metaphorically speaking only “a flood” will destroy the old habits and allow new ones to take their place. The media problem is negotiated through social class conflicts. The media company in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* is shown to be dysfunctional because of the family connections of employees: Youssef (Mohamed Driss), the owner, and his relatives hold the power. His stepdaughter Beya (Baccar) is a twenty-seven year old journalist and his nephew Izzeddine (also played by M. Driss) is the administrative director.

The need for better working conditions is a central concern. When Youssef is away traveling, his workers strike to show their dissatisfaction with working conditions. The protest underlines the class division between the workers and the middle class. While Youssef, Beya, and Izzeddine belong to the middle class, Laroussi (Jaziri), ‘Am Salah (also played by Jaziri), and all the other journalists and employees belong to the working class. Production manager ‘Am Salah does not agree with the other workers. While he thinks that they are right to express their needs by striking, his priority is that the newspaper *al-Akhbar* continue being published on time so that it will not lose any readers. For him, the work should be done first and negotiations should be undertaken later. He considers Izzeddine his rival because the latter fires three workers and instructs other workers, such as Laroussi, to prevent the three from entering the building. Izzeddine aims to block the protest.

The hierarchy of work positions in the small world of the newspaper publisher represents a microcosm of the social, economic, and ideological stratification of Tunisian society. The above-mentioned protes reflects the deficiency of the working conditions across different sectors in Tunisia during the 1970s and an increasing awareness of the impact of Tunisian private institutions on workers who could easily be fired if they protest. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* describes how the media are controlled by those who have power in the country. Only a “flood” can wipe away the entire political system that has a stranglehold on all such institutions.

These working conditions broaden the gap between social classes, creating conditions that emphasize the subservience of workers to their superiors. Laroussi, for instance, outwardly seems to be submissive to the commands of the manager and his family, mainly, to Beya. He acts in accordance with his survival instinct and is violent against other workers seemingly in order to protect the profits of his boss. In fact, his main purpose is to be able to continue to provide for his own family. Beya does not show any concern for Laroussi especially after her plan to entice him to be with her in the new place fails. In the meantime, she has to face Youssef, who blames her move and attempt to commit suicide on Laroussi because the latter helped her move to a traditional neighborhood so she can live far from her family. However, Beya soon takes Youssef’s side and completely denies Laroussi. This character ends up losing both his job and Beya. In response to her rejection, in the final scene of the play, the man carries out his revenge against Beya by kidnapping her, locking her in an extremely cold room, and committing suicide in the next room. Fortunately, Beya is saved at the end, but it is not clear by whom she is rescued. The relationship between Beya and Laroussi demonstrates how Beya’s attempts to rebel against her social milieu fails. Similarly, when Laroussi tried to deny the social differences between Beya and himself at the end of the play, he was rejected and disillusioned and thus became suicidal. The dramatic relationship

between Beya and Laroussi highlights the danger of submission. The playwright suggests that oppressive working conditions may lead to the explosion of these repressed and silent people. The unfulfilled love between Beya and Laroussi is also a motif that is typical of Jaïbi's plays. Love that turns swiftly to tragedy suggests that social and political concerns cannot be resolved by means of romantic relationships. Jaïbi's drama proposes to foreground conflicts, rather than to seek answers to them.

In *Junūn* (Dementia), Jaïbi and Baccar revisited the flood trope to portray the hope for change both in the psychiatric institution and the family. In this play however, the image of the flood is murkier than in the aforementioned two. In *Junūn*, the protagonist Nūn imagines Tunisia flooded with blood: "blood ... streams of blood ... flooded rivers ... scarlet ... boiling ... flooding the country."²⁷ Nūn internalizes the way in which he perceives his country. Through this image, the patient Nūn expresses his anger against violence and oppression that he experienced both in the hospital and within his family. Unlike the flood trope in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, the blood component in *Junūn* adds an emotional dimension to the image of the flood of anger and the desire for revenge. To describe the patient's anxiety and depression, the playwright refers to the physical image of a bloody flood, which serves to heighten and engage the emotions of readers and audiences.

The flood in Jaïbi's plays seems to repeat an old concept that is common in religion as well as history. For example, the flood that occurred in the Bible²⁸ and reoccurred in the Qur'ān,²⁹ the story of Noah and his followers. The biblical flood lasted 150 years and was meant to wash away human sins as wickedness had pervaded the Earth. This flood nearly swept the human race from the earth. Only Noah and his followers were saved as Noah's righteousness had gained favor in the eyes of his Lord. The fifth chapter in the Qur'ān describes how the disbelievers did not follow the Prophet Noah, who is also described as *shakūr* (thankful) in the Qur'ān. The rejection of Noah's faith led to the destruction of all

those who did not believe. The floodwaters destroyed everything except for a few people and pairs of animals that escaped in Noah's ark. In both religious texts, the flood punishes those who denied Noah's message, validating the Prophet himself, and cleansing the world of sin for the generations to come. There are also narratives that treat the Nile River as a mythological figure. The Nile symbolized the power of the fertility goddess, Isis. In that mythology, the yearly Nile flood was the embodiment of Isis' tears over the murder of Osiris, her brother-husband. Certainly, the Nile flood continued to be an important subject of study throughout the ages. As an example, we have references to the ways in which the Nile flood was measured in the medieval era and in William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*.³⁰

In Jaïbi's plays, the use of flood trope departs from mythology and religion. It is rooted instead in the Tunisian social reality as a multivalent metaphor. While the component of destruction of all types of writings is an important element in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, which calls for media transformation, the bloody flood in *Junūn* suggests a stronger form of destruction such as war or violent revolution. The nature of flood trope also varies. While the flood is real and caused loss of life and home in the 1980 play, the 2001 drama shows how Nūn is inhibited by the concept of a bloody boiling river. Gradually, the playwright uses more features of destruction and the tone becomes more vengeful and violent. Yet, the protagonist's imagined river reflects his yearning for progressive change even if that change requires bloodshed. The image of boiling blood is significant in the sense that the people are preparing for a drastic change.

The Asylum Trope

In addition to the flood trope, the recurrent asylum trope in both *Junūn* and *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* also deserves consideration. The 2010 production of *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* connects to the

earlier play *Junūn* when the protagonists, Yaḥia and Nūn are locked at one point in a psychiatric institution. The plays diverge in that these protagonists are confined for different reasons. While *Junūn* addresses a dysfunctional family, *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* focuses on a leader who is also dysfunctional having lost his power. The use of the asylum trope in *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* is also broader because it demonstrates how all characters, including journalists, doctors, lawyers, and nurses gather in the psychiatric institution to interrogate the political leader, Yahia. While he was held in the ward, all the other characters are also part of the system. The presence of the civil society in the same location with Yahia illustrates that together they share responsibility for maintaining ineffective institutions in the country.

From the start, *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* announces a power shift: Prime Minister Yaḥia (played by Ramzi Azaiez), is mocked in a television newscast on the birthday of his daughter, and his dismissal due to abuse of power is announced. Following the news, Yaḥia is accused of burning his private library during his house arrest. As a result, he is committed to a psychiatric institution. Yaḥia's incarceration is also represented by his literal paralysis, which is an analogy for his distress, which began when he lost all his power. The portrayal of Yahia in his wheelchair represents his descent into hell. This fall becomes visible and inevitable as together with his daughter and wife, he enters a state of anxiety while enduring interrogation by journalists, prisoners, young people, and so on. First, Yahia attempts to run away from Tunisia, taking the first flight possible out of the country, but he fails. He becomes paralyzed and confined to a mental institution. Then, Yahia and his family try to flee Tunisia a second time. This time, they make it through security and finally depart. The paralysis of Yahia seems to embody the experience of being a dictator who loses all power. In his depiction as paralyzed and mentally ill, Yaḥia stands for a diseased Tunisian political regime. *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* is so compelling in the sense that it allegorically represents and predicts the flight of deposed Tunisian President Ben Ali, who left with a few members of his family on January

14, 2011. In this context, the director-playwright pair appear to be visionaries in creating a remarkable drama that almost perfectly predicts the events that preceded the Tunisian Revolution. The connection between *Yahia Ya 'ish* cannot be perceived in terms of repetition because the play reenacts events such as the flight of a leader similar to Ben Ali. The concept of repetition exemplifies no relation to an original event. Rather, the representation was thought of in terms of hypothesis and presupposition. This play was perhaps motivated by a dream of overthrowing Ben Ali. It could even literally have been a dream because in an interview with Jean-François Perrier,³¹ Jaïbi reported that one morning he told his partner that he wanted to direct a play about Ben Ali's life—an idea to which Baccar responded by suggesting her husband see a psychiatrist.

Both the story of Nūn and that of Yahia provide insight into the use of the asylum trope. They complement rather than repeat each other in their concern with political and social tension. The playwright and director aim to counter the dementia caused by medication and to resist amnesia by disempowering Yahia physically. His paralysis uncovers the reasons that led to the decline of Tunisian institutions, be they political, social, or medical. The use of the asylum trope in a number of plays and films was discussed in Chapter Three, showing that it reflects not only on the question of isolating patients, a theme that is common to these plays and films, but also on the reasons that brought each patient/protagonist to the ward in the first place. This trope is mainly used to indicate the struggle of the individual against authorities and against conformity—two aspects that are common not only in mental institutions but also in society in general. In Baccar's play, for example, the individual story of Nūn is a metaphor for the silencing of an entire society. Néjia Zemni's original case study reveals how the hospital can only partially fulfill the needs of a patient who suffers from a psychiatric disorder. Her focus on the family and society at large in order to understand her patient's dilemma is represented in Baccar's drama.

Besides the use of flood and asylum tropes, and the recurrent theme of Islamic terrorism in conjunction with the misuse of power, throughout the historical theatrical trajectory of Baccar and Jaïbi, there is also a repetition of character types. One may argue that this reiteration of character types, such as the working class “cog,” the rebel, and the militant leftist, is meaningful insofar as this duplication helps to understand how type characters both advance plot and complicate interpretation of these plays. Type characters sometimes use the same names at different stages of their lives. For example, Beya occurs in both *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* and *Les amoureux du café désert*. Giving these two characters the same name helps to draw links between the New Theater and Famila productions. Repeating the same type characters with the same names creates continuity of theme in different contexts.

Character Types/ Functions

Vladimir Propp’s early twentieth century theoretical approach to understanding of the structure of Baccar and Jaïbi’s drama is based in character theory. Propp categorizes character stereotypes in terms of function. These functions change throughout the text, for instance, from a character that deceives another character based on a particular function, such as the desire to have something. The change at the level of functions leads to the development of the character. To the end of the play, the audience does not see this character. In Propp’s *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1928), story is regarded as a route; the absence of the character will help to advance the plot usually when there is a seeker. In the absence of a seeker, the storyline is based on the victim.

The recurrent motifs in Baccar and Jaïbi’s dramas invite us to think of patterns of repetition. Among the functions that are particularly repetitive is absence due to political “disappearance” and in some cases death. Several of Baccar and Jaïbi’s plays open with the

mysterious absence of a major character; without his or her absence, there would be no story. The 1974 *al-Karita* (The Cart), discussed in Chapter Two starts with Sabti's father sending his son to the city in order to look for his friend Belgacem in order to borrow money. The more Sabti searches for Belgacem, the more he discovers the city and how different it is from the village from which he recently moved with his siblings. The function of absence allows exploration of a different location that helps the character Sabti to discover the social change happening in Tunisia. The absence of Belgacem and the search for him along the main avenues of Tunis intensifies Sabti's imagination of the city as he perceives it each time he embarks on a new search for Belgacem. In the 1998 monodrama from the beginning to the end of the monologue in *Al-Bahth 'an 'Ayda* (Searching for Aida), Baccar plays the role of one seeking Aida who we learn is a Palestinian refugee. Aida and her family were forced to relocate in Lebanon where she lost her husband, leaving her daughter, Jafra, fatherless. The search for Aida is useful for Baccar's investigation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Seeking Aida also frames the interconnectedness between the personal and the national story of Aida/Palestine. The drama is structured based on a double absence: the absence of Aida reflects an imagined Palestine, as characterized by the the speaker in the play. The presence-absence of Palestine forms the subject of an endless debate in Arabic literature whereby the Palestinian struggle becomes appropriated universally in light of each writer's goals.

The function of absence also structures *Les amoureux du café désert* and *Khamsūn*. The first play opens with the absence of Leila and the rumour of her rape by Professor Krik. Almost all the sub-plots in the story of *Les Amoureux* are related to Leila. Two examples reveal the way in which Prof. Krik's wife and son are involved in the students' life, looking for a way to defend Prof. Krik. The second example concerns the relationship between Beya and her daughters (Lilia and Leila). Leila's absence leads to investigations not only regarding the rumor of Leila's rape by Prof. Krik but also to other important discussions

between Beya and Lilia concerning familial relationships. In *Khamsūn*, Juda disappears from the opening scene when she blows herself up. The main discussion in Chapter Four highlights that every other event in the play is related to that extremist act. A similar function occurs in *Araberlin* with Mokhtar's disappearance from the outset. He is a member of a terrorist organization and his absence affects almost every other character in the play, particularly, his family. When a character dies or departs without our necessarily knowing if his or her departure is temporary, the course of action and building of sub-plots is advanced.

It is important to note, however, that Baccar and Jaïbi do not adhere to a fixed sequence of events. The absence of the character at the opening of the play familiarizes the audience with that notion. Nevertheless, the audience cannot predict the structure of these plays since there are exceptions. In *Yahia Ya 'ish*, for instance, the playwright chooses to hold Yahia accountable for his abuse of power. He cannot disappear at the beginning of the play as the audience must be allowed to observe the shift in power that makes him physically and symbolically disabled. Nor does *Junūn* announce any disappearance at the beginning of the play. The patient Nūn receives full attention in the play from beginning to end because the play is concerned with his progression from silence and so-called madness to self expression and sanity.

In addition to the recurrent motifs, the reiteration of character types explains how Baccar and Jaïbi use this device. One such type is the rebel character who acts in opposition to the established rules set by social and political institutions. Among the rebels in these plays are both characters who resist the established traditions of family and authority and those who embody the militant leftist and/or human rights activist. Examples of these would be Hayet in *Tsunami*, the journalist in *Yahia Ya 'ish*, and Maryam in *Khamsūn*. The division between these types is not clear-cut. The relationship between the human rights activist and the rebel, for instance, is sometimes blurred because some figures have the characteristics of both. For

example, Hayet in *Tsunami* is both a human rights activist and a rebel, whereas her friend Dora is a rebel only.

The rebel character recurs with Amal in *Khamsūn* and Dora in *Tsunami*. Both are painted as rebels against their families and society, but each character decides on a different journey. Dora's resistance to the establishment of political Islam and to social traditions that impose veiling and arranged marriage on women in her society is less complicated than Amal's multivalent acts of resistance—first to political oppression in her society and then in her act of self-definition when she is exposed to French culture. Within this second type of resistance is a third type of resistance: in France Amal joins some extremist Islamists, including her ex-fiancé, but soon her opposition to this extremism leads to her ideological shift to Sufism. Apparently, her Sufi ideals also cause her to oppose her father's leftism, which is grounded in dialectic materialism. Her act of rebellion against her father originates in the contrast between the ideals of freedom that he has taught her and his rejection of her due to her Sufism, that is, her adherence to a different ideology from his.

The rebel character type also shares common traits across different plays. This type includes Beya in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, Beya in *Les amoureux du café désert*, and the psychotherapist "She" in *Junūn*. They each exemplify the rebellious character type who challenges institutions that impose pressure to conform. In Baccar's 2001 play, *Junūn*, free expression is the most basic right that the rebellious psychiatrist "She" supports. In the hospital, this character encounters silence. The psychiatrist believes that free expression should replace medication and become the primary way to heal the protagonist Nūn from the schizophrenia that seems likely to be his future. By breaking silence about the incompetence of the Tunisian psychiatric institution and the repression within the dysfunctional family of her patient, the psychiatrist gets Nūn to express himself and regain his dignity via therapeutic talk sessions.

The rebel type in search for free expression and self-realization also plays a role in *Famīlia*. In his 1993 *Famīlia*, Jaïbi depicts the character Bahja's frustration at being denied her dream of becoming an actress. In this play, Bahja visits her deceased husband's grave to insult him for depriving her of her wish to become a dancer and a singer. She bitterly declares, "Every Thursday I visit his grave, I insult him and swear at him, curse and spit on him, then I return home."³² Bahja avenges herself by both insulting her husband and helping a woman whom she encounters in the graveyard who is also being prevented from becoming an artist. Bahja explains, "This is to retaliate against the one who kept me down at my flourishing age! This is to retaliate against the time that flows! This is to retaliate against merciless age! I want this lady to do what I was deprived from doing."³³ Able to make her own decision, Bahja attempts to help the young woman pursue her dream of being a singer, a feat Bahja never accomplished. The interaction between Bahja and this young lady relieves Bahja's frustration, giving her a chance to take revenge against her dead husband. Bahja recalls, "He besieged me for ten years. During ten years he frustrated me. So much did I please him to get one time on stage and sing but his answer to me was No."³⁴ In this scene, Bahja regrets that she submitted to her husband's will. However, by helping to transform the young woman's life, Bahja takes action that enables her to explore her own potential.

The characterization of the dissident Beya ties together *Les amoureux du café désert* and *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, suggesting how the representation of Beya in the latter play echoes that of Beya character in the former. In *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, Beya is both rebellious and liberal. Her decision to move to a new apartment to live by herself upsets her stepfather so much that he vents his anger on Laroussi, his company's driver, for helping her to move.³⁵ The decision of Beya to move is driven by her long stay in France, during which she an appreciation for living independently from the family. By comparing her life in Tunisia to the one she had in France, Beya recognizes how bored and imprisoned she feels at home. When

she returned from France with liberal ideas, she could not adjust to living with her family, or even to living in Tunisia.³⁶ Since she is overly sensitive, her inability to cope with the Tunisian traditional lifestyle leads her to attempt suicide. However, Laroussi rescues her in her apartment. With a subversive act of rebellion Beya seeks to disrupt an established social system in which women usually live with their families for as long as they are single. Beya tries to escape the apartment in which Youssef and Houria (the maid) live by moving to a traditional neighborhood. To accomplish her goal—the desire to change the ingrained social order—Beya has asked Laroussi to help her during the absence of her stepfather, the manager of the newspaper company. Her move gains significance as an element of her struggle for freedom and her wish to be away from the eyes of her stepfather, whose presence is a constant reminder of his poor treatment of her dead mother.

Beya's rebellious acts are multiple and sometimes ambivalent. These acts also involve the seduction of Laroussi—an act that disturbs the social class structure. Her opposition to the oppression of the media is not clear, however, even if Beya appears to be an advocate of free media and social change. Although she defends the cause of impartial journalism and encourages the thirty-six-year old driver Laroussi (played by Jaziri) to stand up for his rights, she refrains from taking action with regard to the workers' protest. Instead, she stays apart from the team and works in isolation.

A third act of rebellion shows how, through this character's social struggle against the norms of her culture, the lack of free expression that affects the media such as *al-Akhbar* is used to spread the official ideology. Beya opposes al-Bawandi, the chief editor of the newspaper, because he rejects her article advocating cleaning up the city of Tunis. Beya considers his action to foreclose social criticism. Beya's disagreement with Youssef, and her conflict with Al-Bawandi, the chief editor of the newspaper, illustrate how she struggles to resist the disempowerment of the press in her country. Beya experiences the rejection of her

article on “cleaning up the city of Tunis.” By using the term “cleaning up,” the New Theater troupe makes a political point, gesturing at the corruption of the people in power. Thus the use of the term “cleanliness” hints at the way in which the press is manipulated to suppress free expression and critical thinking. Resisting cleanliness implies refusing to allow the media to mention scandalous acts.

Beya also complains about the vacuity of the newspaper, blaming the manager Youssef for not using his newspaper to report the events that are taking place in the country. In France, Beya observed how journalism favors pluralism and free expression. Her previous life experience equips her to distinguish between committed and submissive journalism. Beya judges *al-Akhbar* to be disconnected from the real-life conditions of Tunisian citizens. In her conversation with Youssef about the poor content of the newspaper, Youssef expresses what Beya means by emptiness in these terms: “She [Beya] blames him [Youssef] for not having his newspaper discuss the events that are taking place in the country.”³⁷ Youssef’s use of the third person in his response suggests that he distances himself from Beya’s accusation and from responsibility. At the same time, by avoiding the use of the first person pronoun, he fails to admit his complicity in disempowering the press in his country.

In his review of *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, theater critic Ahmed Hadiq ‘Urf maintains: “[The newspaper] does not produce its own discourse. Rather, it is satisfied with regurgitating the same discourse that was dictated to it: coping with the government system and being devoted to the prevailing meanings, moral values, cultural norms, representations, and more, in order to expand submission.”³⁸ *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* targets newspapers that submit to official Tunisian political ideology.

Repetition of the same character types and names creates continuation of similar motifs within different contexts. The repetition of the name helps the audience to recognize in

Beya the recurrent rebel character type from *Les amoureux du café désert*. Beya is now a mother with two daughters already in college. In this play, the character Beya continues to experience new stages in her life, following the Beya of the previous play, *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*. Beya exclaims, "I'm not a woman to be hugging the walls in a miserable condition planned for me! Nobody will decide my fate in my place, no family, child, or homeland! ... When I had enough I resigned from *the newspaper* (Italics mine), divorced your father, and I rebelled against my condition."³⁹ The statement draws attention to Beya's part in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* and invites the audience to imagine how her life changed from 1980 to 1995.

From *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* to *Les amoureux du café désert* some characteristics of Beya have not changed. She remains liberal, rebellious, and critical. However, the character has developed from the first play to the second one. In *Les amoureux du café désert*, Beya's liberal character is reinforced. She is someone who has managed to live her life to the fullest while allowing nothing to hold her back from achieving her dreams. However, her daughter Lilia believes that Beya neglected both her and her sister Leila. She also accuses her mother of leaving them when they were adolescents for five years, during which time she traveled to Brazil with her lover.⁴⁰ Lilia shows Beya little sympathy as she not only blames her mother for being selfish, but also reproaches her for Leila's disappearance.

In *Les amoureux du café désert*, the relationship between Beya and her daughters may best exemplify the image of the rebel and the liberal woman she was in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*. When Beya appears extremely worried about the disappearance of her daughter Leila at the beginning of the play, her other daughter, Lilia, tries to avoid her mother's company by spending all day and night in the café. In response, Beya decides to invade the café to meet Lilia and find out why her daughter did not come home the previous night.⁴¹ This scene calls to mind how Beya used to go to Laroussi's office to meet with him. The invasion of both

spaces—the café and Laroussi’s office—suggest that Beya is daring, but she failed to attract Laroussi by chasing him and invading his space at work. In *Les amoureux du café désert*, Beya also fails to convince her daughter to be obedient and to return home after she invades Lilia’s social space. Lilia attempts to avoid her mother’s questions, but when Beya insists on knowing, Lilia becomes furious.⁴² During another meeting in the café, Beya cannot control her anger and slaps her daughter.⁴³ This instance of physical aggression echoes Beya’s biting Laroussi’s ear in *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*. In both plays, Beya attempts to overcome her failures in communicating with other characters by trying to dominate them with physical aggression when she cannot get her ideas across. Her understanding of freedom becomes irrational, but also illuminates the context in which Beya acquired freedom and attempts to pass it to her children. Hence, repetition is not only used to familiarize the audience with certain motifs, but also to reinforce the character’s development. To achieve this goal, Baccar and Jaïbi sometimes weave the same character—using the same name—into more than one play. This demonstrates the changing socio-political conditions in Tunisia, framing the past in the present.

Beya’s approach to freedom conveys how she matured in her understanding of these values from one play to the other. In this respect, the lack of communication between the mother and her daughters stems from the fact that each generation not only has different concerns, but has also lived under different social and political conditions. Jaïbi uses the concept of generation gap to make a political statement. *Les amoureux du café désert* hints at the gap between the Tunisian generation that experienced the 1960 world events that called for justice and freedom, and the Tunisian youth that suffered the oppression of the 1990s. Thus, *Les amoureux du café désert* juxtaposes two generations. While the generation of Beya, who was already forty-two years old in 1995, shows cultural-political awareness and a fervor to change conditions through culture, her daughters’ generation seems to lack any political or

cultural engagement. The gap between the two marks a shift within the Tunisian socio-political system from allowing freedom during the sixties to the repression of the people which became the norm starting in the early seventies, and culminating in the nineties. Beya questions her daughter's indifference by lamenting a generation that she identifies as having the "Mentality of the aided, the degenerate, the disabled and free riders."⁴⁴ By insulting her daughter, Beya expresses her frustration with an entire generation. Lilia, however, accuses her mother of being the cause of her decadence: "It is your product, dear madam."⁴⁵ Lilia's disrespectful comment is an accusation that her mother is addicted to smoking and drinking. The use of alcohol and cigarettes are symbols of liberalism in the urban setting of Tunisia. Additionally, Beya's relationship with Daly is annoying to her daughter as he is one of the students depicted as shrewd: he is known to have been Leila's boyfriend before she disappeared, but to have replaced her with her sister Lilia. He then attempted to seduce their mother.

Beya seems to counter Jaïbi's conviction: "My generation [of those who were born during the 1940s-50s] owes this satisfaction to the Revolution of May 1968 in France. My generation is "satiated with the ideals of freedom, justice, and tolerance... I wonder whether we [parents] genuinely have transmitted those assets to our children."⁴⁶ It is worth noting that Jaïbi is cautiously weighing the merits and demerits of his generation. By asking whether parents are responsible for the values they pass on to their children, Jaïbi proposes that the questions of passing and receiving values is complicated. According to *Les amoureux du café désert*, Tunisian youth abandoned liberal values, including: the will to be independent and different, the desire to change things, and the commitment to the international human rights of freedom, equality, and justice. Through Beya, Jaïbi shows how conflicts between generations can produce a generation that is indifferent to important values. The character Beya, whom the audience met in 1980, has not fully developed as a parent or lived up to the

expectations of her daughter who does not see her as embodying an appropriate role model for her children. Beya has gone through a lot of experiences yet still seems to be searching for herself in *Les amoureux du café désert*. She is a liberal woman who loves freedom, but not yet an advocate of human rights.

The early play, *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, introduces the character Laroussi as a driver who has the characteristics of cog in a gear. He wants to carry out what his superior wants him to do without the least bit of thinking. When Beya asks Laroussi what he thinks about her working for the newspaper, he replies: “I do not have any opinion / It is up to you / You tell me, give me a ride to a place, I do / Pick me up, Collect me back, I do / I take you / As for point of view / I have no point of view.”⁴⁷ Laroussi functions as an automaton and believes that his support of his manager must be unconditional. This belief leads Laroussi to commit violence against his co-workers during a protest at work.

Laroussi’s complete submission is echoed in *Famīlia* through the character Ḥsayra, who represents the cog character. He abuses the police state system by staying at Bahja, Babouna, and Molka’s home to control their actions under the pretext that he is a superintendent and under pressure from his superior to gather information about the death of Zohra. Soon after the interrogation starts, his role begins to change. It becomes clear that Ḥsayra has a double undertaking; not only is he pretending to solve the mystery of Zohra’s death, he is misusing the three sisters’ accommodations by being involved in a relationship with the youngest Molka, which causes her to be in conflict with her sisters. Ḥsayra’s behavior stands for the way in which the police-state abuses its citizens.

The play reveals that the repression at the heart of Ḥsayra’s tactics is duplicated in the three ladies’ cruelty toward one another. The three sisters are unhappy not only due to Ḥsayra’s domination of them, but also because of their own behavior. From the early scenes in the play, Bahja describes some of the criminal acts the sisters have committed against each

other. She asks Molka whether she had confessed their scandalous acts to Ḥsayra. These acts include forcing Lilia to drink a bottle of mercurochrome. Another time they kicked Bahkta down the stairs and then pretended that she fell. The sisters' desperation arises from their alienation from almost everyone except their deceased sisters. The darkness of death motivates these heinous acts. Nonetheless, the superintendent does not seem to embody power in the way Bahja thinks. While Bahja seems frightened that Ḥsayra will elicit information from Molka, he in turn works in fear of his superior, embodying the automaton character type. Ḥsayra bitterly exclaims:

I have not stepped into my home for the last four days. Do you know why?

BAHJA. Did your wife kick you out?

The superintendent. No, my boss did. . . .

BAHJA. What? Did he slap you?

THE SUPERINTENDENT. He gave me 48 hours. He threatened me in case I do not unfold the story of the three old sisters. He swore at me, "I'll send your mother to Um al-'Arayes to take care of the traffic."⁴⁸

This statement shows that despite seeming to hold a position power over the sisters, Ḥsayra is himself under the control of his superior, who threatens to send him to the less-privileged far south of Tunisia if he does not discover the cause of Zohra's death. This punishment reveals the petty nature of the police state and hierarchy.

At the end of *Famīlia*, the conflicts between the sisters and their "external" ones with Ḥsayra appear to be resolved in favor of unity among the sisters when they act and kill Ḥsayra by poisoning him. The sisters had become aware that he had been taking advantage of his job. He abused their cooperation by inciting jealousy among them. While they know that reforming the police institution is hopeless, they nevertheless take steps to overthrow Ḥsayra as one representative of the police apparatus. By ending the superintendent's life, the sisters add to their history of criminal acts. In this case poisoning constitutes a symbolic act that stands for the Tunisian people's wish to overthrow the police state system.

In *Khamsūn*, Gaddour justifies the practice of torture with a pretext similar to Ḥsayra's. Gaddour also expresses his fear of being sent by his manager to the underprivileged south of the country as a punishment for performing his job less than efficiently. Both Gaddour and Ḥsayra are portrayed as figuratively lobotomized because they cooperate with the system. By working for the police state system, both characters avoid thinking. They only follow orders. At the end of each play, these characters are depicted in a tragic way. Ḥsayra dies after eating food poisoned by the sisters; Gaddour ends up a miserable, lonely alcoholic. While they are all around the table, Bahja was not sharing food with Babouna, Molka, and Ḥsayra. Bahja and Babouna exchange looks and wait for Ḥsayra to fall down. Molka, however, does not seem aware of the crime.

Laroussi is no less tragic than Gaddour and Ḥsayra. Laroussi's act of revenge at the end of the play leads to his suicide and his attempt to kill Beya by exposing her to hunger and cold. However, despite his tragic end, Laroussi's story is different from both Gaddour's and Ḥsayra's because his narrative is imbued with love. He takes revenge against Beya after he loses both his job and her love. By contrast, Ḥsayra and especially Gaddour are instruments of repression and torture. Both act out of hatred and abuse power. While the superintendent Ḥsayra threatens the three ladies with torture, Gaddour acts as a mere marionette in fulfilling orders no matter how abhorrent.

The aforementioned characters' function is determined by the routine nature of their jobs. Each justifies his subservient position to the regime with nearly the same excuse. They will not change as long as the regime remains the same. Gaddour represents this stagnation by serving as the instrument of torture through two regimes, the action of the cog is repeated and never questioned. Laroussi shares the experience of subservience and is caught in a routine that keeps him from questioning the working conditions in the newspaper company. Unlike the earlier two characters, however, Laroussi evolves in *Gassalet Ennouader*. With

these characters, the three plays cluster as part of a large project that uncovers the police state system. This connection between these plays also shows how since 1980, each new production continued to question the state power and the machinery of power.

In addition to the cog character type, Baccar repeats the militant leftist human rights activist character as well. This type becomes easily identifiable to the extent that the audience develops expectations in regard to this persona, who is always played by Baccar. In their 2013 play *Tsunami*, for example, Baccar performs the role of Hayet who has dreamt all her life of social change. When the 2011 Revolution occurred, Hayet thought her dreams would come true, but soon realizes that the Revolution is being coopted by the Islamist movement, especially by the Jihadi Salafists that have plagued Tunisian society since the Revolution. Hayet's leftist position is represented in terms of assisting the twenty-five-year old Islamist Dora who flees her political Islamist family, takes off her veil, and changes her ideology to become Hayet's friend.

Baccar embodies leftism and human rights in *Tsunami* in a way that reiterates her role as a journalist in *Yaḥia Ya'ish* in which she is committed to a free press. Addressing the media is certainly a political statement in *Yaḥia Ya'ish*. However, as a journalist in the performance, Baccar plays this role herself to show an awareness of the pressing need to change the media in Tunisia. The journalist states: "The role of the cultivated people is to criticize the king continuously."⁴⁹ The term "king" mocks the Tunisian regime that is a republic in theory, but a form of absolute monarchy in practice. This sarcasm refers to historical events outside the context of the play and is informed by Tunisian political history. By reforming the Tunisian constitution in 1976, President Bourguiba assured that he would remain president until his death. However, a presidency for life was not possible due to his health problems. A coup d'état enacted by his Prime Minister Ben Ali in 1987 led to a

change, but clearly, Ben Ali did no better than Bourguiba: he held power for twenty-three years until he was ousted in 2011 by the Revolution.

In addition to the role played by Baccar as Hayet in *Tsunami* and the journalist in *Yaḥia Ya 'ish*, in *Khamsūn*, the narrator's voice—Baccar again—opens the play with a sarcastic report about Tunisia being a host for the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society. In this prologue, the narrative voice juxtaposes this event, which is mainly about promoting a free press, with the actions of the Tunisian citizens who rushed to hear the news about Juda's bombing on channels such as al-Jazeera, al-'Arabyya, and CNN. The anonymous narrative voice functions as would that of any Tunisian citizen who acquires the news about his own country through foreign broadcasting.⁵⁰ From the outset, the narrator speaks up against the repressive Tunisian regime, which has led, among other things, to the impoverishment of the media and the stifling of intellectual and artistic expression. In *Khamsūn*, Baccar also plays the role of Maryam, the human rights activist who counters the Tunisian authorities' views by showing how the history of her country is a history of political repression and torture. As a human rights activist and leftist, Maryam resists the way in which the Tunisian government treats both leftism and Islamism, proposing plurality as the only way in which all Tunisian citizens can live together and express their political views freely.

Jaïbi and Baccar did not break away from the principles of the New Theater with Familia Productions. For example, plays from both the New Theater (*Ghassalit Ennuwādir*) and Familia Productions (*Yaḥia Ya 'ish*) resist the propaganda of the Tunisian government disseminated under pressure by the press. The latest plays of Familia, including *Khamsūn*, *Yaḥia Ya 'ish*, and *Tsunami*, also feature Baccar in familiar roles, serving as the voice of human rights activism.

Frequent tropes, themes, and character types in the theater of Baccar and Jaïbi establish conversation with the general audience to teach them how to consume theater. They also make visible the evolution of this theater. The repetition with variation in Baccar and Jaïbi's plays forms a conversational approach to theater. If repetition is consistent in several plays directed by Jaïbi, then it is possible to reconstruct the structure of one play in relation to another based on their shared features. Finally, an examination of these connections helps to identify what is consistent throughout these plays and for what purpose. What is unique about these plays, is the double meanings conveyed through the national story that is almost predictable and repeated in each performance. Each national story comprises constituents that engage power and anti-power. The other meanings involve the individual stories of characters whose experiences change from one play to the other. One cannot draw clear-cut lines between the individual and the collective stories as they are blended—coping with historical and ideological changes. A relationship established between Familia and the audience continues until Familia changes perspectives. If history is in flux, then, this theater cannot claim to have found a perfect mode of performing onstage. It continues, experimenting with new tropes, functions, and motifs despite the aforementioned recurrence of certain elements. The impression of familiarity may create a sense of complacency, but in these plays, one is always jolted out of this calm by an unexpected (unfamiliar) development. Certainly Baccar and Jaïbi have conditioned their audiences to recognize some recurrent themes in their performances. However, they have also succeeded in establishing strong links between their plays only to surprise their audiences. If the purpose is to engage the audience in thinking and enjoying theater, then Jaïbi's use of the theoretical phrase "hammering down the same nail" also means repetition for a purpose. The theater of Jaïbi and Baccar becomes a space where Tunisian audiences learn to think deeply about each production by means of linking it to the previous ones.

1. The play is not published, but the original script is available at the library of the Institute of Dramatic Arts in Tunis.

2. Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Glyph I: John Hopkins Textual Studies*, ed. Samuel Weber and Henry Sussman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977), 191.

3. Ibid., 191.

4. Ibid., 187.

5. Carol Kino, in Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: routledge, 2011), 5.

6. J. Macgregor Wise, *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J. Stivale (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 77–78.

7. Fadhel Jaïbi, video recorded interview with Renato Sarti, Milano, 2012. <http://vimeo.com/35684755>

8. James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2003), 26.

9. Ibid., 6.

10. Ibid., 12.

11. Marcel Proust, "Du côté de chez Swann" [Swann's way], in *À La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, vol. 1 [In search of lost time, vol. 1] (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 44–47.

12. Gregory J. Seigworth, "From Affection to Soul," 163.

13. Jalila Baccar, interview with Rafika Zahrouni, Tunis, 28 May 2012.

14. "Chokri Belaid, 1964–2013: Fierce Opponent of Tunisia's Islamists," *Ahramonline*, 6 February 2013. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/64204/World/Region/Chokri-Belaid,-Fierce-opponent-of-Tunisia-Islami.aspx/>.

15. One has to be cautious that in both mainstream Eastern and Western dialogues, there has been a tendency, especially in the post-9/11 era, to lump all types of Islamic fundamentalism into one monolithic entity. Similarly misguided, there is a desire to equate religious fundamentalism with political extremism when the two have no relationship of necessity and are actually more commonly at odds with one another. The Salafist tradition, for example, started with the first generations of Muslims who followed the prophet Mohammed. Roel Meijer, a scholar of issues on Islam, explains that this time period spans the Golden Age of Islam, a time in which Muslims believe that Islam was applied in a way most consistent with the teachings of the prophet Mohammed. Because of this, Salafists advocate strictly literal reading of the Qur'ān and hadith and imitation of these first Muslims as a means for returning to the proper application of Islam (Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2009], 5). Bernard Haykel, a researcher who is mainly concerned with political and social tensions that arise from religious identity, claims that the origins of the Salafist movement go back to the emergence of Ahl al-Hadith, a theological group that was formed during the Abbasid caliphate (Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 40). The purpose behind the formation of Ahl al-Hadith was to sort through the huge volume of hadith that had accumulated by the time of the Abbasid Empire, some of which was of questionable origin (Haykel, "On the Nature," 41). The religious scholars of the time wished to develop a system of verification to distinguish the writings and teachings that could be genuinely attributed to the prophet and his followers from those that were either of pagan origin and had been modified to fit mainstream Muslim culture or else were entirely concocted by Arab leaders out of political motives.

The systems developed by these early Muslim theologians were later consolidated and codified in the writings of Islamic theologian Ibn Taymiyya in the thirteenth century. The modern intellectual historian of Islam, Joas Wagemakers, explains how Ibn Taymiyya's work focused on theological Muslim reasoning and gave rise to many of the central tenants of modern Salafism (Wagemakers, "The Transformation of a Radical Concept: Al-wala' Wa-l-bara' in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi," in Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 83). The most important of these concepts is the idea of Tawhid, which Salafists understand in three main categories (Haykel, "On the Nature," 39). According to Bernard Haykel's translation, these categories are: Oneness of Lordship, Oneness of Godship, and Oneness of the Names and Attributes of Allah (ibid.). These distinctions have two primary consequences for the Salafist thinking. The first is to provide a very specific outline for the correct beliefs that should be held by a true Muslim (Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 20). It is not sufficient to proclaim, as all Muslims do, belief in the tawhid of Allah. Rather, it is necessary that this declaration be representative of very specific doctrine, which is explicitly supported by Qur'anic text and hadith. Second, the explicit nature of the Salafist beliefs allow the Salafists to clearly distinguish who properly follows the faith as outlined by Mohammed and the hadith, and who among Muslims is in fact kafir (heretical), or Muslim in name only (Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 23).

Building off the codification of the "true Islam," Ibn Taymiyya drew clear lines between those who properly followed the way of the salaf, and those kuffar who had been misled. Ibn Taymiyya also condemns not only non-Muslims in his writings, but also Shi'a and Sufi schools of Islam as well as those Muslims who continue to practice local customs that do not have clear Islamic roots (Wagemakers, "Transformation," 87). Jihadi Salafists today who carry out attacks against Shi'a, Jews, and Sunni Muslim leaders they perceive as hereticals base their justification in these writings. By this logic, the Salafists' claim to be members of the "victorious group who will be saved in the Hereafter" while these other groups and other Muslims will be condemned along with the rest of the non-believers (Haykel, "On the Nature," 35).

Interestingly enough, however, Salafists' focus on the Qur'an and hadith as the only authoritative sources on Islam has left some Salafist scholars relatively open to the idea of *ijtihad* (reasoning) (Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 13). Although Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia tend to follow the Hanbali school of thought, when it comes to Islam and law, most Salafist scholars tend to reject the adherence to any one school of thought. The reasoning is that all these scholars injected their own reasoning into the formation of their theological schools, and thus they represent a pollution of God's law. As a result the access to scholarly authority is relatively open in the Salafist community, as is evidenced by the significant local authority that many local Salafist imams have been able to accrue (Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 9). Additionally, the focus on theology as the foundation of Salafist thought has led to a wide range of political involvement among different Salafist organizations. Meijer outlines three categories of political involvement that can be applied to various Salafist groups ranging from quietist, to covert, to openly activist. Influential scholar Nasir al-Din al-Albani is a good example of a modern quietist Salafist leader. This tension between political activism and complete abstinence from any political involvement is a significant area of disagreement within the Salafi community, and has traditionally led most modern Salafi organizations to distance themselves from political institutions.

16. See photo in appendix 8.

17. Fadhel Jaïbi, *Les Amoureux du Café Désert* (Lovers of the deserted café), translated by Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud (Tunis: Sud, 1997), 41.

18. Ibid., 65–69.

19. Ibid., 65. “Au nom d'Allah clément et miséricordieux et que la paix soit sur Mohammed sceau des prophètes et grand-père d’Hassan and de Hussein.”
20. Jalila Baccar, *Araberlin*, in *Four Plays from North Africa*, ed. Marvin Carlson and trans. David Looseley (New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2008), 9.
21. Ibid., 125.
22. Ibid., 128.
23. Odile Quirot, “La révolution tunisienne sur scène: La chute du tyran” [The Tunisian Revolution on stage: The overthrow of the tyrant], *Nouvel Observateur*, June 2011, 80. “Sous Ben Ali, Fadhel Jaïbi a évidemment dû ruser avec la censure.”
24. Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson, *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 213.
25. “Conférence de presse de fadhel jaibi—15/07/2013.” 2013. YouTube, 15 July. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32kHPyUWQZY/>.
26. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* [First real rain of the fall season], by Firqat al-Masrah al-Jadīd and the New Theater, draft script, Tunis, 1980, 6.
27. Jalila Baccar, *Junūn* [Dementia] (Tunis: Dār al-Janūb, 2007), 35.
نون: "دمومات سايلة تقيقب ...
وديان تغلي/ هايجة حاملة/ زادمة/ عايمة/ غامة البلاد."
28. Genesis 5:32, 10:1,
<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%205:32-10:1/>.
29. Qur ān 25:37:2,
<http://corpus.quran.com/wordmorphology.jsp?location=%2825:37:2%29>
30. Charles. E. M. Pearce and Frances. M. Pearce, *Oceanic Migration: Paths, Sequence, Timing and Range of Prehistoric Migration in the Pacific and Indian Oceans* (Adelaide: Springer, 2010), e-book, 2014,
http://0-download.springer.com/libraries.colorado.edu/static/pdf/115/bok%253A978-90-481-3826-5.pdf?auth66=1391578365_532c4f2ce2e2dd28848f42210553fd58&ext=.pdf/.
31. Fadhel Jaïbi, video recorded interview with Jean-François Perrier, 2011, Avignon. <http://www.theatre-video.net/video/Fadhel-Jaibi-Yahia-Yaich-Amnesia?autostart>
32. Fadhel Jaïbi, *Famīlia* [Family] (Tunis: Dār al-Janūb, 1997), 104–5.
بهجة: "كل نهار خميس نزور قبره .
نسبه و نقشتله و نلغنه
نيزق عليه ونروح."
33. Ibid., 106.
بهجة: بونتو في اللي قصفني في طنبيكي / بونتو في الوقت اللي يجري / بونتو في العمر اللي ما يرحمش/
اللي ما عملتوش أناحبها هي عمله."
34. Ibid., 106-107.
بهجة: "عشرة سنين حاصرني /
عشرة سنين قاهرني / نلحج به قلت له
نطلع مرّة على الرّكح نغني/
قال لي لا."
35. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, 91.
36. Ibid., 4.
37. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, 34.
38. Ahmed Hadhiq, ‘Urf, *Al-Masrah al-Tūnsi wa ‘Awā‘iq al-Tajāwuz* [Tunisian Theater: Obstacles to improvement] (Tunis: Dar al-Janub, 1997), 163.
39. “Je ne suis pas femme à vivre en rasant les murs dans une minable existence planifiée, moi! Personne ne décidera de mon destin à ma place, ni famille, ni enfant, ni patrie!

. . . Moi, quand j'ai eu ma claque j'ai démissionné du journal, divorcé de ton père et je me suis révoltée contre ma condition" (*Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, 100).

40. Jaïbi, *Les Amoureux du Café Désert*, 100.

41. Ibid., 48. Beya: "Je veux savoir pourquoi . . . tu n'es pas rentrée hier à la maison?" ("I want to know why . . . you were not back at home yesterday?")

42. Ibid., 53.

43. Ibid., 100.

44. Ibid., 101. "Mentalité d'assistés, de dégénérés, de handicapés et de resquilleurs!"

45. Ibid., 101. Lilia: "On est votre produit, chère madame."

46. Zoé Lamazo, "Piece explosive à Tunis" [Critical play in Tunis], *Jeune Afrique*, April 2007, 32. Jaïbi notes: "Notre génération qui doit beaucoup à la révolution de Mai 68 en France, est imbue des valeurs de liberté, de justice, et de tolérance. . . . Je me demande si nous avons réellement transmis tout ce capital à nos enfants."

47. *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, 25.

لعروسي: "ما عنديش راي/ إنت واللي يساعذك / قللي هزني نهزك / جيبيني / نكرس بيك/ نوصلك/ أمّا راي/ ما عنديش راي." (المسرح الجديد)

48. Jaïbi, *Famīlia*, 77.

المفتّش: "أربعة أيّام ما عفتش داري /
تعرف علاش/ بهجة: مرتك طردتك/المفتّش: لا عرفي أعطاني
بهجة: طريحة/ المفتّش: أعطاني ثمانية وأربعين ساعة/
قال لي لو كان ما تفرّكليش رمانة دار العجايز/
نطوّف أمك في أمّ العرايس."

49. Fadhel Jaïbi and Jalila Baccar, *Yaḥia Ya 'ish* [Amnesia], dir. Fadhel Jaïbi, perf. Fatma Ben Saïdane, Sabah Bouzouita, Ramzi Azaiez, Moez Mrabet, Lobna M'lika, Basma El Euch, Karim El Kefi, Riadh El Hamdi, Khaled Bouzid, and Mohammed Ali Kalaî, 2010 performance.

50. Jalila Baccar, *Khamsūn* [Fifty] (Tunis: Dār al-Janūb, 2007), 15.

Conclusion: Theater of Protest in Tunisia and North Africa

In sum, the trajectory of Tunisian drama indicates that theater was first introduced to Tunisia by the shadow plays brought to the country by the Turks. During colonial rule, the existence of European troupes did not result in the formation of Tunisian theater as it was not presented in Arabic and therefore not accessible to locals except for the educated minority. Egyptian theater, specifically after Sulayman Al-Qardahi's Egyptian troupe visited Tunisia, had the most direct influence. Nationalism played an important role in fostering theater during colonial rule. The development of a theater and the appearance of theater troupes was strongly tied to the movement to modernize Tunisia in the post-colonial era. President Bourguiba's 1962 speech implied that school was not the only instrument for educating the masses and disseminating culture in modern Tunisia. The importance of theater to modern Tunisian society is therefore rooted in a political and cultural history. Among the durable and most influential troupes is the New Theater of Tunis, which began in the mid-seventies, continues to present powerful and political plays to this day. This analysis of the context in which the New Theater (later Familia Productions), arose has illustrated how communication between the New Theater and politics on the one hand, and between this theater and the Tunisian audience on the other, continues to be channeled through each play presented by Baccar and Jaïbi.

The plays discussed so far are truly Modernist and Brechtian in their efforts to force the viewer to react to their strangeness and meta-theatricality. In most of these plays, the individual engages in a debate that critiques the individual as well as the community. Their expression of modernism, while it advocates that the individual should thrive, does not attempt to save the individual from internalizing the collective world that is best represented through the metaphor of a schizophrenic society. Despite the sordid nature of Baccarian and Jaïbian dramas, specifically at the end of *Famīlia*, *Junūn*, and *Yaḥīa Ya 'īsh*, there is a striking

sense of optimism—a glimpse of light amidst darkness. In this schizophrenic world, the protagonist in *Junūn*, for example, shows how free speech helps to transform him from silent to eloquent—even to a poet-like figure.

The more intrinsic elements explored in these chapters are the consistent political commitments, the evolution of the playwrights' thinking in terms of social criticism and theater aesthetics as the political situation in Tunisia changed over the last forty years, and the rough symbolism used so effectively in play after play. These consistent components show how a turning point in the theatrical experience of the director/playwright couple, however, was marked by a surface representation in the almost docudrama-like *Tsunami*. This recent performance shows evidence of a greater degree of experimentation and the rootedness of this theater in Tunisian daily life.

Guattari's concept of the rhizomatic structure helped to explain how these plays are interconnected by means of repeated themes, functions, and tropes. By means of using such literary devices, it is possible to realize the multiplicity of meanings and the elasticity of structure and effect. Every time these plays are read or viewed, they have the capacity to generate new meanings and effects inside the context of the play itself; outside the text—in the context of Tunisian society; and, within the scope of clusters of plays. As illustrated in the previous chapters, the depth of *Junūn* and *Khamsūn* is highlighted by means of constructing symbolic figures rather than mere characters. A common effect of all these figures is that they invite us to think of the broader human experience. Pervasive literary topoi—such as the use of the asylum to represent inadequate social and political systems—are useful to access new ways of theatrical representations. The institution that subjugated the patient's desires depicts how social norms insinuate themselves into the depths of his organism, affecting his neurosis. The theatricalization of schizophrenia, for instance, is depicted mainly within the family where the scenes of almost flying plates and chairs have not only a symbolic but also an

impressionistic value. While the symbolic aspect mirrors socio-political conditions, the impressionistic persistence of such motifs seems to depart from social criticism and symbolism altogether in order to reinforce what Joseph Roach calls the *It*—that thing that only the audience can feel when something really outrageous and compelling moves them to their innermost being. In most cases, the *It* is inexpressible, but manifestations of it can sometimes be seen in the form of effects that include laughing, crying, shivering, applauding, feeling happy, disgusted, or maybe sad, etc. Hence, the pertinence of some recurrent motifs in Familia Productions reinforce figures that are archetypes and which may be found in any culture, creating that *It* effect in any audience. Hence, Familia Productions draws its strength not only from its political but also from its aesthetic commitment.

The spiral structure of this study allows one to follow the sequence of the plays in their interconnectedness. This sequence also outlines some connections between the plays, but also within clusters of plays. The relationship between *Les amoureux du café désert*, *Khamsūn*, and *Tsunami* illustrates common themes and motifs. Baccar and Jaïbi's representation of Islamic terrorism, for example, evolved from the accusation that the pre-revolutionary government was crushing Islamist opposition to critiquing the current government for allowing this form of terrorism to produce sites of oppression. In post-revolution Tunisia, this theater has become more concerned with the abundance of freedom, rather than the absence thereof. Their concern now is mainly about the Jihadi Salafists who represent a threat to the freedom of progressives of all walks of life.

In this particular moment in the history of Tunisia, dramatic expression has been important to the awakening of a political consciousness, while the moment of revolt has also increased the need for expression. Whether the new political situation has led to real change or not remains uncertain, as the results of the Revolution are still in the making. The plays echo and express the social and political transformations Tunisia has undergone since the

1970s. They explore the people's reaction to these transformations, and dramatize the question of whether the transition toward political plurality can fulfill the aspirations of the people.

Before this post-revolutionary era, however, and from *Ghassalit Ennuwādir* (1980) to *Tsunami* (2013), the theater of Jaïbi and Baccar has consistently resisted the Tunisian regime. Under Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali, the New Theater and Familia Productions were constantly raising the question of freedom and social justice. The devotion of Baccar and Jaïbi to such issues have so far met the needs of their Tunisian audiences. Ezzeddine Abbassi brings this argument to the forefront: "The spectator, also missing free expression, goes to the theater to meet this need, guessing that others do it for him, which leaves him alert to the connotations and hints that are implied in performance."¹ This statement reveals that theater had in the past and, in the present, continues to form one of the rare spaces where the audience is able to share and enjoy free speech.

It is impossible today to read the pre-2011 plays from an exclusively pre-revolutionary perspective. Indeed, the Tunisian theater enacted the spirit of resistance, reflecting the essence of Revolution before the Revolution took place. While the term "revolution" implies a radical and sudden change, Baccar and Jaïbi's works show that change in the established order had begun long before actual political change occurred. In addition to these thematic connections, one can identify structural links between their plays. As an example, *Les amoureux du café désert*, *Khamsūn*, and *Tsunami* together may function as a trilogy, comprised of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. *Les amoureux du café désert* considers the bloody Algerian civil war of the 1990s, setting the stage for the rise of Islamic terrorism in nearby Tunisia. In *Khamsūn*, by exerting repression under the pretext of protecting the people from the danger of terrorism, the Tunisian government establishes the conditions that lead to its own downfall and the subsequent rise of extreme Salafism. After

the fall of the dictator portrayed in *Yaḥia Ya'ish*, *Tsunami* comes as a conclusion to warn the Tunisian people about a Revolution that had been co-opted and, if left in its current state, would lead to a tsunami-like disaster, allowing Islamic terrorists to destroy everything.

Taking a broader view, the plays and performances discussed in this dissertation share and expand on similar concerns of other Tunisian and Moroccan plays regarding protest and resistance against political schism that may lead to despotism and perhaps even civil war. The 2013 *Monstranum's (Ghaylan)* is among the Tunisian plays that raise the question of despotism and represent the concept of complete destruction after Revolution. Playwright and actress Leila Toubal suggests that the concept of destruction is embodied by the play's monster-like figures. *Monstranum's (Ghaylan)* also dramatizes the crisis by presenting individuals hugging, kissing, and striving for seats that symbolically stand for positions in the Tunisian government. All characters in this performance appear either seated or moving on office chairs to suggest that those in the current government strive for power in ways similar to the methods of the previous government of Ben Ali. The figure of the monster shows that current politicians continue to destroy society. The contradiction between destruction and continuity highlights the greed for power internalized by pre- and post-revolution leaders. As the character Nims (played by Oussama Kochkar) puts it, "The country [Tunisia] was unable to bear children for the last 23 years and the day it was able to reproduce, it gave birth to a *ghūl/ghaylan* (a monster) that will eat you up and will eat all the country and the people."² The statement is addressed directly to the audience—another Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*—employing seemingly innocent humor based on the language of children, in which the mythical ghost-monster is described, to express a much darker meaning. Distanciation is thus two-fold, the direct address to the public as well as the winks of irony by means of using two different registers. This dark humor suggests that politicians completely envelop the people by swallowing them, using power viciously for devastating purposes.

In *Monstranum's (Ghaylan)*, playwright Toubal invites viewers to recall the violent events of the past, committed by the Tunisians who are in power today. For instance, the character Nims highlights the political contradictions through wordplay, asking,

What is the difference? What is the difference between the acid of *bāb* (gate) Souika and that of *bāb al-Halfaouine*? What is the difference? What is the difference between Sidi Bouzid and Sidi Bousaid? What is the difference between someone who wears a *būrnūs* (traditional coat) and a hat and another person who holds a cane and a *kabbūs* (hat)?³

Nims' rhetorical questioning refers to recent radical Salafist attacks on shrines. One such incident was that at Sidi Bousaid (January 2013), an important cultural and religious site and one of the most visited cities in Tunisia—attracting many artists, intellectuals, and tourists. Juxtaposing Sidi Bouzid and Sidi Bousaid suggests that while *Thawrat al-Karāma* (The Dignity Revolution) was mainly driven by the misfortunes of Sidi Bouzid (embodied in the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi), the reference to Sidi Bousaid shifts the focus from poverty to religiosity. This juxtaposition invites audience members to make up their own minds about the gap between those who urged all Tunisians to revolt against ousted President Ben Ali, and the radical Salafists who seized opportunity after the Revolution to enact similar despotism. Although different forces drove despotism in the two cases, the outcomes were similar acts of repression that deprived people of the most basic of civil liberties. While the poor joined the Revolution out of despair, radical Salafists hastened to hijack the effort for their own ideological ends. Nims also refers to the well-known event of Bab Souika, when Tunisian Islamists of the al-Nahda attempted to violently overthrow former President Ben Ali during the 1980s, committing such violent acts as throwing Molotov cocktails and throwing acid in people's faces. Nims' allusion reminds the audience that the Islamist movement has its flaws; indeed the leaders of the al-Nahda party apologized for the violent events of Bab Souika, perhaps to obtain the forgiveness and trust of the people. Nims also refers to the different costumes, implying outward change only—while maintaining the

same inherent greed—of such opportunists. The *būrnūs* (traditional male coat) may allude to Moncef Marzouki, the first President of Tunisia after the Revolution. The *kabbous* is perhaps an allusion to Bourguiba, with “the cane” implying the catastrophe of longevity under the regimes of both Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Clothing references also allude to the predominance of the Islamist style of dress in post-revolution Tunisia, including the most provocative *niqab* that has sparked debate on religious displays in schools since November 2011.

From a theatrical perspective, it is important to note that Gannoun’s use of chairs in *Monstranum’s (Ghaylan)* differs from the Jaïbian chair game that occurs in some of his plays, including *Junūn* in 2002 and the 2010 performance of *Yaḥia Ya ‘ish*. Jaïbi’s use of chairs in *Junūn* accelerates the rhythm from the slow movements of objects and bodies on stage to very quick movements in order to represent a schizophrenic world where loud noise, disorder, and violence are pervasive. This theatrical technique shows how the schizophrenic world of his protagonist serves as a metaphor for the larger society. Similarly, in the opening scene of *Yaḥia Ya ‘ish*, the actors appear sitting on chairs facing the audience. The actors continue seated while gazing out over a few minutes, eliciting the confused laughter of the audience at being watched by the actors instead of watching them. The chairs are eventually disarranged and turned upside down at a party during which Yahia, a political leader, both celebrates the birthday of his daughter and receives the devastating news of his removal. At this point, the actors stand, holding their chairs up in the air. The chair gains another significance when it is a wheelchair in which the character Yahia is later seated, showing how Tunisian citizens hold him accountable for misuse of power even after his fall. Unlike the mere clinging to political power represented in the form of clinging to chairs as used by Gannoun, the chair game in these scenes reveals that Jaïbi’s aesthetic employment of chairs is multifaceted, articulating concepts not only of power, but also of disability, chaos, and schizophrenia. These concepts serve to create a greater sympathetic distance, to allow for

critical compilation of the meaning implied here.

In *Tsunami*, the tone of political criticism is more direct and straightforward than that in *Khamsūn* due to new aesthetic choices. *Tsunami* was presented in the ancient amphitheater of Dougga in July 2013. The performance occurred during the day without any theatrical lighting, suggesting the exposing of truth to the light of day. The choice to produce *Tsunami* in the daytime is challenging in the sense that the stage cannot be beautified without lighting. Instead, this type of theatricality reinforces the poor stage familiar to the audience of Baccar and Jaïbi. Without lighting, the Jaïbian stage perhaps appears more impoverished than at any previous time. However, this technique is in line with the directness that characterizes *Tsunami*. The alarming tone of *Tsunami* is best represented in daytime and without any stage embellishment. During the Revolution, it is important to note that as much as the protestors inspired artists—including cartoonists and graffitists—the director Jaïbi, too, must have been inspired by the drastic changes that took place in his country and the Arab world in general. This inspiration is embodied in the way Jaïbi takes the stage to be a site for experimentation. In other words, the stage is malleable in that it yields to the circumstances that guide the director to redefine its focus.

The aesthetic choice of Jaïbi seems justified by the revolutionary perspective that does not tolerate any metaphorical expression. Unlike *Monstranum's (Ghaylan)*, which is symbolic, *Tsunami's* political statements are direct in the sense that they hold the Islamist regime accountable for destroying the country—like a “tsunami.” In spite of the directness of style and the poverty of the stage in *Tsunami*, like *Monstranum's (Ghaylan)*, both plays depict post-revolutionary authoritarian political figures. Both *Tsunami* and *Monstranum's (Ghaylan)* suggest that major steps to establish Tunisia as a new democracy are taking place, and yet there is the real possibility of returning to despotism and tyranny. The fear of such a destiny is portrayed through the figures of the monsters in *Monstranum's (Ghaylan)* and the

“tsunami” concept in *Tsunami*.

Both dramas also gain artistic validity by portraying the tension between religious and secular political tendencies beyond Tunisia. If it were not for the historical specificities of these plays with regard to Tunisia, they could easily be set in other countries experiencing similar political upheaval such as Egypt, for example. To illustrate this point, the Egyptian *Ward al- Gana'in* (The Garden Roses)⁴ is a modern docu-drama directed by Hany Abdul-Moetamad. The play tells the story of the revolutionaries who were shot by police snipers during the early days of the Egyptian Revolution. Playwright Mohamed Al-Gheity introduces a number of martyrs of the Egyptian Revolution. In the play, young male and female protestors fill the space of the stage and chant for freedom. They hold placards on which they write revolutionary slogans similar to the slogans used in the Tunisian Revolution. These include “The people want,” “Change... Freedom... Social Justice...,” and “Peaceful Stand.” *Ward al- Gana'in* then portrays how the police attack the crowds. Then, the narrator’s voice introduces each martyr as he or she falls. A real picture of every martyr is screened at the back of the lower stage once introduced. Revolution to bring about freedom and change are common themes to Tunisian and Egyptian post-revolutionary plays.

By the same token, the plays and performances discussed in this study may share similar concerns with Moroccan theater. In her discussion of the socio-political role theater has played in Morocco before and after the Arab Spring, Cleo Jay explains how theater in Morocco is employed by youths as a unique space to engage in free expression. Jay points to a number of plays, including Hicham Lasri’s 2005 *K(rêve)* in which he paints the “sexual frustration, violence, and boredom [of a young man.]”⁵ This play cannot, however, exemplify how Moroccan theater has made giant steps in recent decades toward representing taboos, mainly because it was never performed in Morocco. Due to the oppression of the media in Morocco (as in Tunisia), socio-political theater has played a major role in countering

government control.

This engaged political theater gains importance by being reflected in real-life instances. For example, the theater/real-life proximity played a major role during the Tunisian Revolution. During that time, the stage and streets mirrored each other, encouraging audiences to move from the theater to the streets themselves; streets which, at this time, became metaphorically—and sometimes actually—a stage of their own. In modern times this dynamic has been much facilitated by the ubiquity of recording devices and the ease of circulating the images thus obtained. As news of Ben Ali's flight circulated through Tunis, one Tunisian citizen, Abd-En-Nasser Laouini, expressed his jubilation and that of most of his countrymen in a spontaneous outpouring not unlike a theatrical monologue in the main street of Tunis, Habib Bourguiba Avenue. Since the Avenue was almost deserted due to a government-imposed nighttime curfew, Laouini appears on it alone to celebrate the fact that Ben Ali has fled. The setting, which is the street, becomes a virtual stage. The video clip, made without Laouini's awareness by observers in an apartment overlooking the street, reveals Laouini's excitement for the future of Tunisians without Ben Ali and also his raging against the dark years of an oppressive leadership. Laouini's words are powerful in a dramatic sense:

Ben Ali ran away/ No fear from anyone anymore/ Lift your heads up/ We are set free/
The Tunisian people are free/ The Tunisian people did not die/ The Tunisian people
are great/ Long live free Tunisia/ Glory for the martyrs/ Freedom for the Tunisians/
Oh, you Tunisians, who were in exile/ Oh you Tunisians, who were in jails/ Oh you
Tunisians, who suffered/ Oh you Tunisians, who were oppressed/ Oh you Tunisians
who were subject to injustice/ Oh you Tunisians who were stolen/ Breathe freedom/
The Tunisian people offered freedom to us/ Long live the Tunisian people/ Long live
Tunisia the great/ Long live freedom/ Glory for the martyrs/ Oh you Tunisians, no
more fear/ The criminal ran away/ The criminal ran away/ Ben Ali fled/ Ben Ali fled
from the Tunisian people/ Ben Ali fled (5 times)/ The criminal ran away/ The thief
ran away/ The ruthless mug ran away/ ran away ran away to Libya/ And now the
people govern/ [...]/ you sacrificed what is priceless/ Oh our people you sacrificed
your children.⁶

Beyond the obvious fact that Laouini's message is political, it is also highly theatrical,

following the form of an unusual dramatic monologue even though the speaker had no intention of addressing an actual audience. Laouini himself was unaware of being filmed until the video clip was repeatedly broadcast on both national and international television channels and downloaded through other social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Nevertheless his “performance” was analyzed, not only in terms of its linguistic content, but as an expression of the performer’s defiance of the restrictions of the Tunisian authorities. In addition to his breaking the law by being in the street after curfew, Laouini’s movements across the avenue were accompanied by his enthusiastic call for Tunisians to awaken, his hands waving up and down as if he were awakening their collective consciousness, alerting them to remember Tunisian political history as condensed in this performed monologue. The uprising in Tunisia was, to a large degree, shaped by real-life performances. Laouini’s celebration represents a political moment that turned into a theatrical reality by virtue of having been filmed. This video illustrates how reality becomes theatrical.

Thus the proximity of art and life characterizes plays such as *Khamsūn*, *Yaḥia Yaïsh*, *Tsunami*, as well as the creation and circulation of the video clip, “Ben Ali Fled!” The events in *Khamsūn* fill gaps that are missing in Tunisian politics such as political pluralism, and correctly forecasts that extreme minority groups might surface after a long political era of repression. *Yaḥia Yaïsh* not only shows the figure of a government leader who abuses his power, it also foretells the imminent fall of this leader following an attempt to escape justice. The play remarkably predicts the real-life events that soon materialized during the Tunisian Revolution. “Ben Ali Fled!” marked a historic moment in the politics of Tunisia and emphasized in a very different way the close ties between theatrical and social performance.

After the Tunisian Revolution, *Khamsūn* may be interpreted as a prophetic statement, certainly if one compares its main concerns to those of the Tunisian Revolution and its

aftermath. Thus, *Khamsūn*'s concern with desperate youth like Juda and Ahmed can be compared to the extreme political protest committed through self-immolation by Mohamed Bouazizi on Dec. 17, 2011. Ahmed, Juda, and Bouazizi are involved in similar acts of suicide or attempted suicide in protest against the Tunisian government. These acts are motivated by the desire to seek political change. Ahmed specifically justifies his suicide attempt as a way to express his struggle against unjust leaders in his country and against injustices in other countries such as Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan.⁷ Bouazizi's suicide was also a reaction to a municipal official who had confiscated his fruit cart on which he depended to make a living. Juda's death in the play leads the Tunisian regime to harness all the acquaintances of Juda without making any effort to explore the complexity of Islamic sects. The self-immolation of Bouazizi, on the other hand, incited demonstrations that extended throughout Tunisia against the president and his regime, resulting in the Tunisian Revolution, the stepping down of the president, and the fall of the Tunisian police state system.

In the post-revolutionary era, it is easy to see how *Khamsūn* addressed the incompetent political reality in Tunisia and how *Yahia Yaïsh* both represented and predicted the fall of the Tunisian regime. Since the Revolution, the Tunisian government has granted permission to many groups to form political parties and be active. Yet, this government still lacks the strength to manage effectively the challenges of plurality as represented in *Tsunami*. It is to be hoped that imaginative and inspired performers in theaters, and perhaps on the streets as well, will provide the models necessary for the development of the effective civil society in whose name the Revolution was launched.

While this dissertation focuses particularly on social criticism as illustrated in the plays of Baccar and Jaïbi, there are many other topics which can be explored in future research on the Familia theater company. I am interested in investigating the question of memoir and remembrance that permeate each play directed by Jaïbi. Perhaps this theme is

more obvious in some plays than others, but both *Famīlia* (Family, 1993) and *Khamsūn* (2006), for example, can be considered the best theatrical experience in reconstructing the history of Tunisia. The topic of national memory could also be fully explored in further research.

Recent research on postcolonial memoirs, written by Norbert Bugeja, discusses Middle Eastern memoirs that attempt to mediate the rapid change in the new cultural and political Middle Eastern scene. The author focuses on narratives that were translated from Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, and French into English. This is why it is important that more scholarship be conducted on Tunisian and Arab theater in English. This type of research requires much translation, and should not be limited to the scarce written material that can be found in English. Moreover, unlike Bugeja, I propose that the plays directed by Jaïbi, particularly *Al-Bath ‘an ‘Ayda* (Searching for Aïda, 1998), can be understood as the Familia theater company’s memoir. Such a memoir differs from those of other celebrities discussed in Bugeja’s Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East: Rethinking the Liminal in Mashriqi Writing. Familia’s theater is different because the director and playwright pair do not focus directly on the postcolonial component. Instead, the question of memoir and remembrance has consistently been treated both from individual and collective perspectives. The term collective is fraught with meaning as it may involve the family, neighborhood, city, village, institution, nation (Tunisia/ the Arab nation), the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and perhaps the entire world. These issues are, for me, more important than the postcolonial lens because they open up a wide area of research that is neither limited nor binary.

The primary motives for this dissertation are not only that Baccar and Jaïbi’s theater requires in-depth research but also to account for the success this theater has had in Tunisia as well as outside its borders. This theater is a testimony to the fact that societies cry out for theater wherever they are and regardless of their socio-political differences. In 2003 *Junūn*,

Appendix One

Personal Interview with Fadhel Jaïbi. 26 July 2009, Tunis.

RZ: When I read *Junūn*, I noticed, of course, how it raised questions around the themes of schizophrenia, fear, and sickness; but I also noted that it provided multiple answers to those questions. The character Nūn fascinates me in how he is juxtaposed with the psychiatrist named simply “She,” because she struggles to help him, challenging the archaic systems of the institution in which she works and to which he is committed. *Junūn* raises the question of whether the character She deals with Nūn as nothing more than another case in the asylum, or in a more complete way—as a human being. Based on reading this play and what I recall from *American Drama: 1945-2000*, by David Krasner, which presents a compelling chapter on the body in pain, I think that *Junūn* tackles the subject of pain, too. For instance, recently I saw a play entitled *Les Racines de l’Eau* (Water Roots), in which Nejia El-Ouerghi was cast in the role of a character in pain. I was fascinated by the intersection between the interiority of the body of this female character, who seems to be suffering and the exteriority of this female character that may express how she avoids addressing problems by indulging in wine. I wonder if you can elaborate more on the representation of the body based on your experience in theater. I am also interested to hear more about what you think of the representation of the body in its struggle for liberation from many constraints among which one can include physical pain, or in some other cases, illusion.

FJ: Before I answer your question, let me ask you whether your interest in the body is restricted to the female or male body.

RZ: My intention is to understand how the body is represented and used as metaphor in the plays that you directed or wrote. I am interested in both male and female bodies. I

guess they are not independent from each other; that is why I would like to understand how each functions in relation to the other.

FJ: I guess it is natural that you raise the question of the body as theater incorporates a present body. In this case, one cannot overlook the body even if you place it behind the curtain, for example. If we consider that you listen to a voice, you will imagine a body beyond the voice. Let alone if you have a body that constitutes one of the main elements on the stage. One may consider how the body speaks more eloquently than what may be spoken about it. The body speaks to uncover what is kept silent about it. The body speaks about its owner against his or her will. It talks about his/her consciousness and unconsciousness. The body communicates what becomes precipitated and speaks about the hidden issues be they intellectual, social, or ideological. The body does not lie even if you hide it in a veil or a burqa, for instance. Rather, it contextualizes the reasons that led its agent to behave in one way or another, accounting for what is sacred and forbidden. The body articulates beliefs, ideas, and obstacles that emerge from socio-cultural conditions.

It is crucial that one confronts this body that exists, lives, and interacts with other bodies. Thus, the expression in French “Le corps social” embodies a society through its people. When you live in Tunisia and you travel to a different country, like yourself to America, you realize how bodies behave differently in private and public spaces, for instance. Based on these differences, you can come to conclusions that will allow you to classify this social body that has its specificities in terms of age, culture, and social class among other factors. These issues have for a long time motivated and continue to inspire scientists and intellectuals. In order to reconsider thoughts about the social body and contextualize it, one may account for the way in which people’s behaviors differ from one another. This is why theater pays particular attention to the body, as do music and dance.

Moreover, the body can be communicative not only when it moves, but also when

it is still. It may become even more eloquent in its silence. One of the important subjects that I investigate in theater relates to the capacities of the body in keeping still and the extent to which it can keep a character from moving. This exercise compares to the person who can stay one minute below water as opposed to another who remain submerged longer. Many factors can come into play such as the degree of stress, training, personality, and so on. I find myself in awe when I am in the presence of those performers, who play the role of being either sick or on their death beds, with an incredible capacity to express different states of being while breathing with difficulty, or even sleeping. I recall watching the fascinating sleep-related movies of Andy Warhol when I was in Paris; these convey bodies in sleep that are submitted to a certain rhythm that is based on a nightmare or a pleasant dream. For me, watching a body in a state of sleepiness, sickness, or agony reveals the utmost state of expression—it makes the skin shiver. Let alone if the body is running, hiking, writing, driving, beating, being beaten, hugging, or building something. In all cases, the body is highly expressive.

Additionally, the body has a spectrum of rhythms which are like a dictionary with a zillion entries. For instance, the breath—which is the starting physical point of these rhythms—may account for the body's submission to these rhythms and may articulate a sensation, a thought, or a feeling. I want to give you a pertinent example that may account for the physical and spiritual relationship that can be experienced and exchanged between the play on stage and the audience. It is like the relationship between a mother and her unborn child. As soon as he/she is neurologically complete, the fetus tries to move about; this is something that only the mother can feel, but it must be extraordinary to feel this sensation ... from each perspective. This is to say that the two of them share something beyond expression. I wish my audience to experience a similar type of feeling; to feel the most sublime effect when they attend a play. The examples I illustrated raise infinite questions, but

in my work I start with thinking about similar ideas because they are first grounded in reality. They are also relative for each body is proportionate to a bigger object, or to a smaller one than itself. This takes me back to an exercise I conducted with trainees in theater. It consists of a journey across personal history.

RZ: Can you explain what this exercise is about?

FJ: In a group of about twelve actors between the ages of twenty and forty years old, I suggest that each should recall the most memorable event he or she felt at a younger age in reverse order. In other words, if the performer is twenty, I require that he attempt to feel again an important event that marked his life at the age of nineteen, eighteen. When he reaches the moment of creation that reduced him to an atom, this moment generates vertigo and affects the trainee so much that he expresses, perhaps, his thirst for the moment at which he was created. I view this as a moment of alliance between the body, the mother, and the universe. Note that this exercise helps to resurrect past experience as well as create and fabricate new experience through imagination that is derived from nothingness. This practice takes us to another dimension, which is characterized by metaphysical notions that locate the human being between finitude and infinity. I argue that there is musicality between the human being and the universe that one cannot observe through vision. Instead, the movements' secrets lie between the mental and the intuitive. I also redirect this exercise in another way; that is to say, I ask the actors to imagine what remarkable experience could have occurred when they were two, three, or four years older than they are at present. *Familia* is a good example to illustrate this theatrical practice. In this play, the actors Jalila, Sabah, and Kamal were between thirty-two and forty, but they performed as if they were seventy to eighty-year-old individuals. They were on a journey of unknown suppositions, talking to their great grandparents. I also collaborate with choreographers, like Nawal Skandrani, in order to express that theater is mostly about the body, movement, and emotions that communicate

immediate and convulsive energy to the audience.

RZ: What about your approach with regard to the stage versus the page? May I ask you about your point of departure? In other words, do you write for the stage, or how does that work? And what is the objective of theater in your understanding? Is it to entertain, to educate, or do you have a different message that is perhaps about raising consciousness?

FJ: Theater to me is not like mummification. In my view, the ideal of theater does not depart from the text, but rather from research. My contribution to this field is based on experiments that are grounded in the here and now. At the same time, these experiments raise myriad questions that I share with the members of my troupe, in some cases, over an entire year. Among the questions that problematize the plays I direct are conflicting discourses that touch on the relationship between the present and the past, the masculine and the feminine, the old and the new generations—and how each of these relates to and bears witness to the independence of Tunisia in different ways: the rationalist Marxism of the militants of the 1960s, with their fundamentalist convictions, and the postcolonial Occident in its relation to the Orient and the Maghreb.

RZ: I sense that your theater does not reflect Tunisian reality as much as it proposes change. What do you think? To whom do you write/direct your plays? When you write or direct a play, do you have any particular social class in mind?

FJ: As Vitez, I call my theater, “Elitist for all.” I want our plays to be performed in Tunisia as well as Damascus, Beirut, and so on. The language we use is manifold, combining prose and poetry and alternating among rural, urban and literary Tunisian dialects. I do start from reality to then move on to achieve what is beyond the real. If we continue to study Shakespeare in Tunisia, it is not because his plays reflect English society. Rather, his success over the centuries may have resulted from so appropriately staging man in relation to the universe. Note that when I present plays in Tokyo and Argentina, the audience’s responses

make plays like *Junūn* seem as if we were talking about Argentinean or Japanese society. I think that the aesthetics that mark a work of art and account for the ephemeral that can be shared among all humanity, are what distinguishes one play—or any work of art—from another. And based on that aesthetic, such a work can gain recognition in a global context.

Moreover, I interact with the audience, conducting a questionnaire from one performance to another. My goal is to understand the condition of the Tunisian people; I prefer to name it “Homo Tunisianus.” By that, I refer to someone who consciously perceives art through his own eyes rather than through the “Other,”—be that the occidental model, or the sub-models that relate to Egypt or France. At the same time, this allows space to develop my thoughts outside of fixed goals. Instead, I follow the flow of my ideas and experiments to see what emerges from many perspectives, whether they relate to the body, emotion, imagination, and so on.

RZ: I sense that the Surrealist school, perhaps, influences you.

FJ: I do not believe in these structured schools. There are so many things that do not find expression in the schools of Realism, Surrealism, or any other literary movement. What we know about imagination, for instance, is very little, which leads me to argue that such schools cannot claim a better understanding of theater. My objective is to focus on a few topics in depth, like the word, the body, movement, and to understand how altogether they have aesthetic value. This is to say that a play like *Khamsūn* is not meant merely to communicate ideas. Rather, it is a play that is filled with images, spoken and unspoken signs as it talks about pain, distress, and torture, and expands into a very far past in Tunisian history. The tone of resistance in *Khamsūn* evokes the Revolution of Ali Ben Guedehum and Hannibal, two major figures in our history. Hence, one may think that there must be something that is difficult to identify. Yet, it was absolutely shared by an audience of 9,000 spectators last year.

RZ: I was part of your audience in Carthage last year and I was intrigued by that performance. With regard to the theater as an instrument of resistance, it is true for me that theater in Tunisia, and specifically in your plays *Khamsūn* and *Junūn* are about the resistance and democracy to which Tunisian society aspires because it does not exist here in reality. In my view, one cannot be apolitical even in countries that are under regimes that stand against democracy. Although I live abroad, I hope to see some change toward democracy in my country some day before I die.

FJ: Although I am secular, I want to quote a Qu'ranic verse which says, "Allah does not change a group of people unless they change themselves." This statement is significant because it illustrates best what I want to articulate. Democracy aims to liberate the individual from all the constraints and chains that the Other imposes on him/her. One should also consider that democracy cannot take hold unless the individual refrains from being unfair to himself by blaming all his failures on the Other. One has to define who is unfair to whom. When individual responsibility is absent, as it is in our society, the individual is absorbed into the tribe, the group, the nation, the flag, etc. My philosophy, from the start of my career, consists of continuously "hammering the same nail" in order to confront the self and reconsider its responsibilities. My career is comparable to the myth of Sisyphus if you will. I do not believe in fatalism. Therefore, I praise Hegel for his notion of dialectics. Hegel did not create this concept, but he draws our attention to make use of it and consider its importance when we think of the dialectic relationship between the individual and the group. Note that democracy is not absolute; the individual moves in and out of the group. The responsibility is both at an individual and a national level. In order to contribute to democracy, one has to be aware of these discrepancies with regard to the individual who both belongs and does not belong to the group. Note that this is the case with other nations that purport to embrace democracy. For example, the Americans, by electing George W. Bush, provided him with the

legitimacy to wage war against Iraq and, therefore, to send their children into war and ultimately, to their deaths. This is to say that there are cases that show that democracy is not observed even in the countries that are thought to have democratic regimes. In other words, democracy becomes a trick when you allow yourself to be represented by someone like Bush or Sarkozy.

RZ: I am really glad that you mentioned Hegel because I can use his theory in my analysis. I would like to ask you more about *Junūn* with regard to this notion of dialectics.

FJ: Theories must adapt to changes in the real world. Our behavior changes over time, and so should theory adjust to continue to be useful. The character, Nūn, represents an individual who tries to break the chains that prevent him from asserting his individuality. Nūn challenges both the family and the institution. He raises questions about everything, particularly about himself, because he is schizophrenic. The dialectics is also an experiment with performance and the process of learning something from it. From my experience, I learned that theater is dialectic. As you direct a play and as you perform a role, you can give and gain understanding at the same time.

RZ: What about the dialectic relationships in *Khamsūn*? I agree that the dialectic relationship between the characters is important, but I have a different experience from yours and I do not take faith as a purely fatalistic experience. In 2005, I travelled to the U.S. and there I attended a workshop on Sufism in Boston. The workshop changed my understanding of faith compared to what I had acquired in Tunisia. The esoteric way of seeking Islamic knowledge appeals to me much more than does the close textual analysis that did not offer me the knowledge I was seeking. I mean, this type of comprehension requires a continuous check on knowledge without claiming completion.

FJ: It looks like you are like the character Amal in *Khamsūn* because Amal explores her faith in France. She goes beyond her Marxist education. Amal thus questions everything

she learned from her family. Through experience, she succeeds in exploring new dimensions of her faith.

RZ: I guess that is an excellent way to describe what emerges from Amal's experience. Yet what I find disturbing during the performance of *Khamsūn*, especially because it was first performed in France, relates to how the actress, Jalila, responds to her daughter. I am alluding to the gesture of removing the scarf from Amal's head after she came from France and while the police interrogated her. I take that gesture as one designed to please the majority of the French, as the scarf represents an emblem of immigrants and Muslims. For me, this conflict arises in that the Tunisian audience can differentiate between the woman that is veiled and the stereotype of the veiled fundamentalist woman. However, I doubt a French audience will find it so easy to distinguish between the two. Does that scene not essentialize the Arab-Muslim culture? What do you think?

FJ: What makes you think that that scene appeals to the French?

RZ: Based on some acquaintances I have, I learned that many French feel disturbed by seeing someone wearing religious garments. Some of them even make outlandish claims such as: women who wear scarves are likely to produce car accidents. Of course this is ridiculous because these claims are not based on any evidence; they are politicized exaggerations, as you know.

FJ: Well, I worked on *Khamsūn* with fifteen actors because in part I don't want to see my daughter veiled. I see this tradition as a fabrication that allows man to make woman surrender to his whim. Society is a composite of liberals, conservatives, and Islamists, and I do not work by excluding one group or the other. By directing *Khamsūn*, I wanted to understand how someone like you could become a suicide bomber. My goal is to include all parts, observe, and analyze how they interact when they are in conflict. For instance, Gaddour is the policeman who interrogates Amal. In imposing power on people, Gaddour does not

look happy. Rather, he appears like a filthy man for whom you feel both disgust and pity because he also suffers under the system. The play dramatizes all these contradictions. Yet, at a time when Islamists are repressed in Tunisian society, the least one can do is give them a voice and attempt to understand them. *Khamsūn* accomplishes that goal, which is why it was initially censored, but after six months and with the coming of El-Basti as new minister of culture, this play gained recognition in France after it was first appreciated in the Odeon.

RZ: I am so pleased to have conducted this interview with you. Mr. Jaïbi. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences.

FJ: I would like to thank you, Rafika, for being part of *Khamsūn*'s audience, for your time, energy, and thoughts. This meeting is nothing but an extension of your attending *Khamsūn*. This is an example of the dialectic relationship that consists of giving and taking. Thank you.

Appendix Two

Personal Interview with Jalila Baccar. May 28 2012, Tunis.

Education:

RZ: Would you please tell me about yourself in terms of education, that is to say, whether you received education in Tunisia or in France? The information I gathered about you is sometimes contradictory, I just want to double check for the sake of accuracy.

JB: I never studied in France. Instead, I obtained my baccalaureate in Tunisia. After that, I studied two years at the École Normale Supérieure. Then, I studied French literature one year at the university, but soon I quit the university for theater.

RZ: As far as your training in theater, many people consider that you are a self-made playwright/actress through your experience in different troupes.

JB: I agree that I am a self-made woman. Before the baccalaureate and up to that year (1972), I was first exposed to theater at school. I was also trained a bit by the television. When I entered the university, I had an experience in theater that almost went unnoticed because it did not advance my experience except for a short training that did not exceed one month. Following that, I joined the troupe of Gafsa, after which we founded the New Theater, and later Familia Productions. All of this is based on practice and I do not have any diplomas in theater.

Familia's Success:

RZ: How did the New Theater attract large audiences? By means of observation and readings that I've come across, I noticed that your troupe gained more fame than other well-known troupes such as El Teatro, or other Tunisian troupes. I wonder if you can clarify the

reasons which you feel have led to your comparative success.

JB: For me, I find comparisons very annoying because if you need to compare my troupe to El Teatro, you would need to talk to Taoufik Jebali. I cannot compare myself to him because, to me, this is not ethically appropriate; I can only discuss my personal experience with you. Indeed, everyone takes a direction, has a vision, has different ideas.

As for us, since our experience at the theater of Gafsa, we have retained the same members except for a few and we have called our theater, “The Theater of Citizenship.” This is to say that this theater is tightly related to the citizen in his social, cultural, and political environment. This is, however, not about documentary drama because the representation of the Tunisian citizen is not separate from humanity. This theater proposes to ask questions more than it provides answers. The issues that our theater attempts to tackle mirror those of society in its human, philosophical, and existentialist dimensions. The Tunisian citizen becomes, thus, part of the universal human being. For example, *Junūn*, which is an adaptation from Nejia Zemni, is about a real Tunisian patient who is schizophrenic. Yet, after the text was adapted into theater, it toured in Argentina, Poland, Korea, and Japan, in addition to other European countries. I noticed that spectators in all these countries reacted in similar ways to the performance. This is to say, you can start from the narrow or the broad scope, or the other way around to motivate audiences. This occurs, of course, in addition to theatrical professionalism and techniques that help to frame images that can be transmitted anywhere. The techniques are modest because the work that we do relies heavily on one principal issue: the actor. The major components of our theater are the actor, the techniques of acting, and the administration of acting that turn an amateur actor, or someone who has experience in acting, into an actor who can be productive at the collective level of performing.

RZ: I agree that the economy of theater is one of the characteristics of your troupe. Also, I recall from Ridha Boukadida’s recently published book on the experience of the New

Theater, he mentions your describing Jaïbi's work in terms of sculpture.

JB: Maybe I said this twenty years ago. Yes, the actor is like raw material. The work consists of exposing the character's features behind which lie the actor's features. The former cannot be exposed unless the actor gets to know these features from within rather than from without. This is how the sculpture of the character's features can be processed.

RZ: Are you saying that the actor immerses him or herself within the character?

JB: The actor does not become the character. We work a lot on distancing, which is about the dialectics that exist between the actor and the character. You are at the same time the puppet and the manipulator of the puppet show. In other words, you lend your body, features, image, feelings, and awareness to the puppet. Fadhel explains this in terms of being yourself and the other. This is what he names the actor and his double. It takes time for the actor to become aware of the other and uses it for the performance.

RZ: In my understanding, this is a Brechtian technique that depends on distancing between the actor and the character.

JB: I am not a specialist on Brecht, but in many cases people take distancing as cold performance, which is about stepping in, saying something, and stepping out. Distancing is not about coldness or disconnection. Rather, the actor should be physically and mentally alert for a risky game, and the sense that the game involves the responsibility of playing, with regard to the character as well as the spectator, which invites him or her to imagine or to embody a given situation. With that in mind, I can express this, being emotionally charged without tension. In his *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* (The Paradox of Acting) Diderot says, "Trop de sentiments tue les sentiments." (Too much emotion would kill emotion). The interaction should be kept between the actor/character and the spectator, which creates catharsis. Such a moment takes us back to Greek theater.

RZ: In general, we compare Brecht to Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double*.

Familia's Approach:

RZ: In the book of Ridha Boukadida, you described the New Theater as a "Model" yet, in *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb*, Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson identify it as a movement.

JB: There is no work in our troupe that is done by one member apart from others. For example, when I write, it does not mean that everybody else writes, nor does it mean everyone else does not write. We each have a responsibility for specific matters, but there is no one who has the entire inspiration to write on his own. We believe in the dialectics of work and the collective energy. It starts with an idea that evolves. In Gafsa and the New Theater, the troupe was larger; but with Familia, both Fadhel and I think about the actors and theatrical practice. Habib Belhedi is devoted to administrative concerns, which helps us to be available to think about the dialectical relationship between writing and the stage. The discussions continue regarding staging and the administration of the actors, until we reach the final script. This is to say that Fadhel and I are devoted to writing, but through a process of "delivery." I am not a director, but I have my viewpoints on the overall picture. All of this leads to what I mentioned earlier: craft and professionalism.

To revisit your question regarding whether the New Theater is a movement or not: We can say yes, it is a movement because the members who founded this troupe, resemble one another, but have different skills and education. These are Fadhel Jaïbi, Fadhel Jaziri, Habib Masrouki, Mohamed Maseoud Driss, and me. As for me, I am a self-made woman as I emerge from the world of the school theater, where I was exposed to some texts and some superficial knowledge of theater. I never studied or lived abroad. The only place I have lived is Tunisia. Unlike me, both Fadhel Jaïbi and M. M. Driss studied theater in Censier, Paris III (La Sorbonne). Fadhel Jaziri is like me, except that he is a halfway, self-made man, because

he studied for one year in London. Masrouki was a filmmaker. This helped to make the experiment open regardless of the individual political orientation of the members. For instance, al-Jaziri was politically engaged, and the others were also politically active while they were in Paris. This is to tell you that the New Theater did not come out of the blue. There was a discussion about the means of production. There are explanations for why and how this troupe was created to break with the oppression of the Ministry. All this necessitated a private troupe, without imposing an appointed director who had to act under supervision of the regime. The New Theater must be understood in the context of its cultural and political environment. It is not only a movement for the sake of production. Rather, this troupe thinks about how to operate production and about a cultural and artistic alternative for Tunisia at that time. This makes it like a movement that involves not only theater. Habib made an exhibition of photos; we were also involved in television and cinema while some members were teaching at the Dramatic Center of Arts (CAD) before it became the High Institute of Dramatic Arts (ISAD). I wonder if all this is said in the books you have read.

RZ: Yes, some of it—not in the way you describe, but differently. For example, the description of the New Theater is usually identified as a counter experience to that of Ben Ayed.

JB: I believe that the theater of Ben Ayed includes both positive and negative sides. I do not believe that there is one category of theater; I am for plurality of theaters because the schools, the artistic movements, and audiences are multiple. The spectator needs a variety to make a choice where to go so that he or she is not bored with attending only one type of theater.

Reception of *Junūn*:

RZ: Regarding the audiences a while ago, you said that *Junūn* was similarly received in Argentina, Japan, and other countries. I am surprised to hear this because once I asked a friend of mine to watch *Junūn*, the movie, but from the onset the opening scene appalled her and she refused to continue watching it despite the fact that she is a fan of cinema.

JB: The movie is different from the play. But even in Tunisia, there were people among the spectators who left the theater toward the middle of the show because they could not watch it. And to come back to your question on whether the New Theater is a movement or not, I might call it a group of reflections rather than a movement, or a model. We need groups of reflection in Tunisia. The missing part of that is weakness and dispersal. Reflection by itself is not enough. Today, the modernists, or secularists, show a great potential to think and analyze clearly and progressively, but the difficulties lie in attaining the steps of planning and applying those theoretical ideas.

In the history of our troupe, we have an artistic vision that has enabled us to work with other artists, such as Kais Rostom, as a production designer, and Nawal Skandarani, as a choreographer. Yet the troupe could not involve musicians, architects, painters, filmmakers, actors, and all kinds of artists, in the way we had hoped. This was far from being possible due to the repressive political atmosphere toward individuals and groups. It was not possible for a movement to flourish in the way the Surrealists, or the Bauhaus had—where all arts were brought together.

RZ: As a follow-up question, do you consider Familia to be faithful to the principles of the New Theater?

JB: I believe that Familia's work represents a continuity of the New Theater and the Theater of Gafsa. The only difference is that the troupe was reduced in terms of members. Our work would not be possible without the participation of the administrative sector and the

contribution of all the actors and actresses. As for me, throughout the years, I evolved because I started to experiment with the Theater of Gafsa in 1973, and it took me twenty-five years to write a text, in 1998, which is *al-Baḥth An 'Ayda* (Searching for Ayda).

Influences:

RZ: In an interview conducted by a French radio station, Fadhel talked about how the events of 1968 had a decisive impact on his career. I noted that you talked about the events of March '68 in Tunisia, which are described by Michel Foucault. You also mentioned that Foucault was a lecturer in Tunis during that time.¹ I wonder what you think about the relevance of 1967 in the Arab World and the other international events that took place in different parts of the world, including the “Happenings” of the 1960s in the United States.

JB: Yes, I think that all these world events are relevant, mainly the events of 1967, because that year is important to think of in terms of the individual and the collective consciousness that keeps changing. In Tunisia, around 1967, the left wing was active; but as early as 1972, the political police invaded Tunisian institutions and from that time on, the Islamists wanted to take the lead, but they were crushed by the official government as well. By this I mean that artistic movements are not disconnected from reality. Rather, they make art accessible to the masses in given socio-political and economic circumstances. This was the case for Surrealism and the Bauhaus. As far as we are concerned, for the Arab peoples, or at least my generation, I was born at the time of what is called the Ḥawadith (Events). I recall how thrilled I was as a child on Independence Day. Later, the issues in Algeria and Palestine affected my life. My generation grew up with these burdens, without being given the opportunity to express ourselves freely. Sometimes, I wonder how the relationship between Arabic countries and the West would be if the Palestinian-Israeli conflict had not taken place at all. But the case is different because we grow up observing the incredible injustice against

Palestine while the Western World, that is so-called democratic, is doing nothing to stop it. Neither has the Middle East, with its reserves of oil, done anything to help. For these reasons, I believe that both the events of '67 and '68 are related to each other. And due to these events, the leftists are repressed, because the Islamists were blaming them for their incapacity to improve the conditions in which Arabs were caught, and to make progress in an unjust world. Islamists take the modernists to be Bourguiba's disciples, which is the case in the sense that they can take what they think is good from the West, but can also use the same type of tactics that the West used to confront them. Indeed, Amine Maalouf explains in his *Identités Meurtrières* (In the name of identity: Violence and the need to belong), that when a group of people feels that it is in danger, it is this group that will claim identity first. This is the case with Islamists, who feel that their Islamic and Arab identity are in crisis.

As for me, I attempt to defend the small group of people that forms Tunisia, and later the larger group. After all, even if we are not raised in Islamic religion, I acknowledge that Islamic culture and civilization form the bulk of our identity, without forgetting other components of this civilization: that we all grew up loving to eat "couscous" and "brik" (The latter is a Tunisian dish that consists of stuffed triangular pastry with eggs, parsley, and onion which is deep fried), which belong to the Berber cuisine. As an artist, I believe that we are who we are and we do not need to provide definitions, which only keep things in flux. In my understanding, here lies the difference in terms of reflection, between an artist who wants to leave everything open, and an academic who has interest in framing everything in some somewhat constricting, coherent picture.

RZ: In a way you are right, as we are trained to understand phenomena by relating them to theories. For example, Foucault's writing is useful, but his insights can be applicable to any text.

JB: I believe that the experience of Foucault in Tunisia is what may benefit your

research. With that, I would recommend a reading of the political militant history of the Left, including Ahmed ben Othmane, Fethi belhaj Yahia, Gilbert an-Naqqash, Hamma al-Hammami, and others. By reading both Foucault and the Tunisian Leftists, you will gain a comprehensive view of the political reality in its context.

The New Theater between Experimentation, Realism, Politics, and Elitism:

RZ: Can we consider the New Theater to be experimental, realist, political, and elitist? I would like us to discuss the last term for a moment.

JB: Yes, these terms together can describe the New Theater. Yet, I think when you say elitist and experimental, you raise a paradox because this theater is not apart from all citizens. We call it the Theater of Citizenship. For instance, *Khamsūn* attracted 8,000 spectators, which turns the play into a splendid representation because of the interaction with a large number of audience members. In my understanding, these were not only the elite. Rather, this is the Tunisian mob that later brought about the Revolution. The elite are not a group of Tunisian people raised in the middle class, nor those who belong to some more privileged area of Tunisia. They do not exist apart from the rest of the people of this society. Perhaps, most of those we call the elite today were raised in poor families whose parents made huge sacrifices so that their children would be part of this elite. To illustrate that the elite is not restricted to Tunis and a few other towns, I know that the elite of Gafsa, and that of Medenine, and Tataouine are some of the best elites in this country. At the Medenine theater festival, they have formed meet-ups for discussion and groups for training since the 1970s. My understanding of the elite lies in the dynamics between reflection, analysis, planning, and action, as I stated earlier. And again, individuals apart cannot do this kind of work. Rather, it will need to prosper individually and collectively.

RZ: Just to follow up your comment on elitism, I wonder if a market vendor, for

instance, will be part of your audience and whether he or she will understand your performances—of course with all my respect to any vegetable seller, or any other kind of job.

JB: You are right to raise this type of question, but I'll tell you an anecdote that will illustrate that the elite is not always comprised of intellectuals. At the time we were working on *Famīlia*, I left the work place to do some shopping. I met with a classmate of mine, who became a teacher of English, and she was asking me what I am doing, and if I stopped doing theater because she had not heard about me for a long time. I was a little bit surprised because the same day, an article on Familia Productions had appeared in *La Presse*, a widely read newspaper in Tunisia. After about a quarter of an hour I stopped at a shoe seller right on the street. He does not have a shop. So, the sneakers he has were right there on the floor. I wanted to purchase a pair, but the seller wanted to offer me the pair of sneakers for free. When I asked him why, he told me that he loved the performances that we have done. He said that he attended *al-Taḥqiq*, *Ghassalit Ennuwādir*, and *Famīlia*. He also said that he was planning to watch *Famīlia* a second time. This shows that any large cultural project should not consider addressing the elite in terms of educated people and artists only. Instead, it should be constructed so as to be accessible to all people.

In this respect, television and information can play a major role in enlightening the masses. For example, Nesma TV, which encouraged its audiences to be addicted to series such as “Bab al-Hara” (The Neighborhood's Gate,)² shares responsibility in producing people who violently react against the broadcasting of *Persepolis*. When the TV shows part of a song, without notifying the audience of the rights of the singer, composer, or lyrics, it projects a given image about information and the way in which the artist is treated. I am saying this because my generation was not raised with TV. To entertain ourselves, we could possibly go to theater or cinema; but the current generations are raised by television; I ask what has Tunisian Television done in order to prevent the Egyptian soap operas, religious leaders like

‘Amr Khaled, and singers like Nancy ‘Ajram from becoming models for our youth? By this I do not mean it is wrong for our youth to entertain themselves, but I assert that emphasizing such figures must be criticized. I ask, what television stations like Nesma have done for the generations to come.

1. During the 1960s, Habib Bourguiba held power under single-party rule, but intellectuals expressed hope that the country would evolve and become more politically diverse. Despite the regime’s rigid control, a few movements for change emerged. One of these was *Harakat Tajdid* (“A movement of Renewal”), led by Rachid Ghannouchi. He proposed Islam as a way to resist the de-Islamization of Tunisian society under Bourguiba’s secular government. At the time, the aim of the Islamic movement was not only to counter Bourguiba’s secularism but also to achieve political recognition. Followers of *Harakat Afāq* (“Prospects’ Movement”), however, argued that traditional Islamic thought could not be utilized to address modern political issues and that Islamists would need to embrace a more progressive form of thought to be successful. Among the leaders of this movement were Ahmida al-Nayfar and Slaheddine al-Jurshi. These political movements were sometimes inspired by and related to larger, worldwide debates that involved not only Islamic thought and politics but also the clash between Islam and the West. Similar debates were taking place in the rest of the Arab world. In Egypt, for example, followers of the Egyptian Brotherhood and those of Mohamed ‘Abduh showed how religious, social and political reform are interwoven. The main focus of Arab society was to seek alternatives to existing political and social structures in order to halt decline and catch up with the modern world.

2. The Syrian soap opera *Bab al-Hara* “The Neighborhood's Gate” is one of the most popular television series in the Arab world and draws millions of viewers. The series tells the story of a Syrian neighborhood during French colonial rule and explores residents’ struggle for independence and their adherence to traditional Syrian values.

Appendix Three

A copy of the original announcement for the play, *Abd-al-Rahman al-Nasser*, Al-Masrah al-Baldi (The Municipal Theater), Tunis. March 3, 1944.

ما بعد العيان بيان! ...

عشية يوم الجمعة { ٨ ربيع ١ ١٣٦٣ } { ٣ مارس ١٩٤٤ } الساعة الثانية والنصف بعد الزوال تقدم جمعية

الكوكب التريبي

التحفة التاريخية التي يشاهد فيها التفرج صورة صادقة من ازهر عصور المدنية الإسلامية الا وهي رواية:

عبد الرحمان الناصر
(ثامن بني امية بالاندلس)

وهي ماساة ذات اربعة فصول هذبت خصيصا للجمعية

على المسرح البلدي

ويشارك في تشخيصها افراد عائلة الكوكب ، الذين اعترف لهم رواد المسرح الكرام بصاحبة الافعال وانفان التبولوبراعة الاحراج
تنبيه - تطلب التذاكر من شبك المسرح - الاسعار ٦٠ و ٥٠ و ٤٠ و ٣٥ فرانكا - ادروا بحجز مقاعدكم من اليوم

شعارنا : خدمة الفن لترقية الفن! ...

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Appendix Four



A Cover Letter for *Lettre d'un comédien à un de ses amis* (Letter of a comedian to one of his friends), 1741.

LETTRE
D'UN COMÉDIEN,
A UN DE SES AMIS,
TOUCHANT

Sa Captivité & celle de vingt-six de ses Camarades
chez les Corsaires de Tunis ; & ce qu'ils font
obligés de faire pour adoucir leurs peines.

A V E C

UNE DESCRIPTION HISTORIQUE
& exacte de la Ville de Gènes, d'où ils sortoient
lorsqu'ils ont été pris au mois de Septembre dernier.



A P A R I S,
Chez PIERRE CLEMENT, Libraire,
Quay de Gèvres, du côté du Pont
Notre-Dame.

M. DCC. XLI.
Avec Approbation & Permission.

Appendix Five

On the Veracity of *Lettre d'un comédien* (Letter of a comedian)

Returning to consideration of whether *Lettre d'un comédien* (Letter of a comedian) should be read as a true account or a fable, this note maintains that although the anonymous author stresses that it is véritable (conforms to reality), one cannot clearly determine where history and fiction meet because the narrator is anonymous and because its subjective nature. Nevertheless, a close analysis of this letter indicates it may be historically related to the 1741 event for two reasons. First, it describes details regarding cultural, political, and economic history that appear in other sources regarding the history of the Mediterranean region during the eighteenth century. Second, not only Charfeddine, but also Gillian Weiss, mentions the letter in *Captives and Corsairs* (2011). It is important to note that commerce among Mediterranean countries had flourished since the medieval period,¹ and that the corsair enterprise had become a common practice in the Mediterranean. Albert Hourani, a British-Lebanese historian, who specialized in the history of the Middle East, explains, “[T]rade was mainly carried on by European merchants, Venetians and Genoese in the earlier Ottoman centuries, British and French in the eighteenth.”² Competition between the Ottoman Empire and Europe concerned not only trade but also territories, particularly islands. The American historian and theologian George-Park Fisher, reports that when the Corsicans revolted against the Genoese, the French were called in to intervene, and, in the end, “The island [Corsica] was ceded to France by Genoa (1768).”³ This example delineates how islands were confiscated by the dominating world powers during the eighteenth century for the purpose of territorial expansion.

Second, Weiss illustrates how the business of piracy created tension between Tunisia

and France. Curiously, Weiss states that, in 1741, there was a French troupe, which was captured by Tunisian pirates. This detail might affirm that this is most likely the same event as narrated in the letter. Finally, in the fall of 1741, just as he was opening all French ports to the sub-Saharan slave trade, Louis XV suspended commerce with Tunis and ordered a blockade. The Bey countered by sending out armed galliots. Their victims included twenty-seven traveling French actors who had staged pantomimes while awaiting ransom.⁴ Weiss explains that the Tunisians captured this group, in part, to halt a transaction-taking place between France and Genoa: that of France's attempt to purchase Tabarka from Genoa. However, Tabarka ultimately became part of Tunisia.

Third, the riddle of this letter lies also in the duplicate names (D...) of the sender and the addressee, as well as the fact that the name of the seaman who sent this letter was taken out by Claude-Prosper Jolyot Crébillon [Crébillon fils] (1707-1777), who approved its publication. Also notable is that the only French names that appear in the letter are "Hus" and "Desforges."⁵ Weiss argues, "[this letter] which reads as pure fiction, is given credence by studies of the Hus family, whose name appear in the text. This multigenerational troupe, which performed all over France in the 1730s, apparently disappeared from the stage for two years after 1741."⁶ Weiss refers to Jean-Philippe Van Aelbrouck who, in 2006, presented a paper on the French family Hus. In this paper, Van Aelbrouck states that this family lived in the eighteenth century in France and he describes them as "a dynasty of actors." Van Aelbrouck also mentions that the "Brothers Hus' Troupe" ("La troupe des Frères Hus") was operating around 1749. Most pertinent to analysis of the letter (*Lettre d'un comédien*), Van Aelbrouck notes,

However, the Hus family disappeared in 1741. At this point, an incredible phase that theater history has retained consists in the abduction of this troupe by 'barbaric pirates.' Max Fuchs relates this curious event that occurred to the Hus family between Genoa and Tunis.⁷

Moreover, Aelbrouck states that in 1756, Madame Hus, who was Françoise-Nicole

Gravillon, experimented with playwriting and acting, but was not as successful an actor as her daughter, Adelaide-Louise-Pauline, in the theater. Further evidence by Max Fuchs is also cited in Yves Giraud, who relates that Madame Hus lived in Toulon before the Tunisian pirates captured her.⁸ In sum, if one supposes that this letter is authentic, then the fact that Madame Hus existed in history as an actor along with the detail that the Frères Hus troupe was inactive for two years would echo the *avertissement* (warning) that preceded *the Letter of comedian*. This preface-like part indicates, “this letter was delivered to Marseille by a French sailor two years ago while he was detained as a slave in Tunis.”⁹ If this document is considered historical, it would worthwhile to verify the repertoire of the Troupe Frères Hus. Jacques Isnardon states that this troupe came from “Rouen” and operated from 1749 to 1963, in Brussels. He also claims that this troupe was known to be touring France from 1720 to 1750, where it performed at Theatre de la Monnaie in 1749. Isnardon highlights, “Hus, a principal dancer in the serious genre does well in composing programs for the Ballets that he presents.”¹⁰ Although Isnardon states the repertoire of other troupes that directed the Theater de la Monnaie, he did not clarify what the Brothers Hus presented, then. It is worth noting, however, that the author explains how Italian operas were part of the programs in this theater around 1750. Despite the historical references that may refer to either real events, or mere fabrications, a close reading of the letter reveals invaluable information about Tunis, Genoa, and France in terms of commerce, culture, and arts. Most importantly, the letter stimulates further debate based on the reception of the pantomime that the French comedians performed.

Appendix Six

Molière, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (The Bourgeois Gentleman, 1670) and Ben ‘Ayed’s Adaptation, *al-Marishāl Ammar* (The Marshal Ammar, 1969)

Analysis of *al-Marishāl Ammar* demonstrates how this play opposes the contrived divisions between social classes. Although Ben ‘Ayed’s play is an adaptation of Molière’s *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, it is original in the sense that it portrays—within a local Tunisian context—social satire in a rural community where the inhabitants aspire to hold titles and ranks similar to those of the urban elite. From a Tunisian cultural perspective, the title “Marishāl” refers to a man from the countryside who enriches himself through his military service. “Maréchal” is borrowed from French to specifically refer to a general in the army. In this play, the regional dialects of both rural and urban communities are used, and this creates a sense of ambivalence about social behavior specifically referencing the rural exodus to the cities. The reoccurrence of the term *Baldia* in *al-Marishāl Ammar* refers to people who originated in an urban area. It is useful to explain the phenomenon of movement from rural areas to cities and the desire of the rural class to imitate the urban class in order to appear refined and rich.

Molière used sarcasm to ridicule the attempts of the bourgeoisie, as represented by M. Jourdain, to imitate the noble class without having any genuine likelihood of actually achieving nobility:

M. Jourdain: Do people of quality also learn music?

Master of Music: Yes, sir.

M. Jourdain: So I will learn.¹¹

M. Jourdain's response indicates that he has no common sense, which results in a ridiculous spectacle; his imitation is aimless and naïve because he imitates for the sake of imitating. As clothing is a tool to imitate the noble class, the tailor in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* plays a major role in manipulating M. Jourdain. In order to appear a gentleman, M. Jourdain spends a great deal of money on garments; the tailor takes advantage of this by flattering him and trying to convince him of the importance of wearing well-matched clothes. In reality, M. Jourdain is a source of money for many freeloaders. To flatter M. Jourdain and affirm that the wearing of a noble costume reflects actual noble social status, the master of tailors declares, "Look, this is the best clothes of the court, and the best matched. What a masterpiece of having invented a serious suit that was not black."¹² This statement reflects the ability of clothing to reduce the class barrier between the nobility and the bourgeois as well as the importance of appearances in society. Larry W. Riggs asserts, "Indeed, even provincial nobles upon arriving in Paris, often went directly to second-hand clothes dealers to buy, frequently on credit, the costumes appropriate to their pretensions."¹³ On the other hand, the failure of M. Jourdain to become a nobleman seems to represent the failure of the entire bourgeois class to achieve any higher status—an argument supported by the attitude of several characters who do not approve of his adventures. Unlike M. Jourdain, Mme. Jourdain's perceptions are not misled by appearances; M. Jourdain's thoughts are torn between his admiration for gentle society and his feelings of shame with his own class. His desire to integrate into the noble class leads to conflict with his family.

Using dramatic irony, Molière portrays M. Jourdain as the only character who cannot see reality because of his lack of common sense. His image represents a false pretense, especially when he appears as a Mamamouchi willing to marry his daughter to the Great Turk. This scene appealed to Louis XIV, who was amused at seeing Turks placed in a ridiculous situation. Eugene H. Falk reinforces this point: "[t]he occasion for the writing of

Le Bourgeois gentilhomme is well known. This comédie-ballet was written to amuse the king, who for personal reasons wished to see the Turks ridiculed.”¹⁴ The mise-en-abyme ridicules both the Turk and M. Jourdain, which pleases the King, who laughs at the Mamamouchi’s humiliation.

It is important to note Molière’s motive behind presenting *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* which was to gain the approval of the French king by both entertaining and indirectly flattening him through the representation of the Mamamouchi. Of Molière’s anxiety regarding the success of his play in Chambord in October, 1670, Georges Mongrédien notes, “After the performance, the King, who had not yet made his mind, was kind enough to tell Molière: “I have not spoken to you on the first night because I was held, but in truth, Molière you did not do anything yet that entertained more, and your play is excellent.”¹⁵ The play reflects Louis XIV’s appreciation of the arts, including drama, painting, dance, and music.

As a contrast to the Marishāl’s foolishness, the voice of reason is represented by other characters—namely his wife, Douja, and her servant, Zohra. After they bring into focus the Marishāl’s neglect of values and virtue at the expense of appearance and pretense, he realizes that he is pretentious. Realizing that his wish to become a nobleman is somewhat pathetic, he decides to return to his countryside manners. As his suit is symbolic of his wish to become a nobleman, he takes it off and treads upon it. He then acknowledges his origins, appreciating his countryside roots:

“This is the suit that made me appear ridiculous, and the laughing and trampling of my dignity. Let me tread upon it [the suit]. Listen to me all of you, I have decided to take off the clothes of the city and wear the garments of the village where the fields of wheat and barley are.”¹⁶

This social satire conveys the failure of the bourgeois to imitate the nobility and the foolishness of trying to change one’s social status.

Both *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and *al-Marishāl 'Ammar* reveal how discrepancies between reality and appearances might result in hypocrisy and thus produce laughter. Indeed, the similarities between the two plays regarding the theme of class distinctions are striking. Like M. Jourdain, the Marishāl is interested in appearing to be a gentleman, but his efforts to do so are futile, and he ultimately refutes his noble pretensions. Although nobility is embodied by costumes, manners, and décor in both plays, the use of different dialects in *al-Marishāl 'Ammar* marks a change in the way that Tunisian theater represents class distinctions. While Ben Ayed highlights social change in terms of rural exodus, Molière suggests that birth no longer determines nobility: The modern nobility are the urban elite who possess the money to exert power.

1. George-Park Fisher, *Outline of Universal History*, (Project Gutenberg, 1904), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8896/>, 749. Fisher explains, “Trade in the cities on the African coast, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, was flourishing, and the Arabs of Spain were industrious and rich.”

2. Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 258.

3. Fisher, *Outline of Universal History*, 1132-33.

4. Weiss, Gillian, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011), 103.

5. *Lettre d'un comédien* 7, 19.

6. Weiss, Gillian, *Captives and Corsairs*, 289-90.

7. Van Aelbrouck, “Comment faire de l'ordre dans une dynastie de comédiens?” Van Aelbrouck suggests, “[T]oute trace des Hus disparaît pourtant en 1741. C'est ici qu'intervient une épisode rocambolesque, que l'histoire du théâtre a retenu comme l'enlèvement de la troupe par des “pirates barbaresques”. Max Fuchs relate ce curieux épisode arrivé à la famille Hus entre Gênes et Tunis.”

8. Yves Giraud, *La vie théâtrale dans les provinces: Acte II du 2ème colloque de Grasse* [Theatrical life in the province: Act II of the 2nd conference at Grasse] (Paris: Éditions Place, 1980), 230.

9. *Lettre d'un Comédien*, n.p. (“Cette lettre a été rendue à Marseille par un Matelot Français, depuis deux ans esclave à Tunis.”)

10. Jacques Isnardon, *Le théâtre de la Monnaie depuis sa fondation jusqu'à nos jours* [Monnaie theater from establishment to this date] (Brussels: Lefèvre, 1890), 34.

11. Molière, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (Paris: Hachette, 2005), 19.

Mr. Jourdain asks:

Est-ce que les gens de qualité apprennent aussi la musique?

Maître De Musique: Oui, monsieur.

Monsieur Jourdain. J'apprendrai donc.

12. Molière, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, 19-21.

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13. Larry W. Riggs, "The Issues of Nobility and Identity in Dom Juan and Le Bourgeois gentilhomme." *The French Review* 3 (1986): 399-409, 400.
14. Eugene H. Falk, "Moliere the Indignant Satirist: Le Bourgeois gentilhomme." *The Tulane Drama Review* 5(1960):73-88), 81.
15. Georges Mongrédien. *Recueil des textes et des documents du XVIIe siècle Relatifs à Molière* (Paris : Centre de la recherche scientifique, 1973), 376.
16. Nouredine al-Kasbaoui, *al-Marishāl 'Ammar* [The Mareshal Ammar], 104.
المريشال: "ضحك علي الرجالة ودعسلي حرمتي هاو كان ندعسه برجليا... اسمعو الكلي كينه... ناي من اليوم نزع
حوايج البلدية و لبست حوايج البادية ارض القمح والشعير."

Appendix Seven

Key Theater Troupes that contributed to the evolution of Baccar and Jaïbi's Familia

Theater

Troupe	Foundation	Familia Productions	Al- Masrah al- Jadīd (Le Nouveau Théâtre de Tunis/ The New Tunis)	Masrah al- Janūb (Gafsa Theater of the South)	Masrah El-Kef (El-Kef Theater)
Socio-political context	1993	Under the repressive regime of President Ben Ali, this theater company continued to present politically and socially engaging theater.	This era was characterized by the decline of the Socialist Party. The New Theater was the first Independent theater troupe. This theater came in response to the decline of state-owned troupes. The New Theater refused to be coopted by the government. The troupe represented social-ills, such as the exploitation of working classes.	1972	1967
			This theater was both popular and didactic. It had a particular interest in , the farce genre. This theater also portrayed an antagonistic relationship between the bourgeois dwellers of Tunis and the conservative, miserable, and uneducated Tunisian population of the South.		From 1963-75 the Tunisian society was undergoing social change in terms of secular modernization under Habib Bourguiba. However, the Leftist/liberal movement was suppressed under the regime of Bourguiba and his single Destourian (constitutional) Party system. This movement wanted an independent political party, but the Leftists were denied such right. This era was characterized by poor housing conditions that reinforced social class differences. The abolition of decaying houses caused people who lived near Tunis to launch a protest in 1965. The 1960s was, however, a culturally active era. In 1966, there many community centers and libraries that were opened for adults and children. The spread of cultural activities took place across the country also through lectures, art exhibitions, museums. ¹ In this context of decentralizing culture, El-Kef Theater emerged and thrived. This troupe aimed at reviving heritage and being militant.

1. Rafik Saïd, *Cultural Policy in Tunisia*, 36, 44.

Appendix Eight



“Familia Productions. Used by Permission.”

The photo above describes a scene in *Tsunami* where Hayet (Baccar) is pulled over by an actor, who violently pushes her against a chair while another actor helps him to put a band over her mouth. The scene portrays how the liberal character Hayet becomes silenced under the threat of terrorist Islamists.

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