

The coffin swing

An article about the play “The Cabaret”
A production of Khashabi Theater
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1. Spoiler

The end. A coffin illuminated from the inside by a garland of lamps. A coffin swings dancing back and forth between four hands: the hand of Fear, the hand of Virility, the hand of "Sin" and the hand of the Future. The coffin carries all these dead people. How did they die?, you might ask yourselves. A skeleton of contrasts collapsed above them, pulverizing their bodies. Then why did sounds of laughter rise? Because we do with them as we do with ourselves: we laugh, instead of listening to the footsteps of tragedy as it approaches.

The end. For a few moments the coffin swings back and forth, dancing to the music. Where did I see something similar?, you might ask yourselves. In the jazz funerals in American movies. This is a tradition in New Orleans. African mourners dance to the tunes of jazz music while the coffin they carry dances along. In these funerals, the jazz mourners turn to their ancestors: until today, this is still a ritual practiced in many African countries, although the rhythms and dance moves are faster-paced and more roaring. In an article in a newspaper a Ghanaian man, who was leading a group of dancing coffin carriers, said: "When someone is buried, they used to wear black. I said 'no', I'll add some color [...] and now people say we're doing something great because we're making them laugh instead of cry."

Carrying a coffin and dancing with it in such an unrestrained way requires a dazzling physical strength. We all carried some coffins in our lives and we know how heavy they can be. But what theatrical strength need four characters, at the end of "The Cabaret", to make the coffin swing and dance despite the weight of all the bodies it carries? How can a colored sparkle shine above all this blackness? And how can we laugh instead of cry? Why do we turn to our ancestors? In order to lament? Or to judge them? Or to assassinate them?

The end. The music rocks the coffin swing, the dead dance between the walls of contradictions as they collapse and crush the dead. Between contradictions like the horror of the tragedy and the cold of the ready-made scenarios. Between death sentence and the song "Ahwak" ("I love you") by Abdel Halim Hafez. Between the military uniform and the red high-heeled female pumps. Between the vigorous throats in protest chanting and the broken voice in the cold computerized "autotune". These and other contradictions in "The Cabaret" are difficult to count. But, of all these contradictions, three are fundamental: the first one is the contradiction between the dead empty black golden frames on the walls, and the colored pieces of clothing lying scattered around. The second one is the contradiction between the deliberate neutral silence of the Maestro and the wild, regulating, dominating flow of his music. And thirdly, the contrast between the dazzling clownish luster spread over the bodies of the actors, and its intensity that is still packed in the knife's gloss.

Meaningless

They are sleeping in the coffin now, and it looks as if the music, while it rocks the swing and shakes their bed, is shaking the crib of a child's that insisted on getting out of his mother's womb and the only thing he encountered was this bed of death. Who are these dead people?, you might ask yourselves. They are all those whose pictures have been erased from the dozens of empty golden frames on the walls. Those who have died without any meaning to explore, so they rest in peace. Here they are, having surpassed their search for meaning and now they have to rest in a place where their only companion is music. Because music is where the lack of meaning is a decisive choice. In essence, music refuses to provide an answer or to make a statement. From the outset, music refuses to speak out. The simple sense of music is that it doesn't express anything nor does it say anything. The search for "the message" of music only ends in a state of failure, misery, absurdity and depression - those states that lead to death. This is what the Maestro knows, and this is the opening theme in the second half of "The Cabaret".

The Maestro opens the second half of "The Cabaret" by the song "Life is sweet, sweet and meaningless", the only song that the Maestro sings in the play. This song is a continuation of the Maestro's anger at the end of the first half, when he rises up in front of the "Master of ceremony", refusing to speak: "I don't want to talk, I'm paid to play music, I'm not paid to talk." This angry short monologue at the end of the first half forms, if we would look at it in connection to the song, a bridge to the second half. It forms a passageway from one world to another. From a world that struggles with life to a world that collides with death. The song expresses this transition as it is itself split into two parts. The first part of the song accentuates the absurdity of expression, as he sings about the lack of meaning: "The word meaning, what does it mean?" This is an internal contradiction that leads us to the struggle with language, the struggle with life and the questioning about life's meaning. In the second part of the song the "Maestro" completely abandons language. Words lose their meaning completely. The Maestro starts to sing words that don't form any logical sentence at all. His language dies and he consents to this death.

What is more striking is that these two parts of the song - one that struggles with life and meaning and the other that consents to the death of language - are not left separate. They are connected by a small bridge. The first part of the song ends with this sentence: "O my shy past, break my bones and build with them a staircase that leads me, stumbling, into tomorrow." It is a future built by the past. This sentence connects what is past with what is coming. We "degenerate", stumbling into the future after the past has crushed our bones. What takes us to the future, to the second half of the play (and the second half of song), to consenting to death, is the past of the search for meaning of whose violence we departed, pulverized. Life was not only refrained from understanding and discovering meaning, it was violently repressing us, breaking our bones as Rabin did and slapping us. The first half of "The Cabaret" is filled with an actual description of this violence, and we'll continue to see it centered around the "knife".

The knife

Ok. James Bond. I myself did not expect to write this name in the context of "The Cabaret", but: James Bond.

In 1973 the eighth film in the James Bond series was screened. "Live And Let Die" is one of the most unappreciated movies in this series, perhaps because it is politically more significant than it is cinematographically. The film was released during the period of Blaxploitation, a cinematic wave that put the African ethnicity and the African-American society at the center of dramatic plots, after the civil rights movement had advanced in great strides against white racial domination. The peculiarity of this film does not merely lie in the fact that it embraced the black community, but also because it strongly linked the African-American society to its roots, with all of its rituals, traditions and its connection with nature. It depicted the black society (in an racist manner, of course) as a society driven by superstition and obsessed with honor, the virginity of women and rituals celebrating murder. In this movie I saw, perhaps for the first time, jazz funerals in New Orleans, those that come to mind at the end of "The Cabaret" when the coffin dances among the four characters.

The jazz funerals in the movie are shown in two almost identical scenes: a man stands on the corner of the street watching a jazz funeral pass by. A black man approaches him and stabs him moments later with a knife. The funeral procession progresses, places the coffin over the body of the murdered man, abducts him and continues to walk. It seems as if the entire funeral (and thus the whole ritual and community) is a "partner in crime". After the body is taken away, the sound of a trumpet announces the start of loud music and dancing. The stabbing of the knife that turned the character from being alive into being dead, turned the black mourners from mourning into celebrating.

“The Cabaret” was written at the time the knife was a central symbol of the Palestinian resistance, when the Palestinian political map and the Palestinian political organization collapsed and reached their lowest point. This led to individuals going out alone to fight against the occupation with knives, scissors or other primitive weapons, in search of meaning, in search of an answer in this dead-end, broken colonial reality. The knife is the center point of “The Cabaret”. All the characters of “The Cabaret” - Fear and Virility, "Sin" and Future - are interconnected through their relation to the knife. The knife is the source of all concerns of Fear. The knife is part of the body of Virility who collaborates with Fear. "Sin" escapes courageously from the knife, learns to adapt to the panic surrounding her, and allies up with Future. And Future, that innocent childish victim, soon turns, he himself, into a blatant knife against life. “The Cabaret” 'celebrates' this knife, and builds a complete infrastructure underneath it that faces superstition with a closed horizon. All of this is evoked by the conversion of mourning into a celebration.

Theater or cabaret?

“The Cabaret” puts a question that, at first glance, appears traditional and only for insiders, we might even say needless: what is it that we see? Is it a play or a cabaret show? Where are we? In a theater that decided to discard its role in order to become a bar and cabaret? Or is it a play that creates a theatrical space that takes over the whole theater building and captures the audience in a sensory experience that surrounds them and embraces them as part of the play, while being inside of the cabaret? This question, regardless of the answer, carries a human, social and political wound without which the play wouldn't exist. The difference between a cabaret and a theater is equivalent to the difference between a state and a homeland. What drives these predatory characters to practice their madness on stage is the cage of illusion - “The Cabaret” - that was fabricated for them so that they could perform "their pieces" in order to make it a success and entertain the audience. “The Cabaret” is an illusion, or let's call it a cage. Let's agree to call it a cage. In this cage, the spark of insanity is kindled. It is the cage itself, which triggers inside of us and in our daily life, all our contradictions, schisms and madness. This makes us malicious and voracious towards each other. It makes us resemble the characters of “The Cabaret”.

This is why the brutality and dispersion, the multiplicity of the conflicting characters and their violence, separate the sections and scenes that may be considered as "sketches" that are cut and controlled by the allmighty "Master of ceremony" of “The Cabaret”. All that is "The Cabaret" and what it results in; it is a theatrical act. In order to understand it, it is not enough to look at what is happening inside the cabaret, it requires us to take one step to the outside, and read at the deeper level: the level of theater.

This play prevents us from detecting its hidden content, by exploiting the cabaret genre as a cover for the underlying painful dramatic story. “The Cabaret” is the illusion that is created by the play, the chaos of the spectator, the fragmentation of the characters and their masks of showmen. All are theatrical lies and through these lies, the author tells an integral, cohesive human story. Therefore, the mission of reflecting on "The Cabaret" is like lifting the play from the cabaret, and lifting the characters, with their human depth, completeness, maturity and composition from the clownish show behind which they hide. This article basically claims that this mission - the mission of saving the theater from being occupied by cabaret - is identical to what this play does to our lives: it tries to extract an integrated and harmonious understanding of the reality of every Palestinian human being from the state of the contradictory, intermittent, catastrophic madness that we experience by living in the cage of Israeli citizenship. From the "celebration" of citizenship in the "State of Israel", it tries to extract a true statement about the meaning of a person's belonging to his homeland.

From where the idol is destroyed?

The Cabaret appears to be devoid of logic, a closed box of raucous insanity and pungent frantic pleasure. To stop at this point, one could easily consider The Cabaret as a panorama of demolished idols and a review of boldness in breaching taboos. But there is something we must emphasize so that writing on The Cabaret is founded on a solid ground: nothing is more unjust to this artistic piece of work than to read it in this way. This mad magical journey does not rush to reveal its hidden content, and the punches it throws are not by words in themselves. The Cabaret involves deeper questions, a complex confrontation with reality, and the courage to break down generally accepted truths, idols and taboos is only a way to state that it is time to surpass being obsessed by them. Eradicating idols is not the issue, but the ability to describe the idol with its finest details, its curvatures, its aesthetics, its goodness, its sources, its historical implications, and its impact on consciousness. This is not only related to The Cabaret, but to the whole Palestinian cultural field that is divided between the vulgarity of narratives and their sanctification on the one hand, and the vulgarity of breaking the taboos on the other hand. Now time is ripe to realize that the only real possible destruction of idols is the one based on analyzing them, understanding them, showing solidarity towards them and not ceasing to love them, even during the process of demolishing and detonating them. Creative demolition is not the opposite of intellectual love. Therefore, the real question is not related to the number of demolished idols nor the power to destroy them. It is related to the way they are destroyed, and to the relationship of the destructor with the destroyed. The question is: from where the idol is destroyed? What is the difference between an idol destroyed by being hit by a hammer from the outside, and between an idol you can enter to burst from the inside? This is a major difference, and "The Cabaret" distinguishes itself by its awareness of this difference.

Therefore, what this article will try to do next is to save the theater from the cabaret, and to look at how its message and questions are structured and how they evolve, by focusing on the four characters that are fragmented and interchangeable along The Cabaret, and to present each character as a self-contained unit, in whatever different shapes they might appear: the character of fear, the character of virility, the character of "sin", and the character of the future. These characters are divided into two camps: a masculine camp of Fear and Virility, and a feminine camp represented by the character of "Sin" and Future. The last presumption is that these four characters are just contradictory but harmonized elements that constitute one mind - they all live in the head of every Palestinian.

2. Fear

Henry Andrawes is Fear. All the characters he performs are based on fear. At first he is a showman, a fearful artist, afterwards an Israeli soldier who is frightened and frightening at the same time, and then he is a man who fears a meaningless death. These are three phases of his evolution. The main feature of this character is that it parallels and reflects the evolution of the questions and theatrical motives of the entire piece. The fear faced by the creator that his community would be in conflict, the fear that brought the play into life and enables it to exist, and then the question on the usefulness of theater on its own.

In the first part, Henry tries to present a pleasing show, while all his attempts collide with his fear of the audience and his concern that people will be upset by what he has presented or (and this frightens him the most) that people disagree with each other on what he has presented. This is his existential dilemma: his fear makes him hold on to safe stuff, and therefore he is always unable to make risky decisions. It is important to note that his impediments in the first part reflect the inhibitions of the play, that presents a review of all the means of performance that will be used in The Cabaret to fulfill its theatrical mission: songs, humor, the "lamentable monologue". In other words, the "first part", in which Henry shows his disappointments and his fear of the dissension of the audience, largely reflects the fears, inhibitions and possibilities that lie at the heart of the playwright's thoughts that led to The Cabaret.

But the most complex part in the evolution of this fear is his appearance in the form of an Israeli soldier (and although he wears high heels and a skirt, he emphasizes that he is a "dude"). There, Fear is terrified by the sudden arrival of a Palestinian knife. It is worth noting that among his three central shapes of appearance (the showman, the soldier, the dead), this is the only appearance in which Fear is not alone on stage. Quite the opposite: he turns into a central point for a series of stories, events and characters that follow each other one by one. Fear is transformed from a showman to the axis of a play that shows all the central events in relation to him. Around this fear revolves the bad relationship between the murderous brother and his "open" sister. Around this fear appears the newly married couple for the first time (who we'll follow later). And here finishes the story of the girl who tries to commit suicide (the story he tells in the first monologue). Instead of the fear that the creator faces in the first part, we here witness fear as an engine of artistic work. Actually, fear at this stage turns from a fear that is against the show (as in the first part), into an axis around which the stories evolve. At first, fear prevented our theatrical ability from stating something in order to satisfy everyone. And then he became a central element without which the stories wouldn't develop. Or in other words: fear started to create events.

Fear is "The Cabaret". He allows characters to go mad, he allows their contradictions to stand out. The appearance of this fear in an Israeli military uniform brings us to reveal the following metaphor: the link between the cabaret-like show and the institution of the state. The moment of collision with the frightened and frightening soldier, the characters become alive. They live on the power that rises from being torn between their black theatrical reality and their glamorous cabaret-like show. Just as we may find in this world people who are torn between their melancholic existential pain in their homeland, and the ridiculous silly masks they put on to live in the illusion of a state that is both frightened and frightening.

But the fear does not come to an end at this point, its character develops to become aware of its own reality. The fear keeps on and appears in the third stage at the end of the play when he sings an absurd chant standing over the coffin and death itself. The fear we see here is different from the two previous stages. How does Fear change? He becomes deeper, his questions become deeper, he is more frank with himself. At the beginning of the play, Fear had a hesitant voice, but in the end he is more confident of what he says. At the beginning of the play, Fear was messily dressed in bright clothes full of inconsistencies, with a corset on top of a shirt and a necktie under the corset, wearing two coats instead of one with sleeves hanging empty in the air. Then the colors calm down with the light, the corset is taken off, and Fear becomes more consistent with himself to end, wearing only one coat. He now is at the end of the journey that has begun in a dazzling cabaret, but now the journey continues in dim light, bringing us back to theater. He is fear emanating from the cabaret, but he has matured and became a fear emanating from the theater. Fear to show in front of the other, versus fear of meaning in front of the ego.

3. Virility

In The Cabaret, Ayman Nahas is Virility. His roles all together form this character. The basic feature of The Cabaret is also repeated here: evil does not show itself as evil, nor does the murderer show himself as a murderer, but he is able to overlook his life that led him to reach this point of gravity.

The "macho" appears for the first time where the character tells a story while having a piece of shit in his mouth. This part presents the essential elements to understand the sources of virility and the way it is shaped. First because it presents Ayman in childish clothes, wearing a shirt with suspenders and giant colored buttons and he has two red circles on his cheeks that refer to the character of a clown. In addition to that, the story he is trying to tell is a children's story that Ayman Nahas in reality plays in a theater play for kids. With his shirt coming out of the opening in his

trousers – an allusion to his male part – he still appears to have an unintentionally clumsy attitude, a result of the childish indifference and nonchalance of the character. Later on, we'll see him holding a knife deliberately as if it was an erected penis. In other words, The Cabaret is looking for the sources of this virility in factors related to childhood; a childhood that is malicious, narcissistic and full of frantic fantasy that is not controlled by language nor customs.

This part takes place while the character is eating shit. The metaphor is very obvious: this man who will develop into a violent character (whose virility and love for domination start when he faces the maestro for the first time, when he treats him harshly and even boasts about his abuse), who "ate a lot of shit" in his life, as the 'Master of ceremony' states in the beginning of the part. But the shit of life and the horrors that make men violent machos are only a lead to understand this character. Underneath are two key factors. The first is related to what we previously mentioned on the issue of childish fantasy that is not controlled by language, which represents the inability of the character to communicate. In a certain sense, the character is dumb. There is a deep linguistic barrier between the character and his need to gain the recognition of the audience. The dumbness is not an innate one, nor is it a result of being violently silenced by the authorities; the dumbness is caused by the shit he eats. However, the character is unaware that his lack of communication with the others is caused by his mouth, not by the stupidity or lack of ability of the audience, nor by a problem with the microphone in front of him. We see in this scene that this lack of communication is an engine of aggressiveness that characterizes the "macho". The second factor, is the factor of myths. After asking for "mythological music" for the story he is trying to tell, we see that the source of the shit the macho eats is not an unknown general source. He is eating the shit that the myth of religion carried into the scene, in which the "porters of good" enter to offer him his daily meal. In other words, the mythological factor is an essential source of virility. Later, we'll see how the macho reincarnates to play the role of the prophet Abraham.

In the second phase of his development he becomes a brother who kills his sister. The buttons grow and shrink on his nonchalant clothes, and the knife appears on the place of his penis. However, he only appears on stage in the presence of Fear, when Fear is personified by the Israeli soldier. Despite the central role of the knife, the brother uses the soldier's gun to kill his "open" sister. But at this point one climax appears for a few seconds, in which an absurd sensitivity becomes extremely intense. After the brother is being shouted at, intimidated and threatened in front of the Israeli soldier, the soldier asked him: "Ok man, whom are you looking for?". This is the first time in the play where the "macho" mentions that he is looking for his sister. Something inside of him calms down. And for a few seconds, we sense sadness instead of anger in the character, we feel that he has a lump in his throat and that he's on the verge of crying. We feel how painful his isolation is: "Well, that's the problem, if she wasn't my sister, I wouldn't care. I knock on her door but she doesn't open, I call her but she doesn't answer. She is running away from me. My sister runs away from me. That's hard, right? That's hard... hard... so hard!" This moment opens a window to the soul of the character, and this is the only moment we agree upon hating him. It shows the sister's grief, and something more profound than the "crime of honor"; a sister running away from her brother, a vanishing of all possibilities of communication between siblings. This impasse is quickly resolved, and the macho returns to what before was merely an implication: "Why am I looking for her? To kill her of course!", and then "Why do people kill their sisters?"

Virility is related to family. The story that the macho tells in the first paragraph talks about a house and the relationship between the son and father who live there. Afterwards the relationship emerges in the role of Abraham, the father of Isaac. Then the issue of the family appears when he becomes a murderer. At the end of the play we also see him in the role of a father, who is keen on expanding his family and wants to give birth to an army of children in a demographic battle against the Israelis. Therefore, this sadness is associated to family, and will manifest itself by a narcissistic violence that develops in the third phase on the grave of the grandfather. The sadness turns into a

real naked grief to the extent of crying and reveals the causes of his exasperation.

The discourse that the macho holds above the coffin of his grandfather is not as much a monologue as it is a dialogue with the coffin – bearing the evoked history in mind that it is not just a story but a direct reason of being of the character standing before us. The existence that he calls "Our existence in the shit" is the very reason of being of the character we saw in the first part of the play. Using a narcissistic and masculine language (such as when he compares his grandmother's chest to the breasts of Italian women), the discourse above the coffin turns into a scolding of the grandfather, shaking the foundations of the myth that our ancestors built: that staying in the homeland in itself is an act of heroism.

But the discourse that makes us believe that the main need of the macho is to leave the country to enjoy satisfying his narcissistic instincts in a fictional country, is actually much more profound. What prevents him to emigrate is not the price of the ticket, but other factors: it is his path that is blocked by images of his grandfather that need to be shredded, by ideas that need a huge eraser to be effaced from his mind. The key to his virility – his relationship to his family and the people – is itself the key to his suffocating human suffering: it is the hatred that is boiling on the firewood of love, and to which all means of expressing it or nurturing it are cut off. It are the sledgehammer blows that are struck to abort our love for people, for the homeland, for the past and for the present. This is a basic survival dilemma, and I believe it is a fundamental motive that led to creation and production of *The Cabaret*.

4. "Sin"

Sin is brought to the stage by Samaa Wakeem without apology, she doesn't accept any compassion, nor does she look for any justification. She is a fierce and defiant woman, refusing to show her story, background or painful human depth. When she speaks, she speaks in heavy metaphors, and when she escapes death, she does so without panicking for a second. She is the unbridled "sin" that was released from her saddle, and no power in the world can restrain her again. How, though, does *The Cabaret* succeed in giving this "sin" her depth? Through two palpable moments.

The first brief moment is the moment of transition between two scenes: in the first scene, the prophet Abraham (played by the "macho") bumps into the Israeli soldier while he's on his way to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham walks and Isaac follows him – Samaa Wakeem crawls on her knees covered with wool and echoing the words of the father obediently. At the end of this scene, we see "Sin" take off the woolen cloak and rise to stand on her feet with the same ferocity, and sets off singing the song "By mistake." This brief rapid instant, which could have been considered a mere solution for directional purposes, gives the character of "sin" her helpless childish background that was slaughtered by the myth. In one moment she reveals, and perhaps it is not really obvious for the spectator, that the essence of this predatory sin is not more than her being a victim. When "Sin" gets out of Isaac's cloak, she looks like a predatory butterfly rising from its cocoon. Immediately, she bears all the features of a victim, even if they were no longer visible. At this brief moment, she gains a more fragile and innocent dimension that feeds our love for and solidarity with her, without that being asked by the rebellious woman.

The second moment in which "Sin" reveals her depth comes after the scene with the angel. In this scene, Sin appears as an angel trained to fulfill all the wishes of the audience. It drives "Sin" to her extreme, to stripping her body of its will and turning it into a "trained" object, ready to satisfy the desires of others without showing any moral, emotional or physical impediment in carrying out orders.

At the end of this part with its violent escalation, when the "Master" shouts "Next!", "Sin" does not get off the stage, she remains there until the next woman enters. They high-five hands as if they were two partner wrestlers who swap roles in the boxing ring. This is, by the way, the only transition between the different "parts" in which the character remains on stage after the Master orders her to leave: do not run away and do not go down by force and do not go out angry.

This moment of high-fiving is the moment that grants "Sin" another dimension. It draws a line extending from the childhood of Isaac, who was sacrificed and victimized, passing by her strength and fierceness in defending her right to possess her body when she plays the role of the "open sister", then the pragmatic use of her body as a means to survive and escape from murder (in the scene of the "Jihad Muslallam"), and ending by the complete abandonment of her body in the scene of "the angel". Here the character of "the sin" arrives to the point of losing all self-esteem, and becomes able (at the summit of humiliation, when the Master orders her to pluck her feathers and tear her clothes and cry) to roar in his face and to start herself to give orders: "Next!". When she is totally deprived of her body, she repossesses her strength and keeps hovering, while making noises, to safeguard the theater for a woman carrying the bloody future and starts to sing the song "I'm not leaving". This is the moment when Sin uses her violated body to become a disturber of peace, and through that she builds a sense of feminist alliance with the pain of the pregnant woman whose body, too, is the source of a bloody future. Here, Sin reveals the fact that female characters are present in *The Cabaret* – they struggle to stay on stage. This is the climax of the maturity and completeness of "Sin" – our uncontrolled, longing and instinctive desire insists on challenging the alliance of Fear and Virility, the challenge of an alliance that rests on the myth of religion and that is protected by the power of the Master of *The Cabaret* – that aims to kill her or enslave her. From this particular point, "Sin" is ready for martyrdom as we shall soon witness.

5. Future

Perhaps because she is the future – this imagined thing whose image or meaning are impossible to control – this character only appears centrally through singing. It is a character that is only carried by music, and it is the music that expresses her fundamental transformations. If we wanted to summarize this character in one sentence, she would be the transmutation from an innocent childish waltz at the beginning of the play to the blunt black R&B music that reminds us of Ruth Brown's indignation in the 1950s. She would be the transformation of a tailor-made costume for a ballet show, into the clothes of a neglected housewife with a round pregnant belly whose body movements remind of the anger of "Connie Corleone" when she smashed the tableware in the first part of the greatest cinematic work that was ever written on the subject of "family" - "*The Godfather*".

In the first appearance of the character, in the song "Papa took me up the mountain," the longing for the future is shown in its strongest forms: the child tells the tragedy without being subject to it. She tells the story of the crime without stopping to dance to the sounds of the waltz. She describes the rape without concealing how she was meditating and contemplating the green nature around her. It is the future that still insists on shouting, from the depth of the tragedy: "Fuck my dad". But this character ends up in painful misery. In addition to being broken, having stopped dreaming and having lost all hope, in addition to the tragedy that she did not really overcome, she carries a fetus in her womb that will bring her back to the same tragedy, move her to commit the same crime, that will make the same contradictions explode. It will lead to *The Cabaret*, to Isratin (a proposed bi-national state of Israel and Palestine). She turns from longing for the future, to screaming in an attempt to prevent this future from coming, as she fear what is to come for her son.

In the song of the knife, the tragedy that annihilates the longing for the future reaches its peak. This tragedy is not as shocking as the rape in the first song. It is a sluggish, boring tragedy that destroys dreams very slowly. It is the tragedy that results from becoming old without a reason and that affects life. Being fatuously and meaninglessly old, in such a way that one becomes forgotten and

alone in the darkness. That limpness and tiredness that makes us even run away from the smallest pleasures of life, so that our old dreams become forgotten stories.

This phase derives its strength from the fact that the character of the future takes the shape of a knife. It takes the form of the element that created in the previous scenes a threat, excitement, gravity and a swing between life and death. It is a factor that, in the context of the time in which the play was produced, a special political symbolism. The reincarnation of the future into the shape of a knife is, in my opinion, one of the most important climaxes of this play. It is the moment when violence reveals its sadness, it is the moment when the dangerous mortal weapon shows its inability and its deadly solitude. The knife that keeps appearing in *The Cabaret* is the painful deep fracture in the longing of each of us for the future. It makes us stumble, it stops us in our place, and it causes our dreams to collapse.

This change in the images of the future parallels the course of changes of "Sin" and contrasts the transformations of the masculine characters - Virility and Fear. Both the future and the sin begin at a point where they are both complete on their own and rebellious, and then break down submissively, until the tragic reality sharpens them until they're poisoned by aggressive pessimism. While the two masculine characters move from violent ferocity and an initial high degree of show to end up exposing an innocent human being, albeit trivial. But the common denominator among these characters is that they are all freed of their contradictions. They all pass from extreme contradictions at the beginning of *The Cabaret*, to being more in harmony with themselves and reaching more maturity towards their truth, albeit miserable. In other words, this play frees its characters, liberates them from the colors of the overwhelming contradictions, to hurl them later on in the black darkness.

6. The end

Virility meets Sin. They are no longer a murderer and a victim, but their cabaret-like characters have been destroyed to reveal their human potential. Both now carry a frame and sing together about their martyrdom. This is the first and only time we see the dead in the golden frames that hang on the wall. As we see their clothes inside the frame, we see colorful costumes that belong to them. As for what does not appear in the frame, we see industrial uniforms that show us that they are only part of a large group of people who all resemble each other and bear the same story. In the end they are just like all those dead whose pictures are hung on the wall. *The Cabaret* refuses to find an answer to the question of meaning in martyrdom, and dares to pursue the question of meaning even from within the creed. But it doesn't present an answer at all. It insists, despite the difficulty of the question, that the motives of martyrdom be revealed when the two martyrs watch the children's games and the horrors of the massacres that have torn people apart and destroyed their dreams of "freedom, the past and the future, of love, identity and the Palestinian problem".

What *The Cabaret* does, is to take the characters on a journey from showing off their contradictions to reveling of their theatrical hidden content. This applies to the way martyrdom is treated. It starts from the ready-made scenario in which vulgar social roles are played and turned into a comic-like atmosphere through the families of the martyrs. Afterwards, when their real burning sadness prevails and destroys the cold scenarios, *The Cabaret* takes another step and interrogates the martyrs themselves. It begins by asking them about the benefit of their death, and then takes them to uncover the real pain that led them to martyrdom. Finally, we take one last step in a third scene in which the motive of our fear of dying a silly death is recited, without doing anything to prevent the massacre that we finance by bowing to the trap of citizenship.