Theatre and Trauma: Ethical Wit(h)nessing in Isabella Hammad's *Enter Ghost* (2023)

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Abstract:

This paper examines the concepts of trauma and ethical wit(h)nessing in Isabella Hammad's *Enter Ghost* (2023), exploring the role of theatre as a means for personal and generational healing. Set in the midst of the Palestinian conflict, the novel follows Sonia as she becomes involved in an Arabic production of *Hamlet* in the West Bank. Using Nikki Tulk's concept of performing the wound and Bracha Ettinger's matrixial gaze, the paper investigates how theatricality serves as a medium for healing trauma and reclaiming cultural identity. To achieve this endeavor, this study analyzes Hammad's contextualization of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a site of resistance. Furthermore, it inspects how the reframing of trauma through the ethical wit(h)nessing of performance enables us to share, and process trauma ethically.

Keywords: ethical wit(h)nessing, Hamlet, theatre, trauma, Palestine,

1. INTRODUCTION

Territorial conflict plants the seeds of generational trauma, ripping through the lives of descendants and shaping the identities of future generations. Among the enduring effects of such conflict is the traumatic impact on individuals and communities. Overcoming past trauma, at the personal level or the collective– and by extension generational level –can be a challenging task. It can even be more arduous and painful to constantly attempt to survive, accept and overcome a persisting trauma, one that is still occurring and unfolding. This statement is best exemplified by the Palestinian people who continue to forebear endless testimonies of suffering that result from periodical wars. In a constant context of trauma, finding a mechanism for resilience becomes pivotal for surviving and building an enduring character.

Enter Ghost by Isabella Hammad (2023) is an evocative work that explores the healing properties of theatre while serving as a therapeutic artistic medium itself. The protagonist, Sonia, is a British-Palestinian theatre actress residing in England, striving to succeed in her field. Following heartbreak from a failed relationship, she decides to take a break and visit her sister in Haifa. This vacation immerses her into memories of family tensions as well as personal and political conflicts. Through her sister Haneen, Sonia is introduced to a group of young actors involved in a theatrical production of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Arabic. Despite wanting to take a break from the stage, she gets tangled into playing Gertrude, Hamlet's mother. Her fellow actors read the play as an allegory for the Palestinian struggle. As Sonia is compelled to revisit and confront her past traumas by facing the challenges of life at the heart of Palestine, *Hamlet* becomes a powerful metaphor for cultural identity and Palestinian resistance.

The purpose of this paper is not to present a comparative study between *Enter Ghost* and *Hamlet*. Rather, it seeks to situate Palestine within a dialogue of arts through Hammad's evocative novel and Shakespeare's universal oeuvre. This paper investigates how theatricality serves as a medium for examining trauma and resilience—concepts that are, almost by definition, deeply tied to the Palestinian experience. To achieve this endeavor, this paper proposes two sub-inquiries: first, it analyzes how the reframing of trauma through the ethical wit(h)nessing of performance vocalizes the wound and delivers its bearer from long endured suffering. Additionally, it examines the peculiar choice of *Hamlet* and considers how this play might function as a form of resistance in the novel.

This study presumes that performance offers a safe space for, as Tulk (2021) stated, "reclamation: both as performer and witness" (p. 35). Since voicing trauma is consequential to the healing process, it is important to first reclaim the experience—especially in Palestine, a place where the expression of trauma is often denied and ignored, even on a personal level. Sonia, and the entire crew involved in the play production, reclaimed their Palestinian heritage and the trauma that undoubtedly comes

with it. As *Hamlet* stands as a universal symbol of human consciousness, the weight of grief, moral ambiguity, and the search for truth in a world of deception, it is intricately – and almost ironically – woven into the narrative as a form of resistance. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is repurposed in an orientalist – and politically charged – context to defy historical and cultural barriers. Theatricality, in Hammad's novel, is more than a medium of intercultural and artistical sharing; rather, it vocalizes, from an ethical distance, a deep-seated and repressed trauma, holding thereof the experience of an overshadowed Palestinian generation. Sonia's expression of trauma through theatre asserts the impossibility of refuting Palestine, even after departing from it.

Palestine, both as a historical entity and a political cause, has been the subject of extensive writing by numerous authors, both nationally and internationally. Barbara McKean Parmenter has taken a particular interest in Middle Eastern studies and Palestinian literature. As a geographer, Parmenter, in her *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (1994), attempted to explore how the concept of "land" has shaped and continues to shape Palestinian literature. Drawing from 20th century poetry and prose, she tried to trace how authors struggled to depict their bond with their land amidst the constant reality of displacement and exile. Parmenter's quest aligns with Isabella Hammad's fiction, in which second and third generations are still navigating the post-Nakba displacement trauma while striving to reclaim their geographic and cultural memory.

The constant conflict in Palestine impregnates a multiverse of literary productions, all aimed at portraying the magnitude of war and its resulting horrors. In his book *Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture* (1990), Ami Elad-Bouskila pragmatizes his examination of Palestinian literature in relation to Arab, Israeli, and Western influences. Bouskila relates this body of literature to the concept of identity in Palestine and leads with a three-based division of work: literature produced by Palestinians within Israel, literature from the occupied territories (West Bank and Gaza), and that of the Palestinian diaspora. Bouskila's depictions resonate with Hammad's portrayals of the different layers of Palestinian society and the frictions resulting from territorial division and generational exile.

Palestine holds a significant position in the literary world, particularly within native and indigenous literatures, as well as resistance and revolutionary literatures. In fictional works, Palestine is often depicted as a symbol—representing, at least to its advocates, an ideogram of courage and resistance. Rarely is Palestine portrayed as a mundane society with its own internal conflicts and societal turmoil. Seldom does fiction delineate the relationship between Palestinians who live in the West Bank and those who live on the other side of the wall; those who, by some form of resistance or another, managed to remain in Haifa after its colonization. With similar rarity, literature overlooks

the tensions between the first generation of the Intifada who decided to leave the country, and their descendants, who either represent a committed second generation or an alienated one. Hammad's novel, however, brings these underlying tensions to the forefront, attempting to reconcile their frictions and inherited traumas through art.

2. Trauma and Ethical Wit(h)nessing

Trauma is the unbearable suffering resulting from an unexpected or a recurrent life event, one that alters the relationship between the mind and the body, the conscious and the unconscious, causing a decadent type of pain that is uncontained by physiological or psychological mechanisms (Tulk, 2021, p. 26). The aftermath of a traumatic experience unfolds the emergent and contradictory need to articulate and dissipate it at the same time. As the overwhelming bulk of emotions writhes between suppression and expression, the need to represent trauma, however, remains indisputable, constructing the genesis of the entire discipline of trauma studies.

According to Cathy Caruth (1996), the leading theorist of trauma studies, trauma, or the "wound", is not merely the physical scar of an injury but also a "voice" that emanates from that injury. The voice bears witness to "a truth that [the wounded] himself cannot fully know" (p. 17). Allowing the wound its proper form of expression is, therefore, an important step to validate it. The idea of vocalizing the wound further accentuates the importance of language in discerning the traumatic experience and, more importantly, attempting to heal it. Caruth pays a closer attention to literature to investigate its power in releasing "the unspeakable." She states the need to find a new and proper language to articulate the wound; this new language is encompassed in the reading as well as the writing of trauma testimonies.

Nikki Tulk draws inspiration from these forms of literature in voicing the wound and extends them to other artistic expressions. In her *Performing the Wound: Practicing a Feminist Theatre of Becoming* (2022), she contends that, "trauma and its communication are not a one-way passing on or transmitting of story as information, but something far more layered and profound—one that invites, even demands, an audience response" (p. 27). Tulk's premise emphasizes the need for trauma not only to be heard, but also to be responded to. This highlights the indispensable presence of an audience as both a witness and a participant in the act of performing trauma. Performance, thus, provides a space where the audience is willing to listen, witness and respond to the vocalization of the wound. The dialogical effect between the audience and the wound forges a bond of trust, validation and understanding.

Performance plays a key role in modern trauma theory. The connection between this form of art and trauma dates back to Greek times where the depiction – and by extension the witnessing – of trauma in tragedies was essential to every tale. These dramatic performances provided lifelike opportunities to reflect upon the traumatic effect of war, sacrifice, violence and grief (Weiberg, 2024, p. 34). In terms of giving a "voice"

to the wound, theatrical performance has been a powerful medium through which individual and collective minds have exteriorized – and resolved – their profound sufferings.

Performing trauma is – or rather should be – governed by several boundaries and requirements. According to Tulk (2022), the expression of the wound demands a level of care from both the teller (in this case the performer) and the listener (in this case the audience). This measure ensures a safe space for the wound to be manifested without the risk of "re-traumatization." In performing the memory of trauma, the audience must not assume the role of a passive "voyeur" but must instead become a rightful witness. This process allows the teller to take up their own "inner witness" and eliminate the need for external validation (p. 30). Similarly, the listener must prepare the right endurance and preparation to survive the telling of trauma without inflicting the same suffering upon themselves. Tulk elaborates at length about this issue and the importance of providing a safe space for the telling of trauma in performance, emphasizing the need to develop the right empathetic response. She concludes that the audience, as a listener and a witness, shares some of the burden of the wound. This listener, however, is also a separate entity from the teller in a joined and shared space. This separation within a safe space of "togetherness" allows for the creation of "border linking," or what Bracha Ettinger calls "Ethical Wit(h)nessing."

Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger is a French-Israeli artist, writer, psychoanalyst and a philosopher. Born in Mandatory Palestine in 1948, she is recognized for her feminist and artistic work, particularly in linking concepts such as trauma, aesthetics and ethics. As a self-taught artist, Ettinger explores the human condition and the tragedy of war. Her art is steeped in mythology, focusing on the various facets of trauma and maternal figures. To this day, Ettinger is a supporter of human rights and the peaceful coexistence of both the Israeli and the Palestinian state. She engages in many organizations that oppose the occupation and favors collaborative cohabitation. Her political and humanitarian stance makes her theoretical insights well suited to inspect Hammad's novel. As *Enter Ghost* ushers Palestine into a dialogue of arts through *Hamlet*, Ettinger's concept of "Ethical Wit(h)nessing" could perhaps bridge an artistic gap between two historically and politically opposing entities (Ettinger, 2000 p. 123).

Ettinger is most notably known for her elaborations on the concept of the "matrixial web," rooted in her psychoanalytical experiences. She defines the matrix through the image of the mother and her unborn child, stressing the co-emerging relations that bind them into a state of interdependency and trans-subjectivity. Ettinger uses the analogy of intra-uterine connections in the late stages of pregnancy to depict the human situations and the process in which the Other is not "an intruder" but a "partner in difference" (Ettinger, 2000, p. 136). Ettinger describes the matrix as an "unconscious

space of simultaneous emergence and fading of the *I* and the unknown *non-I*; it is a shared borderspace in which *differentiation-in-co-emergence* and *distance-in-proximity* are continuously rehoned and recognized by metamorphosis" (Ettinger, 2000, p. 136). Through her art, Ettinger concretizes her theory of the matrixial gaze, insisting that the *I* not only exists, but could only exist in relation to someone else, forging a link of intimacy to create a space of "trans-connectedness." This, ultimately, constitutes the basics of ethical wit(h)nessing which ensures "empathy within compassion" (Ettinger, 2000, p. 138).

Ettinger describes the matrixial zone as a uterine space between the audience and the performer which englobes two separate but interdependent subjects who must carry each other, and, therefore, profoundly feel for one another (Tulk, 2021, p. 4). The womb metaphor emphasizes the creation of a maternal and feminist sphere in which an ethical consideration is conditioned to perceive the trauma. Ettinger proposes this rumination as the basis of life; "I have always already been wit(h)nessed by another, a m/other, and the sublimation of singular borderlinkages suggests possible schemas and routes. The world is gone. I must carry you" (Kaiser & Thiele, 2018, p. 108). Since human existence is initiated and maintained through the process of being carried through the womb, then, through art, this same action should be upheld.

To bring Ettinger's insights into the world of theatre and drama, Nikki Tulk draws from her visual art to explore trauma within the context of performance. The performance of trauma is examined through the concept of "ethical wit(h)nessing," where the spectator is invited into a matrixial ethical space to empathize with the bearer of wounds. This shifts the spectator's role from that of a voyeur to an active participant and reframes art as a shared experience rather than an object to be observed. According to Ettinger, "ethical wit(h)nessing" opens the possibility for "collective love" (Evans, 2016). This approach is crucial in validating the wound and fostering a bond of trans-subjectivity, while avoiding the risk of re-traumatization through the realistic re-enactment of traumatic events on stage.

3. The Matrixial Gaze: Perceiving Palestine through *Hamlet*

Enter Ghost explores the diverse manifestations of trauma rooted in the Palestinian cause. Each character drawn by Hammad navigates the complexities of surviving an ongoing trauma, while managing the demands of daily life. Sonia's grandparents resisted in the First Intifada, remaining in their home in Haifa. Her father dedicated his youth to the Palestinian cause but ultimately abandoned it in frustration. Her mother, however, has limited ties to Palestine, having been raised by a Dutch mother and a deceased Palestinian father. Sonia and her sister Haneen were alienated from their roots, cocooned in a trauma-free childhood. Sonia acknowledges this distance – almost defensively – stating, "We were not born here… It's not really a question of return, for us. We came here for the holidays, to see our family" (Hammad, 2023, p. 18). As their parents decided to nest and

settle in Britain, Haifa became merely a holiday retreat and Palestine faded into insignificance—much like their waning efforts to maintain a connection to it.

Ettinger considers subjectivity in terms of "encounters" in "borderspaces" where shared experiences of aesthetics, art works, ethical and political relations take place. These encounters could engage several "strange, foreign, irreducible elements of otherness" (Ettinger, 2006, p. 3). Hammad's novel consolidates many opposing entities through theatricality. The cast of *Hamlet* is composed of actors from the West Bank and others from the 48' (a term referred to the Palestinians living within the modern state of Israel). The relationship between these opposing residents is charged with resentment, jealousy over certain privileges and an overarching sense of betrayal. In an ethical space of trauma performance, however, *Hamlet* becomes a terrain of mutual understanding and empathetical compassion. As each character merges their own generational or personal trauma with the despairing essence of the play, they develop a nurturing space of ethical wit(h)-nessing. The matrixial space channels their pains, allowing them to see themselves in relation to each other rather than as separate subjects. This dual subjectivity, as Tulk terms it, democratizes the space, enabling each of them to perceive Palestine through the gaze of the other.

The daily rehearsals for *Hamlet* ensure an "ethical" space of performance and engage Sonia both as an audience member (a listener/witness) and then as a narrator of her own trauma. Ettinger ensures that "a real witnessing through [art] passes via wit(h)nessing first: dwelling with your subject-matter, taking your time, giving yourself time, remaining with it, in your body; only thus compassion becomes real" (Kaiser and Thiele, 2018, p. 105–106). Through an immersive matrixial gaze, Hammad embeds her protagonist in a trauma-laden history, reconnecting her with her Palestinian roots and allowing her to perceive the trauma attached to it. The production of *Hamlet* in Arabic is directed by Mariam Mansour, an ambitious young director devoted to the Palestinian cause. Along with the cast, Mariam journeys daily from Haifa to Ramallah to rehearse. As Sonia reluctantly joins the production at the heart of the West Bank, she bears witness to the struggles her fellow Palestinian actors endure; these rehearsals become living testimonies of unuttered traumas. Navigating checkpoints and confronting the threat of violence from the Israeli army give Sonia her first taste of what it means to live in perpetual fear. This experience immerses her in Ettinger's matrixial gaze which emphasizes relational and interconnected ways of witnessing and perceiving trauma.

Sonia is immersed in an estranged and traumatic environment through the lenses of art, which enables her to grasp the Palestinian experience in terms – as an actor – she could understand best. Her castmates offer a peculiar reading of *Hamlet*, casting Gertrude as a symbol of Palestine, who gets raped. Sonia, playing this role, initially resists this over-simplified interpretation, noting that Gertrude is not actually raped in the play.

Mariam, however, supports this reading by stating, "Well hold on, maybe rape is too far. But remember ightisab means rape but it also means usurping. Like, yaghtasib al- ard" (Hammad, 2023, p. 81). Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is thus remodeled to reflect the struggles of the Palestinian context, embodying the traumas of being forcefully taken. Sonia, through her character in the play, becomes the embodiment of her estranged land as art allows her to see and perceive the trauma of being violated, robbed and degraded.

Sonia's initial reluctance to join the play gradually faded as the rehearsals imbedded her into trauma performance, reinforcing her role both as a fictional character in the play and as a Palestinian returnee. The catalyst moment abrupted when Wael, the character playing Hamlet, was taken by soldiers at a random checkpoint, showcasing, once again, the sheer injustice of the numerous checkpoints imposed by the Israeli army. Sonia steps out of her usually calm and unconfrontational demeanor, screaming recklessly and irrationally at an armed soldier: "Rage was making me vibrate. …. Oh God, what am I doing? I thought, and then I said loudly in English: 'Where have you taken my son?' My voice came from somewhere other than my mouth, somewhere further away" (Hammad, 2023, p. 143). Recognizing the soldier's English accent, Sonia attempts to appeal to their shared British citizenship and pleads, almost imploringly, 'What the hell are you doing here?" (Hammad, 2023, p.144). Her motherly outburst of "my son" echoes Ettinger's re-theorization of the womb, which extends beyond "the phallic object" that essentializes pregnancy as the core of a woman's femininity. It is, instead, a grandiose element that constitutes a matrixial space of human subjectivity (Ettinger, 2006, p. 3). Through the trauma of fear and humiliation, Sonia is ushered into this dimension where her maternal instinct to protect her "son" transcends from a fictional scenery of the stage to a raw reality where she understands, sympathizes and then attempts to fight this injustice.

The performance of trauma, both on and off the stage, allowed Sonia to truly grasp the experience of Palestine. Witnessing this trauma firsthand and then seeing it reenacted during rehearsals enabled her to fully assimilate what she had unconsciously suppressed. Moving from an estranged "half-Palestinian" to a fully committed one, Sonia ends up even protesting in Jerusalem, performing Friday prayers as a Christian in Al Aqsa in solidarity with Palestinian Muslims and confronting Israeli soldiers when they attempt to disrupt the prayers. The production of *Hamlet* within a traumatic context provided a safety net, allowing Sonia to engage with Palestine's reality without being personally traumatized by it. *Hamlet* not only enabled her to ethically witness trauma but also gave her the space to voice her own wounds in an act of "co-carriance."

4. "Co-Carriance": Healing Palestine through *Hamlet*

Witnessing trauma within a matrixial web does not reduce the witness to a passive voyeur of pain. Instead, it invites them to share their own suffering within an ethical and safe space. Ettinger insists that art should foster an environment of compassion and ethical

engagement, allowing the listener to vocalize their own wounds: "The listener, therefore, by definition partakes of the struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past" (Felman and Laub, 1992, p. 58). The testimony, Ettinger insists, is met by a reciprocal encounter of trauma sharing, in which the listener's wounds are awakened during the performance. This creates a concurrence of "part exchange, part joining, part one carrying another" (Tulk, 2021, p. 5), strengthening our human connection and fostering joint healing. The act of carrying, or "co-carriance," for one another in a shared space of connectedness and togetherness makes the process of performing trauma both ethical and safe.

Once Sonia perceived the trauma of Palestine through art, she was able to share and heal her own personal traumas. *Hamlet* became more than just a site of performative talent; it became transformative medium for alleviating past wounds and reshaping familial relationships and future self-perceptions: "I hadn't realised quite how much the play meant to me… I was relying on its structure to hold me" (Hammad, 2023, p. 215). As she channeled motherly feelings on stage as Hamlet's mother, Sonia was able to openly address her broken marriage, heartbreaking divorce and her failed relationships. The play became a space for her to recall, share and eventually heal the wound of both terminating an unwanted pregnancy and miscarrying a wanted one.

Witnessing trauma in an ethical space of art gave Sonia the courage to confront her sister and resolve the life-long resentment she felt towards her. Haneen, Sonia's older sister, is the only politically engaged member of the Naseer family. She is depicted as strong-willed but also tormented by her own life choices. Serving as the anthesis of her sister's detachment and introspective nature, Haneen is pragmatic and fiercely committed to the Palestinian cause, choosing to remain in Haifa despite the political and social tensions. She is embedded in the reality of occupation and resistance, which immerses her in a context of raw trauma. She often challenges Sonia's theoretical reflections, pushing her to confront uncomfortable truths about their heritage and identity.

Haneen's activism is primarily expressed through her work as a professor of sociology at an Israeli university. Having a Palestinian professor lecture students on human social behavior as well as the pattern of cultural and social relationships and interactions could be a daunting task in such a politically charged context. Yet, Haneen remains tormented by her failure to vocalize her pain. preserve her family's heritage or create real change for Palestine. Sonia, having resolved her own wounds, carried her sister along the same path:

> Do you think that's why I live in Haifa?
> But if I'm here for Palestine, then why am I there? Why am I not here?' She gestured at the room. She meant the West Bank.
> Because, well, because Haifa is part of it,' I said. 'You teach, you're an example, you teach about the history (Hammad, 2023, p. 242)

In a burst that awakened all past issues and resentments, Sonia reassures her sister that the daily battles she endures are a meaningful part of her dedicated activism. Both sisters are now co-carried in a renewed commitment to the Palestinian cause, affirming once again that Palestine is not just the West Bank—it is the whole of Palestine. Sonia's reference to "the history" as a definitive concept reinforces the idea of Palestine as an undeniable entity, one to which Haneen is proudly contributing.

Through artistic expression, Sonia was able to process and heal the most traumatic childhood incident she witnessed. During the summer of 1994, while on holiday in Haifa, her uncle Jad insisted on taking her and Haneen to Bethlehem—a trip that would prove decisive in shaping Sonia's denial of Palestine and Haneen's dedication to it. Their visit was meant to expose them to the realities of occupation through Rashid, an activist on a hunger strike as a form of resistance. Bargaining his body to be heard, Rashid, according to his mother, embodied what Palestine has become.

This brief but harrowing encounter left a deep mark on both girls, shaping their life paths and choices. Haneen distanced herself from her British upbringing and grew more devoted to the Palestinian cause, while Sonia repressed the experience, pushing it to the backburner of her subconscious. Only through art could she summon it back and fully grasp its impact on her life. In an acting exercise known as "occult games," she was able to reconnect with her "dark private feelings," including those linked to Rashid: "Telling the story of Rashid left a sharp, singed feeling, as though the thinnest layer of skin had been removed from my body, making every sensation more intense and flushed with an undercurrent of risk" (Hammad, 2023, p. 105). For Sonia, performance was not merely an aesthetic pursuit but a means of constructing an environment of compassion and ethical engagement – one where past trauma could be revisited in a safe space of "co-carriance." Through ethical wit(h)nessing, she was able to awaken her trauma, heal her wounds, mend her relationship with her sister, and rediscover her commitment to her Palestinian roots.

The final chapter of *Enter Ghost* depicts the staging of *Hamlet,* weaving a matrixial web that entangles the trauma of both the cast and the audience within an ethical space of togetherness. On stage, the actors deliver a powerful performance, transforming their personal traumas into a collective testimony that resonates with the audience's own experiences of loss and displacement. When the Naseer family attends one of the performances, they immediately connect with the play's underlying trauma, allowing

them to confront and reconcile with their past wounds. Sonia's uncle Jad—the most politically engaged member of her family—implicitly acknowledges that Palestine has become his prison. *Hamlet* uncovered a persistent political commitment for the new generation and allowed the old generation to make peace with their lifelong struggle of losing Palestine. It also emboldened Sonia's father to break his silence about his political past, confessing to her: "Forget about it, my love. Palestine is gone. We lost her a long time ago" (Hammad, 2023, p. 192). As the family experiences *Hamlet* together, they not only confront their personal and generational wounds but also uncover a shared history of resistance and an enduring devotion to the Palestinian cause.

Tulk insists that "the act of wit(h)-nessing offers the possibility of restoration, which alters the way of seeing the self and others, and forges a community based on a collective identity (Tulk, 2021, p. 127). As *Hamlet* gained widespread publicity, it became more than just a performance. It emerged as a tool for forging a shared Palestinian identity, bridging the divide between those in the West Bank and the colonized parts of Palestine. The play served as a vehicle for cultural unity: "They've stopped us having political unity but we can put money into building cultural unity" (Hammad, 2023, p. 196). This illustrates the power of art when it transcends the frame of creative expression and imagination to embody the essence of culture and reconstruct the collective identity of an oppressed generation. As Ibrahim, Sonia's love interest, states: "Perhaps you don't know this, my dear, but theatre can be very dangerous" (Hammad, 2023, p. 152). Through art, trauma is ethically shared and healed, transforming artistic expression into an act of resistance. Ibrahim reinforces this idea: "It's not the way. The time for fighting with guns is over.' 'Right. It's the time for acting.' 'Acting, yes,' he said. 'In English it is a nice play on words" (Hammad, 2023, p. 151). The wordplay on *acting* encapsulates a shift in resistance tactics – moving from armed struggle to cultural defiance. By embracing theatre as a means of resilience and restoration, the new generation reclaims its history, heals its wounds, and solidifies its collective identity.

Integrating Palestine into a dialogue of art through Shakespear's *Hamlet* is quite peculiar, yet it aligns seamlessly with the play's central themes. Among other themes, *Hamlet* deals with the omnipotent presence of the ghost from the past that taunts the present and changes the course of the future; and in many ways, this depicts the essence of Palestinian resistance. The production of *Hamlet* resonated across the nation, generating widespread attention and unsettling Israeli authorities. In response, the Israelis destroyed the theatre, cut off funding, and threatened the cast; yet, the actors persisted: "… in some way the meaning of our Hamlet depended on this suffering. The context gave our Hamlet its force" (Hammad, 2023, p. 249). The actors performed their final act in soldier costumes – an experimental yet deeply symbolic gesture that united the audience into a shared experience of "co-carriance." The fourth and final run of the play was

displayed in an outdoor makeshift theatre, positioned defiantly beside a military checkpoint – an act of resistance in itself. In a final cathartic scene that constitutes the climax of the novel, the army raided the stage with bullets and tear gas as the actors were steadfastly determined to "keep going."

Tulk encapsulates Ettinger-s theory into the world of theatre and the art of performance. She conceptualizes trauma in a context of art to bring forward another dimension to the way trauma is perceived and healed, she states: "The heart of the art contains both the trauma and also a space in which to encounter that pain. Here exists a "wound-space," encased in a uterine site of co-carriance" (Tulk, 2021, p. 6). The play in *Enter Ghost* is contextualized in a conflict zone that is historically, politically and socially ample with a multitude of trauma and pain. Through art, however, each character was carried, joined and healed in a matrixial web of "co-carriance."

5. CONCLUSION

Ettinger insists that art works "like a maternal healing when it solicits against all the odds the human capacity to wonder, to feel awe, to feel compassion, to care, to trust and to carry the weight of the world" (Evans, 2016). In *Enter Ghost*, Hammad ushered Palestine into a dialogue of art, opening a multiverse of cultural and intertextual crossovers. Additionally, integrating *Hamlet* into a Palestinian context transformed Shakespeare's tragedy into a medium of ethical wit(h)nessing. The art of performance allowed for the vocalization of trauma, encouraging the characters to share, and ultimately, carry one another. This paper attempted to exhibit how Hammad's novel situated performance within Ettinger's matrixial gaze, where repressed trauma was summoned in an ethical manner and co-carried in a process of collective healing. This paper has also demonstrated how theatre was used in the narrative as a powerful tool for resilience and cultural preservation. Future studies might further explore how this form of art, among others, intersects with decolonial discourse, expanding the scope of trauma studies within colonial literature.

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