Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad: A Study in Post-colonial Appropriations of Shakespeare

Dr. Samir Talib Dawood
University of Basrah / College of Arts
E-mail: samir.talib@uobasrah.edu.iq

Abstract:

The paper explores Munadhel Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* (2012) which is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1592). The paper argues that to better understand the significance of Dawood's adaptation we need to situate it within the context of post-2003 Iraqi adaptations of world literature. More broadly, it is part of the way that postcolonial literature responds to the hegemony of the colonial culture. In this respect, the play can be seen as an attempt by the Iraqi culture to write back to the colonial cultures that took part in the 2003 war. More specifically, the play achieves this goal by integrating elements of Iraqi culture and tradition and, paradoxically, it attempts to set the terms for a dialogue with the colonial culture by highlighting various elements which that culture might find relevant.

Key word: Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, adaptation, postcolonial.

Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad: A Study in Post-colonial Appropriations of Shakespeare

مسرحية روميو وجوليت في بغداد: دراسة في التكييفات ما بعد الكولونيالية لوليم شكسبير

د. سامر طالب داود
جامعة البصرة / كلية الاداب
E-mail: samir.talib@uobasrah.edu.iq

الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة بالتحليل مسرحية *روميو وجوليت في بغداد* (٢٠١٢) للكاتب مناضل داود والتي هي تكييف ادبي لمسرحية *روميو* وجوليت (١٥٩٢) للكاتب الانكليزي وليام شكسبير. تجادل الدراسة باننا لكي نصل الى فهم افضل لمسرحية *روميو وجوليت في بغداد*، اننا نحتاج الى وضعها في سياق التكييفات الادبية التي مارسها الادب العراقي في مرحلة ما بعد ٢٠٠٣. ومن منظور اوسع، فإن الدراسة ترى بان هذه المسرحية عي جزء من محاولة الادب ما بعد الاستعماري للاستجابة لا دب الثقافة المستعمرة. وفي هذا السياق يمكن فهم المسرحية على انها محاولة من الثقافة العراقية لمخاطبة الثقافات المهيمنة التي شاركت في حرب عام ٢٠٠٣. تعمل المسرحية على تحقيق هذا الهدف من خلال امرين: الاول هو غرس مفاهيم وعناصر من الثقافة العراقية في مسرحية شكسبير، والثاني بالتركيز على العناصر الغربية التي تجدها تلك الثقافة المهيمنة ذات صلة بها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: شكسبير، روميو و جوليت ، التكييف الفني، ما بعد الاستعمار.

Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad: A Study in Post-colonial Appropriations of Shakespeare

1: Introduction

In April 2012, The National Theatre in Baghdad hosted a performance of Munadhel Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*. Later that month, the Iraqi Theatre Company staged the play in The Swan Theatre in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England; and in June the play was performed in the Riverside Theatre in London, as part of the World Shakespeare Festival, which was also coinciding with the London 2012 Olympics. Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1596) in a characteristically Iraqi setting. The playwright dramatizes the feud of Shakespeare's Montagues and Capulets into a sectarian feud between two Iraqi half-brothers in post-2003 Iraq. That feud impedes the love story between Romeo and Juliet. The playwright goes even further in localising Shakespeare's play when he makes Paris a member of the jihadist group. At the end, thwarted by the prospected marriage between Romeo and Juliet, Paris storms and explodes the Sayidat al-Najat Church (Our Lady of Salvation) in which both Romeo and Juliet were planning to get married. The explosion claims the lives of Romeo and Juliet, and the play ends with a history Professor talking their parents into reconciliation.

2- Literature Review

Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad was the first internationally acclaimed attempt to bring Shakespeare directly to an Iraqi setting of the post-2003 era. This is why the play attracted the media attention and enjoyed coverage by internationally renowned media outlets. For *The New York Times* Tim Arango wrote that in this play Shakespeare's Capulets and Montague's are turned into Iraqi Sunnites and Shiites (Arango 2012). *The Guardian* reported that "Shakespeare's epic love tragedy (is) relocated to present day Iraq, a society riven by sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia" (*The Guardian* 2012). Richard Spencer of the *Telegraph* wrote that the play that is coming to London shows Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*'s "timeless – and explosive – quality" (Spencer 2012). Ben Monks in the *Exeunt Magazine* commented on how far in the background Dawood's play pushes the love story in favour of the political element. He also noticed the connections which the play, employing neat chronology, makes with the 2003-war. He argues that "Shakespeare's text is merely the starting point for a narrative transposed directly to Baghdad: it's been nine long years since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and nine long years since our star-crossed lovers were set to be married before a family-feud forced them apart" (Monks 2012). This international reception, then, is mainly concerned with the political and religious aspects of the play.

Academic criticism of the play focused on the audience that it targets as well as its reception in England. In their review of the play, Susan Bennett and Christie Carson stress that the play managed, through the choral figure (The

History professor), "to implore us (the West) to better understand the brutal realities of life in a city so long torn by war and the price it exacts on all its inhabitants" (2013, 183). In a later more detailed study of embodiment in *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*, Susan Bennett traces the Western adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* and how they foreground the love story. The English audience who attended the play as part of the World Shakespeare Festival (which preceded another national event in Britain's history – the 2012 London Olympics) was shocked to watch the revision of the play by the Iraqi playwright, in its exclusive emphasis on politics, death and destruction, to the detriment of the love story. According to Bennett, the play should be understood against the background of the romantically oriented Western adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* (2016, 700). As a result, Bennet opines that Dawood interrupted, even challenged, Western responses to the play (ibid., 705). Letvin, Walkling and Cormack, on the other hand, are less enthusiastic about the revisionist power of the play. Contra Bennet, Letvin, Walkling and Cormack think that "The localization simply borrowed from Shakespeare rather than challenged him" (2015, 7). They also hold that the play is primarily directed to Iraqi audiences. Katherine Steele Brokaw holds that the play was not successful as theatre, yet it did "provide important new perspectives on both Shakespeare's play and life in post-war Iraq" (2013, 268). However, according to Brokaw, the strength of the play lies in its topicality (ibid., 271). Amjad and Makki (2020) think the play is about love and that its message is against sectarianism in post-war Iraq. Ubeid (2020) approaches the play from an intertextual perspective, and attempts to highlight the intertextual relations with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. However, apart from the proper names, the study falls short of proving intertextual links between the original and the adaptation. Given the radical appropriation of the original, intertextuality might not prove the most suitable approach after all.

3: Theoretical Framework

However, due to the language barrier, these studies were not informed by a detailed knowledge of the text of the play. Moreover, they fail to situate the play within the larger context of the post-2003 Iraqi adaptations of world literature or, still more broadly, within the postcolonial literature writing back to the colonial nations. Aided by a detailed reading of the text and making that context as the starting point, this paper argues that the play can best be understood as an attempt to write back to that international audience that constitutes the colonial powers. This way it can be seen as an example of how postcolonial literature writes back to the colonial culture. It is an attempt by the colonised culture both to challenge the colonial culture and to engage in dialogue with it.

One of the best tools the colonised culture has at its disposal is literature. This process of writing back is an attempt to decentralise the dominant culture by

presenting a different literature from a different perspective. As Richard Terdiman puts it, these postcolonial literatures are driven by a "negative passion, to displace and annihilate a dominant depiction of the world" (2018, 12). This is achieved by picking up a classical literary work from the colonial culture "as a way to integrate the perspectives of their homelands into works that stereotype or ignore the presence of the colonised" (Hollyfield 2018, 1). This common practice of postcolonial literature has been dubbed variously as 'counter discourse' (Terdiman 2018), 'writing back' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989), 'con-texts' (Thieme 2001), etc. They all "identify a body of postcolonial works that take a classic English text as a departure point, supposedly as a strategy for contesting the authority of the canon of English literature" (ibid., 1).

The adaptive culture seeks to challenge these canonical texts by appropriating them, sometimes even subverting them. This is achieved by changing narrative elements, like characters, plot, and most notably the setting. As Linda Hutcheon remarks, "Some adaptations tackle the politics of empire from a decidedly postcolonial perspective, thereby changing the context of the adapted work considerably" (2006, 152). The appropriation process might also include infusing historical and cultural elements of the colonised culture into the fabric of the adapted text, so as to invest that text with its local colour. This has been mainly the case with African literature and films adaptations of imperial literary texts (Dovey 2005, 163). Concomitant with and underlying this process of alteration is a drive to re-interpret these canonical texts and understanding them in new ways, or as Hutcheon phrases it, they are 'wilful reinterpretations' (ibid., 153).

This phenomenon of writing back to the colonial literature is also prominent in Arabic literature, Iraqi literature included (See Al-Musawi 2003; Motyla and Arghavanb 2018). Especially after 2003, Iraqi literature has been responsive to the political change in the wake of US-led invasion and attempted to engage in dialogue not only with the Iraqi or Arab audience, but also, and even more significantly with the international audience, especially the English-speaking one. The 2003 invasion of Iraq has been a definitive moment for postcolonial studies. In fact even the 'post' in postcolonial is being questioned after the 2003 Iraq war, since, as some scholars speculate, we might still be living the colonial era (Lazarus 2006, 24). The 2003 was a turning point, not only in the history of the middle east or the world, but also in the literature. That date marked the rise of what Gabriel Page calls 'the post-American novel', one which challenges the American narrative of the war and marked a protest or dissent against the American hegemony (2018, 7). This is especially the case with Iraqi literature. In fact, Iraqi literature was very engaged with the politics of the British colonial era since 1921 (See Al-Musawi 2006). However, post-2003 Iraqi literature has been even more responsive to the political events, most notably reconstruction of the

state, identity crisis and violence. In this era Iraqi writers strived to engage in dialogue with the colonizing cultures in order to convey the Iraqi perspective(s) to them. So they deployed the appropriation of classical text of these cultures (mostly English) and reproduced them in a radically different way.

That is why Iraqi fiction in the post-2003 era has addressed with these postcolonial themes (See Caiani and Cobham 2013). Theatre, in turn, has its lot of dealing with issues of violence and identity through appropriating classical plays. In fact, theatre is more suited for the visual representation of violence than the novel. According to Suman Gupta, "Theatre is probably the cultural form which has been most explicitly and persistently used to understand the relation between reality and artifice" (2011, 105). Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1592) is especially unique in its representational power. Mark Thornton Burnett believes that the imaginative power of *Romeo and Juliet* is best appreciated in theatre (2013, 218). One of the illustrative theatrical experiments is Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* (2012). Not only is Dawood present Shakespeare an emblem of world literature, but also he also highlights the special relationship that Britain has to the Iraqi history through its colonialist past. Moreover, Shakespeare's works are often used to 'write back' to the British culture: "postcolonial texts that 'talk back' to the colonizing culture frequently deploy Shakespeare as a means of achieving this" (Sanders 2006, 52).

Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad, this paper will set out to prove, embodies the endeavour to write back by both localising Shakespeare's original play in a characteristically Iraqi setting and by attempting to engage in dialogue with the English-speaking audience. Although the play highlights the Iraqi identity of the adaptation, it is not oriented toward Iraqi or even Arab audiences. Rather, the play targets an international, mainly English-speaking audience, as it aims to engage in dialogue with that particular audience. The Iraqi identity of the performance is highlighted through accommodating the play in a characteristically Iraqi setting that is unquestioningly imbued with Iraqi culture and traditions. However, the play paradoxically attempts to set the terms for a dialogue with the Anglo-American audience through underscoring several elements, like the introduction of the Church and the emphasis on the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the coalition led by the US and UK. By doing so, the play is working to set a shared ground with that audience by speaking a language that they understand and utilising issues that they care about. Approaching the play this way is also, I stress, more critically rewarding. On the one hand, this approach in understanding the play would situate it within its basic genre, namely post-2003 Iraqi adaptations of world literature. The play has to be seen in the light of other works that belong to this category, most notably the, Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2012), which was shortlisted for the Booker-prize. These works always adapt a classic piece of world (mostly British

or American) literature and to accommodate it to post-2003 Iraqi situation. This way the adapters attempt to address the colonial culture that produced the original work, probably even criticizing its role in bringing Iraq to that situation. On the other hand, this approach will broaden our understanding of adaptations in post-war, colonised societies and how these societies capitalise on works that were produced by the colonial culture in an attempt to draw that culture's attention to the grievances caused by the war and the colonial project. Thus, this study contributes both to a deeper understanding of post-war Iraqi adaptations and, more broadly, to the scholarship on postcolonial adaptations and their work mechanisms. In what follows, I will first explore how *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* highlights Iraqi identity, and then will show how the play manages to initiate a dialogue with the international audience in order to convey its challenging message to that audience.

4: *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* as a Postcolonial Adaptation

4-1: The Iraqi Identity in Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*

Except for preserving the proper names of the characters, Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* works hard to relocate Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in a characteristically Iraqi setting. Through the language and the cultural allusions to local traditions as well as the costumes and the geographical locations, the play is heavily investing in the Iraqi environment as an environment to the play. As far as the language is concerned, the play is originally written in modern colloquial Iraqi Arabic. When performed in England in 2012, the language was translated into English by Raac Muschatat and Deborah Shaw, so fast that some non-Arabic reviewers complained that they could not follow the dialogue (Brokaw 2013, 269). The play is written in prose rather than poetry, unlike Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Consequently, it is not characterized by the powerful language of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Some Iraqi critics criticised the language for being very dull and falling short of expressing the strong feelings in the original play (Amjad and Makki 2020, 28). As it is pointed out above, nothing is preserved of Shakespeare's language save for the proper names of characters. In fact, using Shakespeare's original language might not be a feasible strategy. Shakespeare's language is seen more as hindrance than an invitation, especially for young audiences, even in Shakespeare's homeland, England (Pope 2019, 123). Changing the language register helped to move the play from a highbrow to an index of middlebrow culture, something that increases *Romeo and Juliet*'s appeal to young audiences even more (Anderegg 2003, 57). Adaptations do not necessarily show their relative loyalty to Shakespeare by choosing to quote from Shakespeare (Burnett 2013, 81).

In addition to the language, the play abounds in references and allusions to the Iraqi culture. The play, for example, makes reference to Ali Baba and the

forty thieves, Scheherazade and Shahryar (p.83), all of whom are characters in *The Arabian Nights* which set most of their tales in Baghdad. It also situates the action in Iraqi regions and well-known places, like Baghdad, Basrah, Abu Noas St., Shat al-Arab, etc. Even for the church which will be the setting for the final explosion that claims the lives of the lovers, Dawood chooses Sayidat al-Nejat, a church in Baghdad whose name was deeply engraved in the international memory as it was the target of a massive bomb attack. It is, thus, unmistakably an Iraqi church. More significantly, the play utilises the symbolic and cultural value of some landmarks of modern Iraqi literature. As a case in point, the play makes some passing references to Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab's famous poem, "Rain". For instance, Romeo's father addresses the sky to: "Rain, rain, and wash my problems" (p.78). Elsewhere, alluding to Al-Sayyab's poem, characters mention rain and associate it with hunger (p. 83). In fact, Al-Sayyab's poem and its reference to rain is always invoked in Iraqi postcolonial texts (Al-Musawi 2006, 118). Moreover, the play features many Iraqi folk-songs sung at the engagement and wedding ceremonies as well as Iraqi folk-tales like the beetle's tale. It also highlights some characteristically Islamic and Arabic practices, like polygamy. For example, we come to know early in the play that Romeo's father and Juliet's father are half-brothers. Later we hear that Juliet is going to be Paris's third wife, as he is already married to two women. Furthermore, the actors are dressed in Iraqi costumes with Romeo's father wearing a Black and white scarf and Juliet's father a red scarf. (Later in this paper, the symbolism of these colours will be discussed).

Yet even more than the language and the mention of the Iraqi local culture, the most significant move Dawood has taken to accommodate the play in the Iraqi setting is to change the nature of the family feud in the play. The prologue of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* refers to a family feud between the Montagues and the Capulets:

> Two households, both alike in dignity,
> In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
> From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
> Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. (Prologue, 1-4)

Thus, Shakespeare mystifies the reasons behind this feud, leaving the audience wondering about the 'ancient grudge' and the 'new mutiny' and it seems that the feud goes too far in history so much so that none of the living of the two families knows exactly why it happened in the first place. As is usually the case, any lacuna in Shakespeare's text proves a great opportunity for the adaptations to present their own suggestions and interpretations.

In the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, later adaptations of the play were motivated to fill in that void and to give a reason (or a bunch of reasons) to it. For example, the South African film *uGugu no Andile* (dir. Minky Schlesinger, 2008) adapted

Romeo and Juliet and depicted the feud as a tribal conflict over a bridge, while *West Side Story* (dir. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961) portrayed it as a drug war between the two families. On the other hand, the movie *Mare´, Nossa Historia de Amor* approached it as a result of class conflict. The French movie, *Romeo et Juliette* (dir. Yves Desgagne´s, 2006), situated the conflict between a drug dealer (Romeo's father) and a judge in his case (Juliet's father). Still many adaptations have raised issues of race and discrimination against immigrants, where the two lovers belong to different classes or where one of them belongs to a migrant group. This can be seen in the Greek movie, *Kanenas/Nobody* (dir. Christos Nikoleris, 2010) which depicted the two lovers as Albanian and Russian migrants. Another adaptation had Juliet as a Danish girl while Romeo a Palestinian migrant as in *Rami og Julie* (1988); still another adaptation, *Kebab Connection* (dir. Anno Saul, 2004), used a Turkish Romeo and German Juliet. In *Sud Side Stori* (dir. Roberta Torre, 2000) we have a Nigerian Juliet and Sicilian Romeo. Another adaptation, *Go!* (dir. Yukisada Isao, 2001), employed the tension between Japanese and Korean identities. Other films featured a Serbian Romeo and Muslim Juliet in Sarajevo, or an Arab Romeo with a Jewish Juliet in Jerusalem, and so on (MacDonald 2020, 53).

Dawood's approach to the family feud is entirely new. Inspired by the Iraqi religious and political landscape in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion, he situates it as a feud between a Sunnite Muslim (Juliet's father) and a Shia Muslim (Romeo's father). However, the words 'Suni' and 'Shia' were not mentioned anywhere in the play, yet everything helps direct the understanding of the feud that way. Not mentioning these words might be due to the reluctance of the Iraqi intelligentsia to employ these terms, since they have become something more like a taboo. To intensify that feud, he turned it from an inter-family feud (between two different families) to an intra-family one (within the same family) by making Romeo's father and Juliet's father as half-brothers. It is to be mentioned here that Dawood was the first one to make the feud on a family level, between two brothers. This choice can be interpreted both ways: firstly, it emphasises that different sects are like brothers that belong to the same father (or the same religion). Or it can be more cynically interpreted to mean that the sectarian schism was so deeply rooted that it penetrated even the smallest social structure: the family.

Although the feud in *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* is overtly religious, yet the play deepens the situation by adding two more layers to it. As soon as the play starts, we get to know that this religious schism was economically motivated. Going even deeper, we come to realise a political schism that shaped the economic grievance itself. The symbol that stands for all these grievances is a 'boat'. From the beginning we realise that the two brothers fight over a boat, one that belonged to their father. It is basically over who is going to pilot that boat:

> Romeo's Father: But we built the boat, not you. You were a little boy and just sat there and watched us sweat…. While we worked, you sat in his lap.
> Juliet's Father: Didn't you notice him giving orders while you guys scurried like rats? Didn't you see how he seized the helm and piloted the ship? I liked the bridge. I would put my hands on the wheel. He put his hands over mine and taught me. I loved the bridge and he loved me.
> Romeo's Father: You are dreaming. Your time is over.
> Juliet's Father: You wouldn't know. This isn't your job.
> Romeo's Father: We will learn.
> Juliet's Father: We're going to drown.
> Romeo's Father: I'm tired. All my life you have been my boss. I want to stand on my own two feet. (p. 76)

The symbolic meaning of this brief exchange is clarified early in the play: the boat over which they quarrel is the country and the father they speak about was the political system (culminating in, but not starting with, Saddam's regime) that always privileged the Sunnites (the younger brother) over the Shiites (the older brother) in running the country. The father, as the patriarch of the family, is expected to be just. But it turns out that he was not. This antagonism is further underscored by costumes. As we have seen, Romeo's father wears a black and white scarf (shumagh) while Juliet's father wears a red and white one (Brokaw 2013, 268). Setting these colours as symbols for fighting factions, the play is reminiscent of the English war of the roses between the Houses of York and Lancaster, where the former chose the symbol of a white rose and the latter a red rose. Shakespeare dramatizes the war of the Roses in much detail in his History plays. Another indicator that the conflict is inherently political and not religious is the fact that the two brothers never engage in any apologetic discourse of polemical nature that characterises the sectarian divide in Islamic theology. The economic dimension is later highlighted with the introduction of another symbol, namely 'pearl'. This is nowhere clearer than when Romeo's father complains: "What do you mean, my share? You call it my share when my sons go sailing for three months diving for pearls and bring them back to your hands. Have you seen any of our women wearing even one pearl?" (p.95). the 'pearl' may well stand for oil. This description of the past, pre-war situation is anticipated by a post-war complaint, this time from Tybalt: "We've stopped working" (p. 93). Tybalt is here referring to stagnation that has plagued their business after the war.

Noticeable in the above exchanges is how the quarrelling characters express their identity. Individual identity is discarded on behalf of a collective identity. Although they start off expressing their grievances and their positions using

singular first-person pronouns ('I', 'my', 'mine'), they soon turn to use collective plural first person pronouns ('we', 'us'). It thus becomes clear that they are assuming their sectarian identities rather than their personal ones. The only religiously neutral figure in the play is the history professor who plays several roles at once; he is a chorus intermittently commenting on and filtering the action to the audience. Right at the start of the play, he declares that he belongs to Baghdad and Iraq and to Romeo and Juliet. He worked hard to establish a purely Iraqi identity in which sectarian affiliation is not only unimportant, but also irrelevant. However, the choice of his field as 'history' is piquantly ironical, since all these schisms that tear out the society have their roots in the country's history. In fact, while many adaptations of the play looked to the future (Anderegg 2003, 59), Dawood's play seems to be inextricably rooted in the past.

However, even here the situation is further complicated by drawing lines between the Iraqi Sunnites per se and the mujahedeen. So, Tybalt first regards the two as one group "He is mujahid. He has shown us the right path" (p. 92). Later he seems to be increasingly trying to dissociate himself from the mujahedeen: "Extremism has blinded me …. One day I wanted to kill one of them" (p. 93). Later this dissociation grows even further when Juliet's father harshly rebukes Paris for speaking badly to Romeo's mother: "Get out. Damn you and damn the boat. Look, this is my sister-in-law. Just one of her sandals is more honourable than you are. This is my sister. Go out", after which Paris runs away (p.101). The play is blaming the extremism that went rampant after the war not on either of the sects, but rather on the mujahedeen. The mujahedeen group is framed as being an external effect, parasitic on the main, mostly tolerant fabric of the Iraqi society. Another distinction that the play draws is between the generations. On the one hand, it presents the older generation as more pragmatic, while the younger generation more dogmatic. The inalienable positions of Paris, Tybalt, and even Mercutio along with Romeo and Juliet in Dawood's play, are countered by the pragmatic positions adopted by their fathers. Nevertheless, it is the feud between the fathers that has fuelled this dogmatism in the sons. Therefore, the Police Officer addresses the fathers: "They hate each other because of you" (p. 75). In fact, this generational conflict, a major feature of Dawood's play is in sync with Shakespeare's original, "the impetuous energy of the youth is set against the physical deterioration that comes with increasing age" (Bickley and Stevens 2020, 78). In Dawood's play, we hear Romeo's father complaining constantly that he is tired, which betrays this sense of deterioration and decay in the older generation.

Thus, Dawood's play utilises the gap that Shakespeare left about the reason of the feud, filling it instead with an overtly religious (and covertly political and economic) reason for that feud. However, the play highlights that motivation to such an extent that is detrimental to the romantic backbone of the original play.

As we know, Shakespeare's tragedy is basically a romance that ends with the tragic death of Romeo and Juliet. Readers and spectators are made aware of all stages that the teens' love goes through. Not only Shakespeare's play, but also most modern adaptations foreground the love story exploring it in considerable details. For example, both Franco Zeffrelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) and Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet (1996) are romantic in essence. Luhrmann goes even further in casting the Hollywood star Leonardo de Caprio as Romeo. De Ceprio's role in Luhrmann's film is shadowed by his role as Jack in The Titanic (1994), which also dramatizes a love story and the tragic death of the lover. Yet, in Dawood's play, the romance is side-lined by the political and the religious conflict. The focus of the play is on the feud between the two brothers. The romantic story, in consequence, is pushed to the background. This entails and is shaped by several structural differences. On the one hand, while Shakespeare starts the romance by making the two lovers see each other accidentally and then go through many stages wherein their love is matured, Dawood's play starts with Romeo and Juliet already in love for at least nine years. Or, as the play states that they did not see each other for nine years, so their love story must have started earlier. Together with the absence of the development of the love story in the play, Dawood's play also dispenses with the balcony scene. This iconic scene has become a symbol for love since the first performance of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. One reason has probably to do with the fact that Iraqi literature is not famous for violent romantic love stories like Shakespeare's. In fact, the atmosphere of violence with which the play starts off and which continues to hold sway throughout invests in the destruction of the two lovers with a kind of inevitability that adaptations have always debated and showed in various forms (Anderegg 2003, 62; Burnett 2013, 198). In Dawood's play, the proper names also enhance the sense of inevitability; we know from the start that the lovers are doomed: it is a sort of onomastic determinism that nobody can resist.

Associated with the elimination of the romantic plot is the ultra-masculinity that characterises Dawood's characters and dialogue. Given the ultra-masculine ethos in the play, it may be inconvenient to focus on "something as un-masculine as romantic love" (Anderegg 2003, 58; also Burnett 2013, 213). From the outset of the play, aggression is associated with masculinity:

Mercutio: He's just trying to act macho.

Tybalt: I am a man and I will break your head. (p. 75)

Consequently, the masculinist ethos is made quite convenient given the violence that permeates the whole play. In such an atmosphere, non-aggressive behaviour is marked as unmanly and feminine. Thus, Tybalt challenges Romeo to face him as a man and asserts that Romeo is "hiding like a frightened woman" (p. 96). Interestingly, Romeo acquiesces to this accusation and even blames Juliet

for it: "Juliet, you made a coward out of me. Because of you I became a coward" (p. 97). More importantly, masculinity is inextricably woven within the fabric of the social and cultural traditions. The society expects a certain manly mode of behaviour from all males. Father Thaer chides Romeo for breaking his promise: "This is not the way a man would behave" (p. 102), and, addressing Romeo, Juliet's father shames Romeo's father for not following the tradition of engagement and marriage: "If your father were a man, he would have come to me" (p. 94). Part of that tradition, which does not easily go well with romantic love, is the restrictions that masculinity-driven patriarchal society imposes on women when it comes to choosing their future partners. Worried that Romeo might be killed by the male members of her family, Juliet exclaims: "We have real men, men who would kill anyone who dared even look at their girls" (84). Sensing a backing off from Juliet's father about the marriage, Paris objects: "Since when are women allowed an opinion" (p. 87). Love is a matter of choice, and in a society where the young, both males and even more females, are denied any choice, romantic love is an anachronism. The society that the play depicts, brewing with violence and the masculinist ethos, is inimical to romantic love. Together with the play's exclusive focus on the religious and political aspects of that society, it is no surprise that the romantic story, which occupies in the centre in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, has been marginalised in Dawood's adaptation.

Utilising all the elements mentioned above, from language through costume to religion and politics, to name just a few, the play has highlighted Iraqi culture and made it the setting for the backstory of *Romeo and Juliet* in Baghdad. *Romeo and Juliet* is a suitable choice for addressing the international audience about the plight of post war Iraq. Critics who widely observed the adaptations of the play around the world have not failed to notice that it is often adapted in nations that suffer historical moments of transition and "contested national identity" (Bennet 2013, 694). According to Mark Thornton Burnett, the play's adaptations flourish in "societies caught on the cusp of transition" since it registers "an uncertain landscape, including social breakdown and political violence, with all the attendant familial tensions" (196). As such, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was the best choice to underscore the conflict-ridden post-war Iraq.

4-2: *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* and its International Audience

Yet, for all the emphasis of its setting on the Iraqi identity, the play's focus is on establishing dialogue with an international, mostly English-speaking audience. This focus is achieved through many elements, not the least of which is adapting the Shakespeare play, preserving the characters names, and the church scene. The play makes frequent references to the British and the American presence in Iraq, the 2003 war and its dire consequences.

In order to establish that dialogue, Dawood had to choose a work that is deeply rooted in the Western unconscious. Hence the choice of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare is the most staged and adapted playwright not only in English literature, but also in world literature as well. Shortly after his death, Shakespeare's works started their journey in Europe and then to the wider world. Shakespeare's adaptations continued during the next centuries in English, European and other cultures (See Dobson 1992). During the twentieth century, Shakespeare's work were globalised and adapted in various media, starting with the cinema, through TV and ending with the new media of the internet era. Over the ages countless writers in various cultures were irresistibly drawn to the universality of the Shakespeare canon - a universality that allowed his work be adapted and appropriated in various local cultural contexts, some of which very far removed from Shakespeare's native English culture. As they are moved outside their native habitats, Shakespeare's plays both shaped and were shaped by the local culture that adapts them (Sen 2021, 18). Be it a European, Indian, Chinese, Japanese or Arabic culture, each produces its own version(s) of Shakespeare. They all use Shakespeare to forge out an identity of their own, shaped as it is by those Shakespeares (Espinosa 2017, 47). In other words, Shakespeare is being used as a prism through which these cultures can see themselves (Estill 2017, 178). While some adaptations merely replayed the Shakespeare text, some adaptations were revisionist in nature: they were intended to challenge it and to question the ideological and ethical assumptions on which it is based. In the words of Stanley Wells, they reshape the material "in ways that are implicitly critical of the original" as Stanley Wells puts it (Quoted in Anderegg 2003, 57).

No less significant is Dawood's choice of *Romeo and Juliet* for appropriation. In fact, *Romeo and Juliet* has a special status amongst other Shakespeare's plays. According to Michael Anderegg, only second to Hamlet, *Romeo and Juliet* is the play that defines Shakespeare (2003, 57). Even more than Hamlet, it is the play with the special and unparalleled appeal to the young (Bickley and Stevens 2020, 70). In Bennett's words (2016, 694), it is the most prominent document of love in Western culture. It can even be said that this has been the case in human culture in general, so much so that the words 'Romeo' and 'Juliet' have transformed from proper names to common names, denoting 'lover' and 'beloved', respectively. It is for these reasons combined that the play is said to have enjoyed the longest stage history and the most adaptations among other Shakespearean plays (See Tatspaugh 2007, 141; Brode 2000, 43). That is why the play was the most adapted among Shakespeare's plays. In the cinema, the adaptation history starts with the silent films followed by countless others in later stages, like the ones by Wise and Robin (1961), Zefrille (1968), Luhrmann (1966), etc. It was adapted as a song (Taylor Swift's "A Love Story", 2008). The

play was also used in activism about climate change, as Meagan King's Polar Bears and A Monkey's Tale. Social media also contributed to the adaptation history of the play, as in the many animation videos posted on YouTube, or on Twitter as in Such Sweet Sorrow, 2010 (For more about the play's adaptations, see Lehmann 2011; Calbi 2013; Tuan 2020).

In adapting *Romeo and Juliet* to convey his message to a worldwide audience, Dawood is investing in the cultural capital of the play and building on that capital if for his message to make any sense to his target audience. To draw attention to the plight of Iraq in the post-war era, it would be futile for Dawood to use any work with which the audience is not well familiar. It is all about finding a common ground on which to launch that dialogue. Hence the choice of Shakespeare and of *Romeo and Juliet* in particular.

In order to establish that connection with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Dawood employs several techniques. The first of which is proper nouns. He preserved the names of the characters in Shakespeare's play . Apart from friar Laurence and the introduction of the history professor, Dawood kept all the names as they are in the English text. Names are markers of identity, so preserving the names would be more like preserving the character's identity. Indeed, names in Dawood's adaptation have a further significance than in the original. In fact, in Shakespeare's play Juliet was busy stressing the inconsequentiality of the names: ""What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet" (II, ii, 43-4). However, in Dawood's adaptation Juliet stresses the importance of the names: "Paris is worthless, compared even to the name of Romeo" (p. 92). Given how far the adaptation departs from the original, preserving the characters names was necessary to indicate the relation between Shakespeare's play and this adaptation. Otherwise, Dawood's play would be hardly recognisable as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Still another indicator that the play is targeting the English speaking audience is its performance in the World Shakespeare Festival in Stratford-Upon-Avon and in London in 2012. Though the play was first performed in Baghdad (The National Theatre, on 17th of April 2012), yet that performance is hardly highlighted. The play owes its international reputation and acclaim to the Stratford 2012 performance (The Swan Theatre, 26th April-5th May, 2012). Then it was performed in London (The Riverside Theatre, 28-30th June) as part of the World Shakespeare Festival which was being held prior to the London Olympics 2012. If it were not for that performance the play would have been fallen into oblivion. The amount of effort and care exerted in the 2012 performance indicates how important that international audience is to the central message of the play. The play was also performed in Doha (Katara Drama

Theatre, 30th Sep – 3rd Oct). Even this performance was targeteing an international, not Iraqi audience.

Another common ground was the choice to include a church in this predominantly Islamic adaptation. After the 2003-war, and the sectarian violence that ensued in its wake, many minorities were targeted by extremists. Chief among these are the Iraqi Christians, some of whom were forced to flee the country. Part of the violence was directed against their worship places – churches - in Iraq. This situation attracted the concern of European countries, some of which provided refugee status to Iraqi Christians. As a result, many immigration schemes were launched to accommodate them in these European countries. One of the most devastating blows to Christian existence was the explosion of Sayidat al-Nejat church as a result of a terrorist attack. The sheer size of the explosion and the timing (on Christmas eve) was very effective internationally. So, choosing this real event and synchronising it with the fictional events of the play is a way to bring the audience closer to the plight of the country that is vividly depicted throughout the play. The choice of the church would neither have been significant if the play was directed to purely Iraqi audiences, nor would the plot have been convincing. Iraqi Muslims would not normally hold marriage ceremonies in churches. The church would not have been the first choice for Romeo and Juliet to reunite. However, with an international, mostly Western audience in mind, the choice of the church seems quite convenient.

Moreover, the play attempted to link its events with the 2003 US and UK-led war against Iraq. There are some stereotypical references to the British and the Americans throughout the play which grew out of the Iraqi experience with the armies and personnel of the two nations in Iraq. It expresses the view that these two armies did not do enough to deter extremism, if not inflaming it in the first place as well as their focus on security issues was? even to the detriment of Iraqi lives. For example, in her bickering with Mercutio, Nurse says:

> Nurse: …. And I will invite the English ambassador, even though the English are misers – they won't help me unless I meet their demands.
> All the men: What demands?
> Nurse: That I become an extremist. Anyone who wants to go to London must be an extremist because the British love extremists and one could become famous after that. And then the American ambassador will send for you and I'll become an important person and they will give fat contracts with many security guards – Blackwater security guards. (p. 90)

This conversation makes reference to entities that were involved in violence against Iraqi civilian (Blackwater) and also to some stereotypical observations about Britain, in which many extremists found refuge. Both of these issues (security contracting companies and extremist figures) contributed to the misery of the Iraqi people that ensued post the 2003 invasion. In this regard, Al-Musawi

comments: "This ensuing outcome cannot be seen apart from a past of British colonial legacy and Ottoman control. The cycle of violence and domination informs and enforces patterns of reactions, in thought and manner" (2006, 3). To overtly say this in front of an international audience is no less than a reproach to that audience for what its governments did. Again, mentioning these incidents for an Iraqi audience would be stating the obvious. Therefore, this indicates that the play is targeting that international audience.

Although the invasion of Iraq is not stated in the play, it is implied in many details. Many incidents are linked historically to the Ba'ath regime era and the 2003 war. In the Iraqi popular imagination, the Shia grievance is dated to 30 years back . For example, Romeo's mother shames Juliet's father for eating from her hand for 30 years (p. 100). Iraqis chronicle the duration of the Ba'ath party rule as having lasted, inaccurately, 30 years. Elsewhere, both Romeo and Juliet talk about their separation as lasting for 9 years (p. 81). As the play was performed in 2012, that separation would have started in 2003, conveniently as the start of the war and the launch of the sectarian violence which obstructed their love. Moreover, Dawood utilised various actual events from the post-2003 invasion of Iraq that are inextricably related to and are consequences of the US and UK-led invasion. One prominent event is the explosion of the Church of Our Lady of Salvation. The event of the Church really happened, and was internationally condemned, and the Assyrian priest father Thaer Abdal is also a real figure. As Susan Bennet puts it, "The Church's ruins lie within view of both National Theatre and Dawood's flat, making a sort of triangular reminder of how Baghdad once encompassed both culture and tolerance, and Dawood's place in that tradition" (2016, 703).

Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*, then, is a revisionist's attempt to re-read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. However, Letvin, Walkling and Cormack hold that "the localization only borrowed from Shakespeare rather than challenged him" (7). It is true that the play does not exactly fall in the category of what Robert Stam calls 'revisionist adaptations' which "mount a critique of source texts drawn from other cultures by adapting new perspectives, restoring excised material, or allowing previously silenced voices to speak" (Stam 2017, 239). Yet, Susan Bennet finds that the play refuses the traditional romantic love plot "in favour of a revision that explores *Romeo and Juliet* through the embodiment of national experience" (2016, 695). In the final analysis, the play has achieved the desired effect, namely to convey the Iraqi dilemma to the international audience. That audience felt both shock at and sympathy for the Iraqi situation. According to Susan Bennet and Christie Carson, the London audience was 'shocked' by the suicide bombing which "underscored the absolute loss of love in this world. Lives lost by the end of Shakespeare's tragedies suddenly seem little more than aesthetic convention; the real tragedy, this

adaptation suggests, is the West's passive spectatorship of a story familiar to us from the nightly news" (2013, 184). Even prior to that, Bennet notices a 'profound disappointment' as the audience was watching "the modern culture's paradigmatic love story rendered overtly political" (2016, 704). And as Letvin, Walkling and Cormack pointed out, "Yet in theatre terms it worked. Non-Iraqi audience members interviewed said they were shocked into empathizing with the Iraqi experience by the terrifying special effects; each explosion shook the auditorium" (6). In his 'Performance Note' of the play, Dawood states:

> Message to Brits: we are all the same, we Iraqis are not savages killing each other, but complex fallible humans just like your high-culture Montagues & Capulets.
>
> Message to Iraqis: unless Sunni and Shia talk to each other, the next generation for Iraq will be a tragedy. (quoted in Letvin, Walkling and Cormack 6)

However, I have shown that the real message was aimed to the International audience (here synecdochised by the Brits) more than the Iraqi audience. In an interview on Al-Iraqiya TV, Dawood stated that he was approached by the International Shakespeare Festival to participate with a Shakespeare play that reflects the Iraqi culture. As a result, he started thinking about the project and found out that *Romeo and Juliet* is the most suitable play for such a project. Thus, the motivation of writing the play was to perform it in England and for an English audience.

5: Conclusion

This paper has analysed Muandhel Dawood's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* in the context of both postcolonial adaptations and of Iraqi post-2003 adaptations. Both genres attempt to write back to the original work which is a product of the colonial culture. The play achieves this engagement with the colonial culture through a two-pronged process: on the one hand, it highlights Iraqi cultural features and invests the love story with an identifiably Iraqi setting. One the other hand, it utilizes these features to engage in a dialogue with its international audience. Despite (or still better, because of) its emphasis on foregrounding the Iraqi cultural identity, the play is in fact talking to an international audience, basically composed of English speakers whose governments launched the 2003-invasion which unleashed the violence during the post-war era.

This approach to the play has wider implications, as it helps us better understand the Iraqi adaptations in the post-2003 era as a category with special characteristics and purpose. These adaptations, as a result, can best be understood as an attempt to write back to the colonial cultures that have participated in the 2003- war. This understanding will arm us with a new perspective to understand

post-2003 Iraqi literature. Moreover, this study would shed a new light on postcolonial adaptations and the way they speak back to the colonial culture and the international order that is sustained by these cultures.

References:

Albanese, Denise. 2010. *Extramural Shakespeare*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Al-Musawi, Muhsin J. 2003.*The Postcolonial Arabic Novel*: *Debating Ambivalence.* Brill NV.

Al-Musawi, Muhsin J. 2006. *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict*. New York: I.B.Tauris.

Amjad, Fazel Asadi and Salam Hasan Makki. 2021. "Al-Bayati's *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* and the Call for Love and Harmony: A Study in Adaptation and its Concept of Indigenization." *Multicultural Education* 7 (3), 23-8.

Anderegg, Michael. 2003. "James Dean meets the pirate's daughter: Passion and Parody in *William Shakespeare's Romeo +Juliet* and *Shakespeare in Love*". In Shakespeare, The Movie, II: Popularizing the plays on film, TV, video, and DVD, edited by Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose, 56-71.. London: Routledge.

Arango, Tim. 2012. "Montague and Capulet as Shiite and Sunni". New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/world/middleeast/in-iraq-romeo-and-juliet-portrays-montague-and-capulet-as-shiite-and-sunni.html. April 28, 2012. Accessed 3/1/2022.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge.

Bennett, Susan and Christie Carson. 2013. "*Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*". In *A Year of Shakespeare: Re-living the World Shakespeare Festival*, edited by Paul Edmondson, Paul Prescott and Erin Sullivan, 183-4. London: Bloomsbury.

Bennett, Susan. 2016. "Precarious Bodies: *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* at the World Shakespeare Festival". In *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, edited by Valerie Traub, 694-708. Oxford University Press.

Bickley, Pamela and Jenny Stevens. 2020. *Studying Shakespeare Adaptation: From Restoration Theatre to YouTube*. London: Bloomsbury.

Brode, Douglas. 2000. *Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brokaw, Katherine Steele. 2013. "*Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* (review)". *Shakespeare Bulletin* 31 (2), 267-272.

Burnett, Mark Thornton. 2013. *Shakespeare and World Cinema*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caiani, Fabio and Catherine Cobham. 2013. *The Iraqi Novel: Key Writers, Key Texts.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Calbi, Maurizio. 2013. *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dawood, Munadhel. 2014. "Interview with Munadhel Dawood." Al-Iraqiya TV. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imVwGL6LRmI. (22/11/ 2014). Accessed on 16/1/2022.

Dawood, Munadhel. 2017. "*Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*." In *Contemporary Plays from Iraq*, edited and translated by A. Al-Azraki and James Al-Shamma, 73-105. London: Bloomsbury.

Dobson, Michael. 1992. *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dovey, Lindiwe. 2005. "Politicising Adaptation: Re-historicising South African Literature through Fools." In *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship*, edited by Mireia Aragay. 163-180.. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Espinosa, Ruben. 2017. "Beyond the Tempest: Language, Legitimacy, and La Frontera." In *The Shakespeare User: Critical and Creative Appropriations in a Networked Culture*, edited by Valerie M. Fazel and Louise Geddes, 41-62.. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Estill, Laura. 2017. "Shakespeare and Disciplinarity." In The Shakespeare User: Critical and Creative Appropriations in a Networked Culture, edited by Valerie M. Fazel and Louise Geddes, 167-186.. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gupta, Suman. 2011. *Imagining Iraq: Literature in English and the Iraq Invasion*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hollyfield, Jerod Ra'Del. 2018. *Framing Empire: Postcolonial Adaptations of Victorian Literature in Hollywood*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Hutcheon, Linda. 2006. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London: Routledge.

Kao, Vivian Y. 2020. *Postcolonial Screen Adaptation and the British Novel*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lazarus, Neil. 2006. "Postcolonial studies after the invasion of Iraq." *New Formations* 57: 10-22.

Lehmann, Courtney. 2011. *Romeo and Juliet: A Close Study of the Relationship between Text and Film*. London: Bloomsbury.

Litvin, Margaret, Saffron Walkling and Raphael Cormack. 2015. "Full of noises: when "World Shakespeare" met the "Arab Spring". *Shakespeare* 12 (3): 5-7.

MacDonald, Joyce Green. 2020. *Shakespearean Adaptation, Race and Memory in the New World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Monks, Ben. "*Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*." *Exeunt*. http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/romeo-and-juliet-in-baghdad/. 30/62012. Accessed 3/1/2022.

Motyla, Katharina and Mahmoud Arghavanb. 2018. "Writing against Neocolonial Necropolitics: Literary Responses by Iraqi/Arab Writers to the US 'War on Terror'." *European Journal of English Studies*, 22 (2), 128–141.

Page, Gabriel. 2018. *The Post-American Novel: 9/11, the Iraq War, and the Crisis of American Hegemony*. PhD Thesis. University of California, Berkeley.

Pope, Johnathan H. 2020. *Shakespeare's Fans: Adapting the Bard in the Age of Media Fandom*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sanders, Julie. 2006. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London: Routledge.

Sen, Suddhaseel. 2021. *Shakespeare in the World: Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Europe and Colonial India, 1850–1900*. New York: Routledge.

Shakespeare, William. 2003. *Romeo and Juliet*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spencer, Richard. 2012. '*Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*' comes to London." https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/9184099/Romeo-and-Juliet-in-Baghdad-comes-to-London.html. 04 April 2012. Accessed 4/1/2022.

Stam, Robert. 2017. "Revisionist Adaptation: Transtextuality, Cross-Cultural Dialogism, and Performative Infidelities." In *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, edited by Thomas Leitch, 239-250. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tatspaugh, Patricia. 2007. "The Tragedies of Love on Film." In *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, edited by Russell Jackson, 141-166. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Terdiman, Richard. 2018. *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

The Guadian. "This week's cultural highlights: *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* and Enquirer". https://www.theguardian.com/culture/culture-blog/2012/apr/22/this-weeks-cultural-highlights. Sun 22 Apr 2012. Accessed 3/1/2022.

Thieme, John. 2001. *Postcolonial Con-texts: Writing back to the Canon*. New York: Continuum.

Tuan, Iris H. 2020. *Pop with Gods, Shakespeare, and AI: Popular Film, (Musical) Theatre, and TV Drama*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ubeid, Ahmed H. "*Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad:* An Intertextual Study from a Contemporary Iraqi Perspective". International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation 24 (6). DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I6/PR261014.