

مجلة النص

دورية أكاديمية محكمة يصدرها مخبر النص المسرحي الجزائري،
جمع و دراسة في الأبعاد الفكرية و الجمالية - جامعة جيلالي ليابس، سيدي بلعباس/الجزائر

المجلد الثاني، شهر

العدد الثاني

ديسمبر 2025

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شروط النشر في المجلة

شترط في المقالات و الأبحاث المراد نشرها في مجلة النص ما يلي:

- 1- أن تكون أصيلة و لم يسبق نشرها.
- 2- أن يتميز الموضوع بالجدية و العلمية.
- 3- أن يستوفي الموضوع للشروط العلمية و الأكاديمية، من حيث سلامة اللغة و الضوابط المنهجية.
- 4- أن ترج الهوامش بطريقة آلية، و بضبط منهجي متعارف عليه.
- 5- أن تكون الرسومات و الصور و البيانات و الجداول و الملاحق منفصلة عن
عن النص المكتوب.
- 6- أن لا يكون البحث قد نشر أو أرسل للنشر في جهة أخرى.
- 7- تنشر المجلة الموضوعات باللغة العربية و للانجليزية و الفرنسية، مع ملخص
لا يتجاوز 100 كلمة
- 8- تخضع الموضوعات المرسل للتحكيم قبل النشر، و تخبر الادارة أصحاب الأبحاث
بنتيجة التقويم.

العدد الثاني

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الافتتاحية

في سياق التحوّلات المتسارعة التي يشهدها المشهد الثقافي العربي والعالمي، تواصل مجلة النص التزامها بدور المنبر الأكاديمي الموثوق الذي يحتضن البحوث الرصينة، ويشجّع على الحوار العلمي الخلاق بين مختلف حقول المعرفة. إذ تتقاطع في هذا العدد الجديد مسارات الإبداع الفني بتنوّعاته—من المسرح والسينما والفنون التشكيلية والموسيقى—مع آفاق الدراسات الأدبية والنقدية التي تسعى دوماً إلى تفكيك الظواهر الجمالية واستنطاق بنياتها العميقة

وإذ نضع بين أيدي القراء هذا العدد، فإننا نوّكد حرصنا على تقديم محتوى علمي يزاوج بين الأصالة والتجديد، ويرسّخ رؤية معرفية تستجيب لأسئلة العصر واحتياجات البحث الأكاديمي. فقد ضمّ العدد مجموعة من الدراسات التي تناولت قضايا الفن والإبداع من زوايا متعددة؛ منها ما انشغل بقراءة تحولات الخطاب السردي، ومنها ما لامس جماليّات العرض المسرحي والسينمائي، إضافة إلى أبحاث فنية تسعى إلى إبراز دور الفن التشكيلي في تشكيل الوعي الجمالي.

كما يقدّم العدد ملفات بحثية تلامس إشكاليات نقدية معاصرة، وتتقاطع مع أحدث المقاربات النظرية والمناهج التحليلية، بما يُسهم في إثراء الحراك العلمي داخل الجامعة ومخابر البحث، ويعزّز حضور الفنون والدراسات الإنسانية كفضاء خصب للتأمل والإبداع.

وإذ نثمّن جهود الباحثين الذين ساهموا في إنجاز هذا العدد، نوّكد على أنّ المجلة ستظلّ فضاءً مفتوحاً لاستقبال البحوث الجادة، والقراءات النقدية التي تفتح آفاقاً جديدة للفكر والإبداع. مع خالص الأمل أن يجد القارئ الكريم في هذا العدد ما يغني معارفه، ويحفّز مسارات البحث والتفكير العلمي.

/أ.د. إدريس قرقوي

**Narratives from Palestine: Ethics and Politics in Raja Shehadeh's
When the Bulbul Stopped Singing (2003)**

Selma DJABALLAH

Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages

University of Algiers 2, Algeria

Email: selma.djaballah@univ-alger2.dz

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Abstract:

This article examines Raja Shehadeh's *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* (2003), a testimony of life under the 2002 Israeli siege of Ramallah, focusing on the ethical and political criteria of narrating suffering. Shehadeh navigates between intimate, sensory descriptions of stillness and moments of sharpened political criticism as the violence intensifies. By transcribing the everyday texture of the siege experience, his memoir avoids over-politicization to offer instead an empathetic testimony. Drawing on Michael Jackson's *The Politics of Storytelling*, this article argues that Shehadeh negotiates the tension between private experience of suffering and public discourse of politics, rendering his narrative a symbol of survival and resistance.

Keywords: ethics, narratives, Palestine, politics, storytelling, siege.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite military containment, inhumane treatment, and widespread indifference to the Palestinians' distress, the power of their literature attests to the strength of their will. The importance of literature lies not only in framing the historical and cultural identity of individual and collective minds, but also in functioning as a timeless testimony of existence and resistance. In this sense, silencing Palestinian voices has undoubtedly been the bitterest failure of the Israeli occupation. From within the crossfire, under sieges or beneath the rubbles, these voices continue to shout their existence, claiming an alienable right to simply *be*, and affirming their roots and ties to their motherland.

Among such restless voices is that of lawyer and author Raja Shehadeh, who delivers an unsettling tale of an under-siege Ramallah in his book *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* (2003). Recounting the terrors, the frustrations and the humiliations of being trapped in one's own home, Shehadeh evokes the voice of an entire traumatized generation of Palestinians. This unyielding memoir narrates Palestine through its unwavering lines, creating a dialogue that speaks, as Shehadeh phrases it, "truth to power." Shehadeh's tale is written as a firsthand testimony from within the clashes of war, attesting, yet again, to a forbearing generation that shouts its story with slit lips, broken spirits and undefeated hearts.

Shehadeh's narrative is placed in a historically marked context; that of an under-siege Ramallah that began on 29th of March 2002 during a violent Second Intifada. Shehadeh starts his story two days after a Palestinian suicide bomber executes his mission in Netanya during Passover. He immediately recognizes the terrible moral toll the violence has taken on both sides. The city is under military lockdown. The tanks are waiting in the streets. Bombs explode at a distance. His wife, Penny, is away. And his brother's house is occupied by Israeli soldiers.

Shehadeh, confined in the solitude of his own house, writes this memoir simply because his life "depends on it." As the world recently survived the ordeals of confinement during the Covid19 pandemic, Shehadeh's narrative is hardly the representation of a similar experience. A

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confinement in Palestine undoubtedly refers to the “slow strangulation” of an entire community, where even the parameters of one’s own house are not safe.

Shehadeh negotiates the tension between the private embodied experience and the political realities of life under siege. His memoir describes the sensory impressions – the overbearing silence, the threatening stillness, the calming sounds of nature and the overwhelming allure of fear – immersing his narrative in a bodily experience of a terrifying political situation. As the pressures of checkpoints and the threat of violence gradually make way into his storytelling, his political criticism sharpens. This exemplifies what Michael Jackson terms the “transaction” of storytelling, where narrative mediates between the private world of experience and the public world of discourse. Jackson elaborates most of his study cases on refugee and intense experience narratives. Though he only mentions one Palestinian testimony in a brief passage, his insights echo the Palestinian experience, especially that of Raja Shehadeh.

This article explores the ethical considerations involved in empathetically narrating events from within the context of occupation, navigating the tension between embodied experience and political voice and asking: what kind of story can be told when one is both a subject and a witness to slow violence? Drawing on Michael Jackson’s insights of *The Politics of Storytelling* (2002), this article explores how Shehadeh represents the political discourse surrounding the Palestinian conflict as the siege is prolonged and the violence intensifies. Additionally, it inspects how the author navigates the burden of depicting suffering while committed to the ethics of empathy and human dignity.

This article argues that Shehadeh’s memoir uses storytelling as a means to preserve dignity, navigate vulnerability, and balance embodied experience with political voice. It presumes that Shehadeh’s memoir provides dual lens: it shows how the experience of siege is felt and lived in Palestine, as well as how it is politically and ethically narrated. The narrator captures the essence of an intense phenomenological experience, portraying

the overload of emotions and the qualia of a siege experience. Moreover, Shehadeh delivers his poignant and realistic tale with a critical voice that addresses the political context surrounding the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. As a prisoner of the siege and a witness to the violence it entails, he struggles with the ethical restraints and political gravity in his narration, amalgamating in *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* becoming a testimony of Palestinian empathetic reasoning and courageous resistance.

Hania A. M. Nashef, a professor at the American University of Sharjah, takes a particular interest in postcolonial and postmodern literatures and films, including Palestinian literature. In her articles, she often elaborates on the concept of “homo sacer” which denotes how states strip individuals of political rights, reducing them to “bare life.” In her “Homo Sacer Dwells in Saramago’s Land of Exception” (2017), Nashef argues that the quarantined city afflicted by an epidemic of blindness portrayed in José Saramago’s novels *Blindness* (1995) reflects the extent of biopolitical control, where citizens are abandoned, dehumanized and subjected to violence under the pretext of order. Moreover, she suggests that these types of subjugation resonate with the Palestinian experience of occupation, war and authoritarianism, where Palestinians are constantly marginalized and excluded from any meaningful form of life. Nashef’s drawn parallels echo Shehadeh’s experience of the Ramallah siege, where the lives of many Palestinians – as this article will try to demonstrate – were substantially reduced by entrapment and violence. Like Shehadeh’s storytelling, Nashef highlights literature’s power to expose systemic injustices and question the ethical foundations of modern state power.

In her “Two memories: Darwish and Shehadeh recount their days under siege” (2017), Nashef elaborates on Shehadeh’s Ramallah siege narrative directly by comparing it to Mahmoud Darwish’s poem *Memory for Forgetfulness*, documenting the 1982 Israeli invasion of Beirut. She analyzes how both Palestinian authors recorded the anguish and terror as well as the daily struggles between both Israelis and Palestinians. Nashef argues that both these narratives provide a solid resistance to the “homo sacer” status by structuring a “counter-narrative” that resists the dominant

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discourse of dehumanization. Nashef's explorations match the intent of this study in showing how literary testimony does not only recount suffering but actively participates in shaping political discourses. This ultimately transforms memory into an act of survival and resistance.

2. The Politics of Narratives

In his *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity* (2002), Michael Jackson analyses – as his chosen title indicates – the politics involved in narrating one's difficult and challenging experiences. In the systemic sense of the personal being political, he aims to examine the intricate process of documenting personal, intimate and life-altering events, generating a palpable system of storytelling upon which the narrator's sanity and survival depend. Jackson considers his insights to be an "anthropological exploration" of Hannah Arendt's views on storytelling being the "subjective in between" personal and social meaning which problematically and interchangeably combine the private and public (11).

Jackson directs his interest to specifically examine narratives from people who survived violent catastrophes. He considers storytelling (in its fictional or factual forms) an act of survival. This is where art transcends its aesthetic or practical function to become a strategy for survival. For people living in disrupted environments or violent conditions, survival is not simply physical survival. Instead, it becomes an opportunity to precisely tell that story. Storytelling in this case restores the real essence of life by linking, sharing and building real connections. The power of narratives, especially for the distressed, resides in providing people with a sense of control and continuity in the midst of chaos and fragmentation.

Jackson advocates for the power of storytelling in negotiating between experience and discourse. He declares, "to reconstitute events in a story is no longer to live those events in passivity, but to actively rework them, both in dialogue with others and within one's own imagination" (Jackson, 2002, p. 15). The act of storytelling is thus the reenactment of events with all what they might carry. Narratives can transmit the unspeakable by retracing the

phenomenological essence of experience and providing a structured form to what otherwise might remain formless.

These private, bodily and emotional experiences amalgamate in a sphere of intersubjectivity to build a public, political and collective discourse. Every story is a manifestation of one's singularity and subjectivity. Nonetheless, the resulting narrative does not stand secluded on its own as an exhibition of self-expressionism; instead, it becomes involved in an "interplay of intersubjective and intrapsychic processes," transforming private consciousness into public meaning (Jackson, 2002, p. 15). Storytelling is therefore a transaction between the personal and the public, preserving individuality while attesting to political dimensions by situating the narrative in relation to others and to power.

According to Jackson, stories do not simply "mirror reality" but create new possibilities for living. They "aid and abet our need to believe that we may discern and determine the meaning of *our* journey through life: where we came from and where we are going" (Jackson, 2002, p. 16). When violence cripples the essence of life, narratives provide individuals and communities with the needed voice to resist and survive. In making and narrating stories, we "rework reality in order to make it bearable" (Jackson, 2002, p. 16). Narrative, as an agency of life itself, create a "semblance of truth" that carry an ethical burden. This burden resides in bearing witness to suffering without turning it into propaganda or appropriation. The power of stories lies in their ability to acknowledge suffering, preserve dignity, and build a collective discourse of solidarity.

3. The Qualia of Private and Public Experience

Narratives are usually prompted by "some crisis, stalemate, or loss of ground" that affects or defects one's relationship with others or with the world (Jackson, 2002, p. 16). This tribulation undermines autonomy and recognition and handicaps all volatile actions of a proper life. In this case, Jackson explains, storytelling becomes a "coping strategy" that involves "making words stand for the world" (Jackson, 2002, p. 16). By constructing the sensory experience of this suffering, one aspires to restore the viability of human relations, reaffirm autonomy and restructure the disrupted

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experience. The act of transmitting delicate and intimate details crosses the lines of subjectivities to build connections between social bodies and efface the boundaries between the private and the public space.

The tangible link between the private and public space in storytelling delivers a vivid account of intense situations, transforming lived vulnerability into communicable embodied experience. These accounts could take a psychological – often philosophical – dimension when various forms of violence shape the narrative events. Jackson's emphasis on the private realm in narratives could be reinforced by David Herman's insight of narrative qualia experience in his theory of narrative. Qualia – a term used by philosophers of mind – refers to the sense of “what it is like” for someone to have a particular experience and the effects of this experience on consciousness. Qualia are felt, “subjective properties of mental states which evoke ‘real-life’ experience” (Herman, 2009, p. 15).

For Shehadeh, his qualia takes the form of a storm of emotions, a turmoil that shapes his experience into something uniquely his own. He first depicts it with horror and extreme sadness, describing it as “a drama, a soap opera and yet reality, a television reality program to be watched and followed in real time” (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 64). Shehadeh loathes the impotency of the rest of humanity as they expect the Palestinians to maintain their rhetoric of inspiration and resistance. He states, “The outside is doing its best to portray my life, to interpret my experience and existence” (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 64). He finally comes to the realization that the siege experience could only be felt by those who are entrapped by it. The live broadcast of separate entities of subjects could not transmit people's suffering and the stages of degradation they go through in their own homes. Shehadeh's personal storytelling is, however, a vivid portrayal of sensory details and tumultuous emotions through which he is able to deliver the realities of a public experience.

In a state of desolate fear, utter disgust and threatening emptiness, the siege experience tempers with the factors of sanity, putting its proprietor at risk of mental deterioration. Shehadeh learns to find solace in small things:

his work, his routine, his chores, his walks in his garden and, more importantly, in the view of the hills, the mountains and the nature of his land:

The sun was shining and for the first time since the invasion the birds were singing in the courtyard. The loudest was the bulbul, a bird with a deep expressive voice whose song sounds like a repetition of a phrase: I told you so, I told you so. The birds were happy because it had rained in the morning. They can take little baths in the puddles. My grandmother used to say, "*Shatwit nisan ibtihi el insan*" (The spell of rain in April revives man) (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 52).

Shehadeh transmits the reality of siege through finely crafted sensory details that draw the reader into his embodied experience. He portrays the fragile continuity of life in the midst of disruption. The bulbul, in particular, becomes a symbol of resilience and the inevitability of truth in the face of aggravated violence. The memory of his grandmother connects the personal present with the collective past, creating a sense of continuity and building a net between the private and the public Palestinian experience.

Shehadeh succeeds in transmitting his vulnerable experience from the private space of his confined home to the public sphere of a sized Palestine. Throughout his narrative testimony, he not only transcribes his sensory experience of a blockade but faithfully delivers the accounts of many people affected by this painful ordeal. Shehadeh collects the qualia of people who could not bury their loved ones and had to live with their decomposed bodies at home, of people who lost their children because they dared to cross the street after the curfew, people who saw their women get shot while hanging their laundry, and above all, people who witnessed their houses getting robbed, their bathrooms vandalized, their food and water getting thrown out and their properties destroyed. The end result is a constellation of experiences that builds a strong link between social bodies in a shared space of intersubjectivity.

Storytelling fosters a deep connection that allows people to relate to each other's experiences. Jackson explains that extreme experience narratives allow for the liberation of that experience instead of "fetishizing" it into an "inward" journey (Jackson, 2002, p. 63). Shehadeh survives the

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stillness of time, the threat of home invasion and the escalating fatality of violence through his narrative, transmitting the essence of his experience from the private to the public sphere. He contrasts these tribulations by expressing his inner turmoil and sharp criticism without falling into the trap of mythologizing suffering and Palestinian symbolism.

4. Demystifying Palestinian Symbolism

Storytelling does not aim to create a consensus about controversial matters by propagating personal journeys. Jackson confirms that storytelling of extreme experiences (he exemplifies through refugee stories) stems from “existential need” rather than emotional impulsivity. The storyteller, in this case, does not focus on the reader’s judgements, perceptions, beliefs or feelings. Instead, the act of narrating, though pedestrian in form, becomes as imperative to life as breath itself (Jackson, 2002, p. 93).

More importantly, the very purpose of storytelling, according to Jackson, is to “invoke and counterpoint *various* points of view” (Jackson, 2002, p. 140). The “relativity of perspectives” prohibits the resolution of “ethical dilemmas” based on personalized moral grounds and principles. Thus, the act of storytelling allows a portal of interactivity and participation between the audience and the storyteller. According to Jackson, this relationship of “call and response” creates both “socially and dialogically an ideal of tolerant solidarity in difference” (Jackson, 2002, p. 141). This is particularly important in moments of colossal tension when judgements are clouded by “private reveries, reactions, or memories” (Jackson, 2002, p. 141).

Shehadeh’s memoir brings forward a new discourse, one that denudes and demystifies Palestine from mythical symbols, criticizes both Palestinian and Israeli government and seeks a more practical, pragmatic and effective solution to this never-ending issue. Shehadeh does not aim to create a common consensus based on oversimplified and generalized outcries. As his storytelling stems from an “existential need” rather than impulse, his tone in early passages is reflective, empathetic, balanced and dignified. He

begins his narrative by mildly attempting to suggest the possibility of peace, opening a conversation, and simply seeing each other as human beings, hoping to concretize “tolerant solidarity in difference.” This creates a sense of impartiality rarely witnessed in crisis narratives where the narrator opens the door for an honest discussion about the realities of policymaking and the rhetoric of symbolism.

While interpreting his experience, Shehadeh expresses his opinion about the Palestinian conflict in all honesty and authenticity. He differentiates between what he calls the “Symbol” and the reality experienced by Palestinians: “There is more rhetoric than ever and more bravado. The speakers are carried away with our illusory power ... Once again Palestine was being turned into a symbol.” (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 49). In more than one instance, Shehadeh points out how his lived experience of under-siege threat affects the representation of events. To us spectators, we hail Palestine as a symbol of “Sumoud,” resilience and heroism. Shehadeh evokes instead the reality behind this rhetoric that no one wants to truly experience, a reality that deprives them of the most basic necessities such as bread and water.

Shehadeh denudes the rhetoric of heroism and symbolism often related to Palestine. He calls instead for an effective solution, pragmatic policies that could deliver the people from their agony: “Symbolism has killed us throughout the decades and brought our society to ruin. We remain dependent on outside aid rather than building our own society and taking responsibility for ourselves” (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 104). While transmitting his personal experience, Shehadeh does not miss the opportunity to criticize his own government. The more his frustration grows as he feels trapped inside his house, the more critical he becomes of his own government for having failed to provide security and missing opportunities for peace. This allows him to bring forward a fresh perspective, not from an outsider commenting on an event, but an insider who is experiencing the said context.

Shehadeh’s perspective serves as a negotiation between his experience as a witness to progressive violence and political statement and criticism

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based on reason and logic. He invokes a counterpoint to the mainstreamed and propagated discourses, demystifying the siege experience and denuding Palestine from the excessive and vacant symbolism that does not offer substantial solutions. Shehadeh's storytelling does not take into considerations judgements, perceptions or feelings about the long-lasting Palestinian/Israeli conflict. He refuses silence and subjugation and attempts at addressing this dilemma – both in its political and ethical dimension – while resisting propaganda. As the siege is prolonged and the violence intensifies, the tone of the narrative gradually shifts, growing sharper and more critical. Shehadeh's frustrations become more aggressive; yet, he is able to govern his storytelling with the moral ethics that humanize the Israelis and open a social dialogue with all parties.

5. Ethical Storytelling: Humanizing the Enemy

Storytelling does not aim at creating consensus but at showcasing the prospects of humans in speaking, sharing and connecting through narratives. Stories celebrate the “intrinsic and inherited differences” displayed in rank, gender, ethnicity and estate; yet, they fuse these elements through the virtue of private experiences (Jackson, 2002, p. 156). The substance of what is shared is thus second in significance next to the very act of “participating in a shared event, and referring separate experiences to a common source” (Jackson, 2002, p. 156). Narratives, Herman explains, not only reflect but also help shape the sense of what it is like to live through worlds-in-flux (Herman, 2009, p. 104). The fostered ground is therefore a fertile terrain for ethical and political transformation.

Storytelling “cross, breach, and blur boundaries” that define critical, political and ethical spaces of everyday life (Jackson, 2002, p. 30). Narratives have the power to help us escape dire situations and transform perspectives from the inner torments to the outer spectrum of intersubjectivity. The various points they present invite more participation into sensitive and overbearing discussions. These forms of expressionism, as mentioned before, cannot be governed by beliefs, judgments or feelings. Nonetheless, the ethical implications involved in storytelling should be

upheld to preserve dignity, authenticity and the persistent – though at times fruitless – quest for truth.

Narratives are more than the mere representation of minds. Through the configuration of concepts, an experience narrative is the representation of conscious awareness itself. Throughout Shehadeh's narrative, we witness an ethical awareness that governs his testimony. His ethical storytelling credits his memoir and preserves the dignity of its structure. Shehadeh shares his vulnerability while restraining himself from over-politicizing or over-romanticizing the siege experience and the violence involved in maintaining it. As a subject to that escalating violence – as opposed to a mere external observer, he does not succumb to his disparities and remains faithful to the ethics of storytelling. The appeal of shared humanity – though understandably weakly-grounded at times – remains the mantra of his last lines. His responsible narration preserves agency and dignity in a context of utter suffering, bearing witness without collapsing into either silence or excessive rents of rhetoric and politicization.

Shehadeh deescalates the feeling of tension and the growing sense of horror with few human instances which the Israeli soldiers showed while in Ramallah. For instance, he opens the narrative by describing how one Israeli soldier apologized in writing for knocking down a plant: "Sorry for the mess. I hope we meet in better times. Stay away from the windows. The IDF" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 32). When militants barricaded his brother's house for three days, they shared a meaningful conversation that allowed them to recognize each other as humans instead of enemies: "You know, both our leaders are lousy. It is only because of them that we are fighting each other" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 53). The conscious decision to include these instances showcases an ethical impartiality and a commitment to a truthful and dignified experience narration.

As violence escalates to gruesome levels, Shehadeh's frustration grows, and the suffocating siege experience begins to shape his consciousness with a bleak sense of hatred and injustice. When a soldier shot a woman hanging her clothes, Shehadeh wonders "Why shoot a woman hanging her washing? What subversive activity could this be? How

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could a soldier have it in him to do something like this?" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 91). The cruelty displayed by soldiers seems unreasonable to Shehadeh who still appeals to their humanistic side: "They must have fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and perhaps children of their own. How could they go back to them after this?" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 139). He finally succumbs to his darkest impulses by wishing Israeli "women and children and babies to die" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 100). This descent from disbelief to hatred attests to the brutality of the siege, eroding all prospects of shared humanity, leaving Shehadeh at the precipice of the dehumanization cycle he once resisted.

However, it is this climax of emotions that highlights the power of his narrative. Shehadeh is able to accomplish an ethical consideration that restores his empathy, leading to the triumph of compassion by the end of his memoir. He admits that, as an intellectual, the momentary glimpses of despair and hatred he felt are a source of disappointment for him. He realizes he has been "blinded by hatred and intimidated by the extremists. Colonial rule is not just a set of laws and regulations, but assumptions and attitudes and attempts at capturing the mind and heart of the colonized" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 100). Shehadeh acknowledges his own vulnerability under colonial oppression, confessing that hatred and fear cloud his intellectual integrity. This admission demonstrates his ability to distinguish the colonial oppression that extends beyond military force to further control and shape emotions and psychological perceptions. By openly admitting his compromised state, Shehadeh exhibits an ethics of narration that values honesty over the romanticizing of suffering, exposing the raw reality of transmitting a private experience through storytelling.

Shehadeh restores his faith in humanity in the midst of aggravated assault and agonizing injustice. Through his narrative, he realizes that it is best to keep his composure and stir away from anger to keep his dignity and not be considered by others as the "subject of pity." In the process of "making words stand for the world," he not only succeeds in transmitting his own experience and those who are trapped under the siege, but also in

conceiving a reasonable explanation – at least to him – as to how “propaganda and programming” are crippling the Israelis’ sense of empathy and turning them into racists (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 100). He strives to think of them as:

... not as intimidating objects of destruction but as human beings. And for the first time I found myself feeling compassion for them, for their relatives and the society they have to go back to, which, after all, will always be a neighbor of ours. This new emotion filled me with a profound sense of relief. ... compassion in this part of the world was in short supply, compassion for ourselves and what has become of our life, and compassion for our enemies. After all, we are both in the same sinking boat (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 139).

In this cathartic moment, Shehadeh moves beyond despair to seek compassion as an ethical stance, even toward those who cause the suffering of many Palestinians. He manages to reframe the conflict not in terms of mythologized rhetoric or over-politization but of shared humanity. Narrating his enemies as human beings attests to the power of his storytelling as a moral act in which the narrated events do not merely document brutality but create the conditions for empathy as well. This offers a rare gesture of ethical imagination in a context dominated by fear and revenge.

Shehadeh’s narrative embodies the ethical considerations of storytelling by transforming private experience of suffering under siege into a public experience of reflection and recognition. His narrative does not negate feelings and emotions of anger, loss, or hatred. Instead, it situates them within a shared space between readers, fellow Palestinians, and even Israelis. By expressing and detailing his thought process ethically, Shehadeh preserves his dignity while resisting dehumanization, proving that the aim of storytelling goes beyond the mere recounting of suffering to forge a connection that could restore faith in human relations.

6. CONCLUSION

Jackson asserts that stories are not only journeys that affect us deeply, but they are also often *about* exploring these journeys themselves as they constitute the basic conditions that make storytelling possible (Jackson,

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2002, p. 30). For Shehadeh, the experience of being a witness and a victim of slow and perpetual violence is the source of a narrative that intertwines the sensory details of the ordeal with the responsibility of ethical narration, preserving dignity while resisting silence and submission. The human rights activist balances his embodied experience with an ethical and political voice. His memoir shows how storytelling transcends the testimonial function to conserve agency and sanity under siege. In a historical context of political violence, Shehadeh's act of narration itself becomes an ethical act of resistance.

When the Bulbul Stopped Singing is a memoir of a person who could have left his land but chose not to, simply because "Palestine is home. Difficult as life has always been, it is where I want to live" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 15). The Irish author Colum McCann, in writing the introduction of the memoir, asserts that the biggest temptation for a storyteller is to create "too much or to settle for too little, but Shehadeh somehow doesn't allow this to happen. The work has a balance about it. This equanimity seeps through just about every page, even when the book exhibits anger and disappointment" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 12). It is a challenging task for the storyteller to restrain himself from creating too much or settle for too little, but Shehadeh finds the appropriate balance by equating his representation of event from a sensory and ethical perspective. Shehadeh strongly believes that: "there will always be someone left to tell the story. The Israeli army can never hope to destroy a whole community and hide the evidence. Someone will be left alive to tell the world what was done" (Shehadeh, 2020, p. 112). This again attests to the power of narrative which for Palestine exceeds the mere telling of stories but represents instead the survival of generations and the perpetuation of their resilience.

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