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Colonialism, Cinema, and Critique: Examining the Rhetoric in Opinion Pieces on *Farha*

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Kandidatuppsats: SOCK07, 15hp

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Handledare: Linn Alenius Wallin

Abstrakt

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This dissertation examines media articles' use of rhetoric to discuss the film *Farha* (2021) specifically the following research questions: 1. What rhetoric is used to express sympathy and praise of the film and 2. What rhetoric is used to express opposition and condemnation of the film. A qualitative analytical approach is used, and the main theoretical pillar of the dissertation is postcolonial theory, particularly Edward Said's contention that Israel is a contemporary manifestation of European colonialism. The purpose is to ascertain whether the authors of the opinion pieces criticize or support the film *Farha* (2021) by employing certain rhetoric. The findings reveal that pro-Israeli authors who criticize the film often focus on external elements rather than its plot and content, and they frequently use accusatory language to convey their points. In order to convey the impact of the film, pro-film writers use more morally conscientious terminology in their discourse, such as empathic language. As a result, the authors turn their attention away from external arguments and toward the film's narrative and its significance as presented by the director of the film.

Keywords:

Rhetoric, Israel, Palestine, newspaper study, Farha film, post-colonialism.

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Preface

I would like to begin this dissertation by sincerely thanking my supervisor, Linn Alenius Wallin, for her constant patience, guidance, and help. I also thank Lennard Armstrong for the support and feedback throughout the process of writing and constructing this dissertation.

I dedicate this dissertation to Sido and Sitto who installed the love for Palestine in me growing up and their ever-lasting wish to return to Palestine, الله يرحمكم.

1. Introduction

An overview of Israeli history in Palestine may be traced back to the late 19th century, when Jewish immigration to what is known as historical Palestine with the intention of creating a national Jewish state. Violence between Jews and Arabs in Palestine increased when the United Nations voted to partition the country in the 1920s and 1930s, when tensions between the two groups first started to rise and thus, by 1948, al-Nakba came to be. Al-Nakba, meaning catastrophe in Arabic, refers to the forced displacement of Palestinians from their homes and land during the 1948 Arab Israeli war (Masalha, 2012, p. 1). The event took place in the wake of the United Nations' 1947 partition plan, which called for the creation of separate Jewish and Arab states in historical Palestine. Following the plan's approval, Zionist forces embarked on a campaign of ethnic cleansing, seizing Palestinian villages and towns and forcibly expelling their inhabitants (UCDP, 2022). The violence and displacement continued even after Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948, with Palestinian refugees fleeing to neighboring Arab countries. To this day, Palestinians commemorate al-Nakba on May 15 as a reminder of the ongoing dispossession and displacement of their people. Al-Nakba remains a contentious issue, with Palestinians demanding the right of return for those who were displaced and their descendants. Israel, however, has consistently rejected this demand, citing security concerns and the need to maintain a Jewish majority in the state (Masalha, 2012, p. 21). Al-Nakba debate in academia and historical contexts slowly crept to mainstream media, including newspapers and broadcast media.

The fact that the conflict has produced starkly opposite national narratives and identities seems to be one important aspect. Many early Palestinian films were used to develop a counter narrative to the Zionist narrative when it came to depicting al-Nakba (Alexander, 1998, p. 321). However, more recent films, like *Farha* (2021) on Netflix,¹ break away from the homogenized treatment of Palestinian identity for political purposes, and one could argue that it provides a new frame of reference for Palestinian shared suffering, memory and cultural identity. The film portrays the experiences of the 14-year-old Palestinian girl protagonist that has given her name to the film. Locked in a pantry, *Farha* is witnessing the crimes happening through a peek-hole, a symbolic representation of the Palestinian struggle in a colonial setting. Sallam Darin, the

¹By the time I am wrapping up this dissertation, *Farha* (2021) can not be accessed on Netflix and one can only speculate why. Netflix have not released a statement onto the film's availability in question other than claims of licensing and copyright issues. The film can be found on YouTube as well as SF Anytime.

writer and director of *Farha* (2021) explains that “[a]ll these stories that I heard from my grandparents, families of friends, patched together to create the character of *Farha*” (Syed, 2022). As such, an attraction of support and praise also attracts criticism and rhetoric, but also mythologizing events such as al-Nakba.

How Palestinians are talked about and portrayed is thus of great interest to me and my family. As well as the victim-blaming that seeks to shift the focus away from the root causes of a cause to Palestinians for their own suffering, arguing that their actions or political choices have led to the current situation. Consequently, also making it of great importance to the research area of sociology to understand how particular social groups are represented in the media, including how they are portrayed, what issues are emphasized, and the rhetoric and narrative employed.

1.1 Background

The idea of this dissertation is to closely examine the rhetoric used in the analysis of *Farha* (2021) from a postcolonial theory perspective. Some approaches to rhetoric concentrate on the external historical contexts that exist outside the film, while others center on Farha's struggle with hope, fear, and identity, which serves as the focal point of the film. Thus, the purpose of analyzing reactions to *Farha* (2021) then is to gain a deeper understanding of how the film is perceived by different audiences and how it contributes to ongoing discussions and debates about Palestinian history, identity, and representation. The stories and struggles of Palestinian people, could, in the end, not all be conveyed by them and thus, the film can serve as a platform for sharing the personal tales and struggles of a diverse group of Palestinian individuals, and offers a unique perspective on the interconnections of struggle in the context of continuing political strife. Maya Alzaben, for example, explains that through the lens of three different women: themselves, their Palestinian grandmother who lived through al-Nakba in 1948, and every Palestinian woman who has experienced diaspora and forced exile, she sees the character of Farha as a representation of these women and their shared experiences and feels a personal connection to her story. Alzaben suggests that the experiences of Farha and other Palestinian women are often overlooked or reduced to oral history and emphasizes the importance of recognizing and preserving their stories (Alzaben, 2022), hence I choose *Farha* (2021) as the focal point for this dissertation.

1.2 Purpose

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the reactions that take on two different focuses, one of which is an external focus on factors and the latter is on inter-personal relationships. The opposing reactions shift between the following: denying al-Nakba, acknowledging al-Nakba but blame Palestinians for it, weaponizing Antisemitism and genocidal rhetoric. The challenge of constructing a historical timeline is evident in Israel's inclination to disregard the present and instead focus on what they consider is the unchanging past. By examining both opposing and praising views, one can explore the complex and often contentious ways in which narratives and rhetoric about the Palestinian experience are constructed and contested in public discourse. This type of analysis can shed light on the ways in which cultural productions like films can shape and reflect social and political realities and can also provide insights into the diverse perspectives and experiences of different communities. Through historical references, the film connects with the audience's memories, knowledge, fears, and desires (Nordgren, 2016, p. 483).

1.3 Research questions

- What rhetoric is used to express sympathy and praise of *Farha* (2021)?
- What rhetoric is used to express opposition and condemnation of *Farha* (2021)?

2. Earlier research

Earlier research about the rhetoric used in relation to postcolonialism raises the importance of attitudes towards an object. In relation to rhetoric and postcolonialism, Raka Shome explains that:

[b]y working from a postcolonial perspective, I suggest that as we engage in rhetorical understandings of texts, or produce rhetorical theories, it is important to place the texts that we critique or the theories that we produce against a larger backdrop of neocolonialism and racism, and interrogate to what extent these discourses and our own perspectives on them reflect the contemporary global politics of (neo)imperialism (Shome, 1996, p. 40).

In *Why Study Media* (1995), Roger Silverstone, among other topics, discusses the value of rhetoric in the media. Silverstone explains that the primary purpose of rhetoric is to persuade and alter attitudes and values, as well as that all media employ rhetoric to persuade readers and viewers. The purpose of this discourse is to persuade and influence the audience. Silverstone

also means that rhetoric needs democracy in order to be effective and withstand critique. The author also emphasizes that there is no assurance of agreement, and that people will always have differing opinions, whether those opinions are related to legislation, politics, or ethics. The rhetorician is aware that failure is possible, and that rhetoric is like an extended hand that begs for conversation (Silverstone, 1995, pp. 30-34). The debaters utilize a particular rhetoric, much like other members of the media in an effort to persuade the reader.

Palestinian films are political cultural expressions because they bring a traditionally silenced population into the public eye. Edward Said famously argued that Palestinians are denied “permission to narrate” (Said, 1984, pp. 27-48). As a result, they conflate aesthetics with politics since their aesthetics convey their political message. Meanwhile, Omar Zahzah uses the term Digital Apartheid to portray the silencing of Palestinian. Zahzah argues that social media has provided a platform for Palestinians to share their stories and perspectives with a wider audience, and that this has been an important tool for challenging the dominant narratives about the conflict (Zahzah, 2021). From a sociological perspective, rhetoric is viewed as a tool for communication and persuasion that reflects and reinforces social norms, values, and power relations. Rhetoric is not neutral, but is influenced by social, cultural, and political factors, and can be used to either challenge or reinforce dominant ideologies and power structures. Sociology as a subject then interests itself in studying the ways in which rhetoric is used to shape public opinion, influence decision-making processes, and maintain or challenge social hierarchies. They also analyze the ways in which individuals and groups use rhetoric to construct their identities, negotiate social relations, and resist or reproduce dominant discourses. In the context of film analysis, sociologists examine the language used by filmmakers, critics, and audiences to describe, interpret, and evaluate films, and how this language reflects and contributes to broader social and cultural discourses.

Farha (2021), for example, is positioned as a significant work of art with the power to transform hearts and minds and call attention to issues of social justice and human rights for instance and so, news media authors highlight have the capacity to elicit an emotional response from readers. Negative reviews may critique the film’s alleged lack of objectivity and tendency to support a specific political goal, portraying the film as a piece of art that cares more about promoting a certain ideology or agenda than it does about addressing complex subjects. It’s critical to consider the rhetorical strategies employed to oppose and criticize *Farha* (2021) as well as to express compassion and admiration for the film.

3. Theoretical perspective

Below is an introduction to postcolonial theory, followed by an explanation for the perspective of Israel in a post-colonial context. Finally, Shimoni's critique of Said's claims of Israel in a post/colonial context.

3.1 Postcolonialism

A sociological viewpoint known as postcolonial theory was created in the late 20th century as a reaction to the effects of colonialism and empire. In the wake of colonialism, it seeks to understand how power, injustice, and cultural difference have been created and perpetuated. Postcolonial theory can be utilized in the context of Palestinian studies to look at the ongoing impacts of colonization and occupation on Palestinian society, culture, and politics. Ania Loomba, in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2005), defines postcolonialism as: "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (Loomba, 2005, p. 8). Colonialism gave rise to the idea that there is a difference between Europeans and non-Europeans. Loomba writes "[t]he definition of civilization and barbarism rests on a constructed notion of an insurmountable gap between "self and Other"" (Loomba, 2005, 45). Loomba continues that a way of talking about colonialism and imperialism that takes into account their lasting effects on the cultures, politics, and social structures of both the colonizer and the colonized. It is a method for comprehending the intricate and frequently contentious relationships that exist between the West and the rest of the world, as well as for investigating the ways that the history of colonialism and its aftereffects have influenced how power is distributed throughout the world but also in a localized place (Loomba, 2005, p. 1). This is not to suggest that events are not taking place or that the war does not genuinely exist, but that the Western concept of the conflict is formed in newsrooms and through interpretations, not by the actual events that are taking place. In Said's writing, the Orientalist's interpretation takes precedence over the thing being interpreted, while it does not entirely replace it. This phenomenon extends beyond Said's idea that Western Orientalists invented the East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is portrayed in Western media as reality for viewers who have no previous experience with or knowledge of the issue. Therefore, how viewers reacted to the scenes in *Farha* (2021) depended on an audience's view of current day Israeli and Palestinian politics.

Postcolonialism can be used to understand the criticism that the *Farha* (2021) has received from Israeli society and critics. Postcolonialism is a theoretical framework that examines the relationship between colonizers and colonized peoples, and the lasting effects of this

relationship on both parties. In the context of Palestine and Israel, postcolonialism can be used to analyse the ongoing occupation of Palestine by Israel, and the ways in which this occupation perpetuates colonial power dynamics. In this sense, the criticism of the film *Farha* (2021) can be seen as an attempt to maintain colonial power dynamics by suppressing Palestinian narratives and perspectives. The film depicts the struggles of Palestinian women living under occupation, and as such, it challenges dominant narratives that erase or distort the experiences of Palestinians. Shome explains that “whereas in the past, imperialism was about controlling the “native” by colonizing her or him territorially, now imperialism is more about subjugating the “native” by colonizing her or him discursively” (Shome, 1996, p. 42). By emphasizing their voices and viewpoints, the film questions the media narrative, which frequently erases or silences individuals’ experiences. As noted by bell hooks, media representation is a critical site of struggle for marginalized groups seeking to challenge dominant narratives and gain visibility (hooks, 1996, 87).

3.2 Israeli context in postcolonial theory

Said argues in *The Question of Palestine* (1992) that the Zionist colonization of Palestine is a new form of European colonialism (Said, 1992, p. 132). Said notes that from the beginning, the struggle between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs has been extremely unequal, asymmetrical. Said also criticizes the Western view that European Jewish immigration to Palestine was a positive development, with Jews being seen as civilizing a previously uncivilized and repulsive Arab population (Said, 1992, p. 52). Said believes that Zionism is just one example of many projects that have been justified based on a perceived superiority over the pre-existing culture. Furthermore, Said notes that the Palestinians themselves were not consulted in this process because they were seen as inferior by their antagonists. He also points out problems with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which declared Palestine a national home for the Jews under British mandate (Said, 1992, p. 64). Furthermore, despite having experienced European anti-Semitism firsthand, Said also writes about how Jews oppress Oriental Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Furthermore, Said also emphasizes that the oppressed people in Israel and the occupied territories do not find solace in the agony endured by the Jews in the past:

To those Palestinian victims that Zionism displaced, it cannot have meant anything by way of sufficient cause that Jews were victims of European anti-Semitism and, given Israel’s continued oppression of Palestinians, few Palestinians are able to see beyond their reality,

namely, that once victims themselves, Occidental Jews in Israel have become oppressors (of Palestinian Arabs and Oriental Jews) (Said, 1992, p. 113).

Gideon Shimoni on the other hand opposes Said. Shimoni takes another angle and looks at an exterior explanation to why applying post-colonial discourse on Israel is harming. It is argued that comparing Zionism and the Jewish-Arab conflict to colonialism is not sufficient for understanding their complex history. Instead, the article suggests that a full recognition of the ethno-nationalist nature of Zionism is necessary for genuine historical comprehension. Although some aspects of Zionist colonization in Palestine may resemble colonialism, it is fundamentally different in that it did not originate from a state or metropolitan center outside of Palestine. This unique characteristic separates it from almost every known case of colonialism, making it an example of colonization without colonialism (Shimoni, 2007, p. 865). Furthermore, Shimoni argues that it is important to examine Said's prior characterization of Zionism as "[z]ionist settler colonialism". Continuing, He (Said) argues that everything Zionists did in Palestine was as settler colonialists. This essentialist view contradicts Said's condemnation of essentialism in "Orientalist" scholars. He (Said) makes statements such as "Zionism never spoke of itself unambiguously as a Jewish liberation movement, but rather as a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient." However, he (Said) shows partisan bias by failing to balance each side's presentation of the "Other" in the conflict. He generalizes on the supposed "Zionist racial presentation of non-Jews in Palestine" but ignores the prejudiced representation of Jews deeply ingrained in Muslim-Arab traditions (Shimoni, 2007, p. 863).

4. Method

This methodology section presents the chosen method and the material used in this study, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. It also acknowledges my pre-understanding of the phenomenon being studied and the potential for biases in the research.

This dissertation employs a qualitative approach with a focus to investigate the rhetoric presented in certain articles related to the film *Farha* (2021). The choice of method is based on the aim to gain insights into the ways in which film constructs and reinforces particular identities and power structures. The use of qualitative content analysis method is chosen due to its flexibility and adaptability to a wide range of research questions and contexts (Krippendorff, 2013, pp. 16-37). One of the main strengths of the qualitative content analysis

method is its ability to generate in-depth exploration of social processes and meanings, as well as insights into the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals and groups (Krippendorff, 2013, pp. 180-208). However, this method also has some limitations, such as the potential for researcher bias and subjectivity in data interpretation.

4.1 Rhetorical analysis

Regarding the rhetorical analysis of the reactions to the film, the Encoding/decoding model of communication is used as a framework for the analysis of the film's messages and their decoding by different audiences. This method has been widely used in studies of media and communication and can provide insights into the ways in which films construct and reinforce particular identities and power structures. Since articles and opinions, for instance, can have several layers of meaning, they can be interpreted in a variety of ways and might signify different things to different individuals, for example, rhetoric. Stuart Hall explains:

The level of connotation of the visual sign, of its contextual reference and positioning in different discursive fields of meaning and association, is the point where already coded signs intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional more active ideological dimensions (Hall, 2007, p. 12).

By analyzing how the film encodes its messages and how these messages are decoded by different audiences, one can gain insights into the ways in which the film constructs and reinforces particular identities and power structures. By quoting Cristiane Nova (2000), Isboli et al. (2017) stress the current usage of resources such as cinema and videos as a medium of expression of historical information and knowledge. According to the author, scholars have been hard at work investigating the potential of employing this sort of information as resources for depicting the process of history building. As a result, we have the utilization of cinematographic materials in the sphere of education. This insight is also used in studies of applied social sciences (Isboli et al., 2017, p. 63). Quoting Gilles Deleuze (1983), Isboli et al. (2017) also state that the visual picture has a reading function in addition to its visible purpose. In this way, everything that goes beyond what is explicit in a film should be considered as part of its analysis, which leads to filmic analysis being thought of as a set of observational studies that provide the researcher with the interpretation of symbols and meanings derived from the characters' images and behavior (Isboli et al., 2017, p. 63).

I understand that as a researcher and as a half Palestinian, my life experiences and cultural upbringing may have an impact on how I view the Palestine problem. This insider's viewpoint may be helpful in comprehending the conflict's cultural quirks and emotional complexities. However, it might also result in biases that influence how research is conducted or how the findings are interpreted. To mitigate these potential biases, I will strive to maintain an open mind and approach the research with objectivity. I will also seek to engage with diverse perspectives and sources, including those that challenge my preconceptions. Furthermore, I find guidance in the methodological approach of Edward Said, who emphasized the importance of self-awareness in scholarship. Said recognized that every scholar brings a perspective shaped by their personal history and social position. Therefore, I commit to engaging in critical self-reflection throughout my research, acknowledging my own biases and striving to maintain an objective and rigorous approach.

4.2 Ethics

It is crucial for a researcher to be aware of any potential ethical issues that can come up when doing this study. Examining the rhetoric used to favor or criticize a film that deals with the al-Nakba, a highly charged and divisive subject, in newspaper articles calls for tact and knowledge of the ethical ramifications. The ensuing moral considerations are addressed in particular: language, it's important to recognize that examining and criticizing the language used in these articles could have an impact on the people and communities that they represent.

This dissertation will work to approach the data with an awareness of preexisting prejudices and critically reflect on their own history, attitudes, and beliefs to ensure that they do not unduly influence the analysis. This is done to ensure objectivity and impartiality in the analysis. Additionally, to ensure that both sides are given equal weight, the text will analyze both positive and negative rhetoric. The difficulty of excluding the researcher's own values is brought up by Bryman. Personal values may be revealed unintentionally, as when selecting a research topic, data collection methods, etc. (Bryman, 2011, p. 39), this should be kept in mind during all data and material processing. Bryman also emphasizes that it cannot be totally avoided. It is feasible to counteract outside impact, nevertheless, according to Bryman, a researcher needs to show reflexivity (Bryman, 2011, p. 43).

The study's articles are also publicly accessible, therefore maintaining confidentiality is not necessary. The dissertation will, however, make sure that the authors are treated with respect. Overall, the study will make sure that the moral standards mentioned above are respected, with the goal of undertaking a careful and respectful analysis of the rhetoric used in the news pieces about *Farha* (2021).

4.3 Material

The articles were chosen because they convey different opinions. Editorial comments regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict are not as widely available as debate posts, which is why the latter is chosen for this dissertation. The mediums for the articles are The Jerusalem Post, a newspaper based in Jerusalem as well as Tribune PK, a political magazine, The New Arab, a pan-Arab news website. Moreover, SVT news, public service broadcaster in Sweden, Times of Israel, an Israeli online newspaper, CNN, a news website and The Intercept, an American non-profit news organization. The Forward, an American news media information for a Jewish audience, Jewish Unpacked, a website that aims at media for young people. Lastly, this dissertation will make use of Dan Margolis' blog and website under the same name that describes itself as "News, Comment, and Other Musings" (Margolis, 2022). The use of the previously mentioned mediums provides a diverse range of perspectives from various reputable sources, including newspapers, news websites, magazines, and blogs. The inclusion of sources such as The Guardian, The New York Times, and BBC provide a global perspective. At the same time, sources like The Jerusalem Post, The Times of Israel add more of a local perspective. But it is also articles that are written by academics as well non-academics such as journalists and other members of the public.

5. Analysis and discussion

5.1 Opposition and condemnation of *Farha* (2021)

On December 2nd, 2022, the article entry "In Israel, a Scandal over Netflix's choice to stream a film depicting the 1948 murder of a Palestinian family" was published by Nora Berman in The Forward where she focuses on the dehumanization of Israeli soldiers in the film. Berman, quoting Nataly Dadon, explains that "The Jewish people" never carried out "purges", "murdered innocent people" for no reason and out of sheer "cruelty" (Berman, 2022). Berman continues:

While there are a few documented cases of Israeli soldiers murder Palestinians by firing squads during 1948 war, I felt nauseous watching a female soldier pull off the Palestinian mother's earrings before lining her up to be shot along with her family. The scene is extremely difficult to watch, and certainly intentional /.../ *Farha* makes no efforts to humanize the soldiers, and these characters' cruelty made me uncomfortable. The 15 minutes devoted to this scene suggests the director was purposefully trying to depict the soldiers who helped create the Jewish state as violent brutes (Berman, 2022).

The problematic narrative of requiring a moral portrayal of a group of people acts like a double-edged sword. It acknowledges a crime by a group of people but also desires a positive depiction of that group of people at the same time. The article's discussion of the director's intention to establish a connection with the audience's memories, knowledge, fears, and desires using historical references reflects postcolonial theory's emphasis on the importance of historical context in understanding power dynamics (hooks, 1996, 87). The rhetoric is primarily focused on the use of imagery to convey a strong emotional response to the depiction of violence committed by Israeli soldiers during the 1948 war (Nashef, 2021, p. 568).

To conclude, Berman wraps up the article by stating that “despite the clunky filmmaking and problematic portrayal of Israelis, I still believe that stories about the Palestinian perspective of Israeli statehood deserves to be made. Hopefully subsequent filmmakers will be more skillfull and less propagandistic than Sallam” (Berman, 2022). One can conclude in a postcolonial sense that Israel's condemnation of *Farha* (2021) that show a one-sided context is problematic because it perpetuates the idea of the colonizer as inherently good and justifies their actions towards the colonized.

On December 3rd, 2022, the article entry “Farha – A Palestinian Film About The Nakba” was published by Sheldon Krisher in Times of Israel where they critique the film by using a historical context rather than the synopsis of the film. Krisher presents a short background of the plot and also mentioning the resolution by the UN to conclude 15th of May as al-Nakba day as well as acknowledging that it is still a key issue to the conflict. Later on, Krisher reacted strongly on the notion that Sallam, the director, is one sided, “Sallam, of course, views the Nakba from a purely a Palestinian perspective, which is to be expected” (Krisher, 2022).
Continuing:

The few Israelis that appear in this clearly pro-Palestinian film are mostly monosyllabic, remain nameless, and are portrayed mostly unsympathetically. Sallam leaves a viewer with the distinct impression that the Nakba was caused solely by Israel's cold-hearted decision to drive out the Palestinians, but the truth is far more complex than that (Krishner, 2022).

It is possible to examine how Israelis are portrayed in the article from a postcolonial perspective, which draws attention to narrative power dynamics. The colonized are frequently muted or sidelined in dominant discourses (Said, 1984, pp. 27-48) which may be mirrored in the film's characterization of Israelis as primarily uncaring and monosyllabic. This might be interpreted as a reflection of the power relations at work, as Palestinian voices and experiences are frequently lost or repressed in mainstream discourse and media. Additionally, Krishner's criticism of the film can be interpreted as a reflection of the mainstream narrative, which presents al-Nakba as the exclusive result of outside events. This, however, disregards the role played by Palestinian women in al-Nakba and their effort to stave off expulsion and eviction. Krishner promotes the mainstream narrative that obfuscates Palestinian agency and reinforces their marginalization in the discourse surrounding the conflict by portraying Palestinians in a traditional, static manner without contextualizing the dangers and difficulties they encountered during al-Nakba.

To conclude, Krishner adds that “[i]n terms of production values, Farha is reasonably competent and in tone it is bereft of false dreams of histrionics. But in the final analysis, it is a one-sided film that depicts Palestinian suffering and perpetuates a cherished myth (Krishner, 2022).

Mythologizing al-Nakba is not all too new (Assi, 2022; Steinberg, 2011; Masalha, 2021, p. 5), in fact this is what Sallam aims to highlight through the eyes of Farha. Postcolonial theory emphasizes the ways in which power is maintained and expressed through culture, language, and history. In the case of Palestine, the Zionist movement sought to establish a Jewish state in a land that was already inhabited by Palestinians. Al-Nakba denialism then follows a particular logic that suggests the Arab population of Palestine should have welcomed the Zionist settlers who came in peace, bringing with them economic and technological progress. The idea is that without any logical reason to resist these positive changes, any hostility towards the settlers could only have resulted from Arab leaders manipulating their people into "hating Jews" (Nassar, 2022, p. 3). This narrative suggests that the settlers had no choice but to fight the Arabs to establish their homeland in the face of such opposition. According to this account, the Arabs

realized they could not defeat the Zionist movement and therefore migrated to neighbouring Arab countries in 1948. Al-Nakba denialism narrative effectively erases the settler colonial violence that was used to establish a Jewish state on land that was home to Palestinian Arabs (Nassar, 2022, p. 3).

Al-Nakba then highlights the ongoing effects of colonization on the colonized population. Even after the creation of the state of Israel, Palestinians continued to experience discrimination, marginalization, and violence (Manna', 2013, p. 92). This ongoing oppression can be seen as a result of the power dynamics established during the colonial period, in which the colonizer sought to maintain control over the colonized population. From a postcolonial perspective, al-Nakba can also be seen as a challenge to dominant narratives and historical accounts and from rhetorical point of view, Krishner's aim to convince is to belittle and deny (Masalha, 2012, p. 175). The Israeli narrative of the creation of the state often portrays the Palestinians as a people who willingly left their homes and land, rather than as victims of forced displacement and expulsion (Masalha, 2012, p. 41).

On December 4th, 2022, Dan Margolis who served as an accredited UN correspondent, covered politics, international and national news, and wrote opinion pieces and film reviews published the article entry "Netflix's *Farha*: irredeemable anti-Semitic propaganda" on his blog, phrasing it as an incredible piece. Margolis explains that:

While supposedly based on true events, there is very little actual historical detail presented /.../ The film's fudging of the historical record is the least of its flaws, however. Much more important is the blood libel /.../*Farha* is one-sided and engages in blatant antisemitism: but is its core story true? Probably not. According to the film's opening, it was "inspired by true events." But "inspired" is a weasel word; which part was true, and which was simply inspired? And of the events that the filmmaker actually believed to be true, was it really? Perhaps there was a girl who hid in a food cellar. There is no documentation of anything that happened, and new scholarship tells us that many well-known "truths" of Israeli brutality were nothing more substantial than rumors that swirled during wartime, later amplified by various interests (Margolis, 2022).

In a sense, the blog post's assertion that the film's portrayal of Israeli brutality is based on rumors and lacks historical detail erases the experiences and perspectives of Palestinians and reinforces dominant narratives about the conflict. It fails to acknowledge the role that Israeli

policies and actions have played in perpetuating the conflict and in the oppression of Palestinians during al-Nakba. It proposes the idea that Israel is right, and majority are wrong. Said shows that this opposition is crucial to European self-conception: if colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilisation itself, with its sexual appetites under control and its dominant ethic that of hard work; if the Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead; the Orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine (Loomba, 2005, p. 45). In a way, Margolis' rhetoric employs just that. Margolis dismisses an attempt to voice a struggle by deeming it inaccurate and because there was not any documentation, and thus it did not happen, dismissing narratives passed around throughout generations and what *Farha* (2021) is based on, a woman's own story. Said's theory of Orientalism, which presents the East (in this case, the Palestinians) as irrational, primitive, and violent, and the West (in this case, Israel), as logical, civilized, and peaceful, is consistent with how the conflict is portrayed. Israeli aggression and brutality against Palestinians are justified in this picture by the idea that it is necessary to defend Israel and its citizens. Margolis' claim can therefore be viewed as an illustration of how Orientalism works by supporting a specific image of the East that justifies Western supremacy and imperialism.

Said contends that by depicting non-Western cultures and peoples as inferior and in need of Western supervision and intervention, such depictions of the East serve to justify Western supremacy and imperialism. The same is true of Margolis' reasoning, which supports a certain interpretation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that justifies Israeli violence and aggressiveness toward Palestinians by depicting them as violent and inferior.

Margolis continues that:

The closest we come to a crime against humanity is the producers and Netflix causing anyone to endure this film. Stripped of its anti-Israel and antisemitic sentiment /.../ The libel against Jews and Israel is clearly the only reason anyone has taken notice of this film /.../ a wretched propaganda film with no redeeming values (Margolis, 2022).

Here one sees the use of hyperbolic rhetoric in Margolis's statement about the Netflix series is manipulative and ad hominem, dismissing the film's content as "anti-Israel and antisemitic" instead of engaging with the plot. This type of rhetorical excess can be effective in mobilizing people but is intellectually dishonest if not grounded in evidence or analysis. Finally,

Margolis's statement that the film has "no redeeming values" is a form of categorical argumentation that assumes a priori that the film is inherently flawed and unworthy of serious consideration. By dismissing the film outright, Margolis is attempting to foreclose any meaningful discussion or debate about its content or themes. This type of rhetorical tactic can be effective in shutting down opposing viewpoints, but it can also be seen as a form of intellectual dishonesty that avoids engaging with opposing arguments or evidence.

On December 6th, 2022, the article entry "Farha and the image of Israelis worldwide" was published by Oded Revivi in The Jerusalem Post who maintains an external discussion in relation to *Farha* (2021) and considering a sports event where, as Revivi claims, Israelis were not treated fairly. Revivi states that:

Israel does not have the luxury of sitting idly by as a propaganda war is waged against her in pop culture. In fact, you just have to look at the way Israelis who travelled to Qatar for the World Cup have been treated by their hosts to appreciate the consequences of unmitigated indoctrination /.../ As Qatar does not allow Israelis to visit their country /.../ these are most likely the first Israelis that these Qataris have ever met in person. But Qataris feel very empowered and entitled to judge every Israeli as evil, based on the steady stream of propaganda that they have been fed (Revivi, 2022).

Revivi's rhetoric can be described as defensive and accusatory. He portrays Israel as the victim and suggests that there is a deliberate propaganda war being waged against it, which is causing unfair treatment of Israelis in international events such as the World Cup. The use of phrases such as "unmitigated indoctrination" and "steady stream of propaganda" to imply that there is a deliberate attempt to demonize Israel and its people. This rhetoric reinforces a sense of victimhood and encourages the reader to view Israel and its people in a sympathetic light. Revivi then moves to the water and electricity Israel provides Gaza, the world's largest open-air prison as well as the companionship he considers between Palestinians and Israelis:

They know nothing about the electricity and running water that Israel supplies to the Palestinian Authority and the Gaza Strip /.../ When they arrive in Efrat, they discover that on the roads of Gush Etzion, Palestinians and Jews travel alongside each other on the same roads and work at factories and businesses side by side shop with each other in the same stores and lead common lifestyles. I do not embellish the reality here, and I do not try to convince them that we are right and that they must support the settlements. But those who

come with an open mind, viewing that reality has an impact. Many will stop their demonization of the settlers (Revivi. 2022).

Revivi argument is external and remote from the plot and the purpose of *Farha* (2021). He is describing the positive interactions between Israelis and Palestinians in the Gush Etzion area, where Palestinians and Jews work, shop and live alongside each other. He also mentions the electricity and running water that Israel supplies to the Palestinian Authority and Gaza, implying that Israel is providing for the basic needs of Palestinians. The article also seems to be suggested that there is more peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians than is commonly portrayed in the media, and that those who approach the situation with an open mind can see this reality for themselves. Revivi is attempting to counter negative perceptions of Israel and Israelis in the media by emphasizing the positive aspects of daily life in Gush Etzion, where coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians is relatively peaceful. The use of phrases such as "they know nothing about" and "many will stop their demonization of the settlers" indicate that he is trying to persuade readers to adopt his perspective and view the situation in a more positive light. However, it is also important to acknowledge that there are many areas in Israel and the Palestinian territories where violence, conflict, and deep-seated mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians remain ongoing issues. Revivi suggests that those who approach the situation with an open mind can see the reality of peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. However, Revivi's rhetoric is also limited in that it focuses primarily on the positive aspects of coexistence and ignores the ongoing issues of violence, conflict, and deep-seated mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians in other areas.

Finally, the article also touches on issues of censorship and free speech, which are important concerns in postcolonial theory. The article calls for censorship and suppression of speech, suggesting that Netflix should not provide a platform for a series that presents an unfavourable portrayal of Israel (Revivi, 2022). Revivi then concludes his article with explaining that:

If we stay silent in the face of *Farha*, if we do not work to prevent it from airing, will give the instigators and the haters yet another platform to slander Israel even further. We will allow them to add another chapter to their campaign of hostility that will meet us on the Arab streets, both near and far. Members of the outgoing and incoming government, those in the opposition and the coalition, and lovers of Israel all over the world must rally together and demand that Netflix not provide a platform for this series, which may pose an immediate danger to Israel and Israelis (Revivi. 2022).

Once again, Revivi sets aside the purpose of the film and focuses on external narratives about Israel. Palestinians have long struggled against a world that has denied them “the permission to narrate” their struggles through stories and questioned about their recounts and are not trusted to “be heard from directly” (Said, 1984, pp. 27-48;1992, p. 29). In his statement, Revivi argues that *Farha* (2021) poses a danger to Israel and Israelis and must be removed. Also claiming that allowing the series to air would give "instigators and haters" a platform to slander Israel and add to their "campaign of hostility" that could incite violence against Israelis. While Revivi's concern about the potential for the series to incite violence cannot be dismissed outright, it is important to examine both sides of the issue in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the situation. On the one hand, there is evidence to suggest that media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can indeed have a powerful impact on public opinion and attitudes towards the conflict. For example, media coverage of the Second Intifada in 2000 was found to be a contributing factor to the increase in violence that occurred during that period (Wolfsfeld et al., 2008, p. 412). On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that Palestinian voices have historically been marginalized in the media, and that the opportunity to tell their own stories is a crucial aspect of the struggle for recognition and self-determination. As Said has argued, Palestinians have long been denied the "permission to narrate" their struggles and to be heard from directly (Said, 1984, pp. 27-48). In light of this, it is important to consider the potential benefits of allowing the film to air, as a means of amplifying Palestinian voices and bringing attention to their experiences. Some might argue that suppressing artistic expression goes against the principles of free speech and could be seen as an attack on the freedom of the press. In this sense, there is a tension between the need to prevent violence and the need to protect free expression.

Revivi's rhetoric also reinforces a binary narrative of us versus them, with Israel as the righteous defender and Palestinians as the aggressors or terrorists. This oversimplification ignores the complexities of the conflict and the ways in which both sides have suffered. Furthermore, his rhetoric implies that the negative portrayal of Israel in pop culture is entirely the result of propaganda, rather than a response to actual actions and policies taken by the Israeli government. It should be emphasized that the pronoun "we" and other inclusive pronouns serve rhetorical purposes by transferring responsibility from the speaker to the audience and by softening the statement's tone in order to prevent upsetting the addressee and provoking political agitation. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Revivi's call to action is not without its own risks. By demanding that Netflix not provide a platform for the series, he

is effectively shutting down a form of cultural exchange between Israel and the rest of the world. This could have negative consequences for Israel's image and reputation, as it could be seen as an attempt to censor opposing viewpoints. In these instances, Revivi expresses their thoughts of optimism in an effort to inspire the readers to act in their favour and sway the reader's political decisions and viewpoints.

On December 24th, 2022, the debate entry “Farha and the Nakba: What really happened?” was published by Sara Himeles and John Kunza on Jewish Unpacked where they critique the film by using a historical context rather than the synopsis of the film. Himeles and Kunza shed a light on Yoseph Haddad’s opinion, a vocal critique on social media, about the film “[t]his is a blood libel that will certainly increase antisemitism and incitement against Israel /.../ If you haven’t canceled your Netflix subscription yet, do it now!” (Himeles & Kunza, 2022)

Continuing, Himeles and Kunza quote Jewish Chronicle where they bring up Sallam’s past comments about Israel, as well as past comments by Ayah Jardaneh, the producer of the film. In rhetorical fashion, the choice of words such as blood libel as well as antisemitism is utilized to convince through emotional appeal. Lara Freidman, in turn weighs on the anti-semitism allegations in Human Rights Group, stating that:

Traditionally, “anti-Semitism” means hostility and prejudice toward Jews because they are Jews—a scourge that has imperiled Jews throughout history, and is a source of resurgent threats to Jews today. The IHRA definition, in contrast, is explicitly politicized, refocusing the term to encompass not only hatred of Jews, but also hostility toward and criticism of the modern state of Israel. For example, it labels as anti-Semitic “applying double standards” to Israel or requiring of Israel “behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.” While it notes that “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic,” in practice this “double standard” language has paved the way for attacking virtually all criticism of Israel as *prima facie* anti-Semitic, based on the simplistic argument that focusing criticism on Israel, when other nations are guilty of similarly bad behavior, can only reflect animus against Jews.

According to Masalha Nur, the Zionist agenda has attempted to rob the Palestinian people of not just their land but also of their voice and their own history (Masalha, 2012, p. 89). This unsettling reality is reflected in the vocabulary of the film. The conclusion of Himeles and

Kunza's article highlights a number of key points, including the lack of important context in the film—such as the historical backdrop of the Arab Israeli conflict—and the necessity of striking a balance between one's commitment to the Zionist narrative and empathy for the Palestinian perspective. All external points that the film does not focus on.

5.2 Sympathy and praise of *Farha* (2021)

On October 21st, 2022, Fredrik Sahlin published a film review on SVT news where Sahlin makes remarks that compares Farha's situation to something out of a WW2 book. Sahlin means that the Jordanian director Sallam's feature-length debut *Fahra* (2021) is world politics in a nutshell, or rather in a cramped pantry. There, the title girl is locked up because her father wanted to protect her from the Israeli army that is attacking the small village in Palestine. The year is 1948 and the West has just divided Farha's homeland into a Jewish and an Arab part - a move that has had known, bloody consequences ever since, to say the least.

The use of metaphorical language to draw a parallel between the film and global politics constitutes the rhetoric in this claim. Sahlin uses a metaphor to explain how the film captures the bloody and violent history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The small pantry serves as a metaphor for the characters in the film's lack of money and living space as well as the greater political and historical environment that affects their lives. The use of "[i]n a nutshell" implies that the film is a distilled version of the struggle, but it still manages to convey its core. Additionally, the statement includes a historical context that sets the stage for the events in the film, highlighting the ongoing consequences of the 1948 partition of Palestine. From a postcolonial view, the rhetoric in the quote can be seen as a critique of the lasting impacts of colonialism on the Middle East, particularly the division of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab part by Western powers in 1948. The use of the phrase "world politics in a nutshell" again highlights the complexity and global significance of the issue, while the reference to the cramped pantry can be seen as a metaphor for the limited space and resources available to those impacted by colonialism and its aftermath. The mention of the Israeli army attacking the small village further emphasizes the violence and displacement caused by colonialism, and the father's decision to lock up his Farha to protect her can be seen as a tragic consequence of the

ongoing conflict. The reference to the "known, bloody consequences" of the division of Palestine also highlights the ongoing struggle and violence that have characterized the region since colonialism. Overall, the rhetoric in the quote can be seen as a call to recognize the ongoing impact of colonialism and to work towards a more just and equitable future.

Sahlin continues his comparison:

However, an Israeli patrol soon does with a devilish officer who has an entire family executed and tells one of the soldiers to stomp a baby to death. Fahra becomes an Arab Anne Frank, in a food cellar instead of an attic, and where the threat comes from Jewish soldiers instead of Nazis. Only in a way, this is political explosives (My translation) (Sahlin, 2022, [Filmrecension: Farha [Film review: Farha] directed by Darin J Sallam]).

The rhetoric in this passage employs postcolonialism by drawing a parallel between Fahra's situation and that of Anne Frank, emphasizing the shared experience of being confined and threatened by an oppressive force. The comparison between Fahra's situation and that of Anne Frank, a well-known symbol of Jewish resistance also highlights the power dynamics at play in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The reference to an "an Israeli patrol with a demonic officer who orders the execution of an entire family and tells one of the soldiers to crush a baby to death" (My translation) also serves to highlight the brutality and dehumanization of the Israeli military towards the Palestinian people. The rhetoric in this passage seeks to draw attention to the political and ethical implications of Fahra's story. Furthermore, the passage employs a postcolonial perspective in its analysis of the film's themes. It highlights the historical context of the conflict, specifically the division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab parts by Western powers in 1948, which had "known, bloody consequences ever since." By situating the conflict within this historical context, the author is able to critique the larger systems of power and colonialism that contribute to the ongoing violence. Yet again, we see an emphasize on the significance of historical context in comprehending power relations, which is reflected in the article's discussion of the Sallam's purpose to connect with the audience's memories, knowledge, anxieties, and wants through historical references such as Anne Frank (hooks, 1996, 87).

Sahlin concludes with a strong remark, mainly that *Farha* is also a coming-of-age tale in which the transformation from child to adult takes place over a brief period of time. That Farha is compelled to see violent attacks and murders from the first level through the gaps in the door and the wall, leaving her with a few traumatic memories (Sahlin, 2022) confirming that through historical references, the film connects with the audience's memories, knowledge, fears and desires (Nordgren, 2016, p. 483).

On December 1st, 2022, Rida Lodhi publishes "Farha' review: A harrowing tale that puts both your heart and mind to test" in Tribune where language is used to take the plot and the film as a whole without external distractions. Lodhi explains that "[i]nstead of portraying the massive scale of al-Nakba, she focuses on the tale of a teenager. The same depiction tells the much-needed story of how several lives were uprooted during the catastrophe" (Lodhi, 2022). But also, that:

Farha's greatest achievement is that it succeeds in telling the story of an entire nation with a singular tale; a loss too big, a grief too overpowering. Once the turmoil dies down and Farha finally frees herself from the pantry - she's no longer the naive teenager; she's a changed individual. Farha, who once felt guarded and protected under the comfort of her own roof, is now on her own to face the world. While the film ends up becoming a great source of catharsis for some and a reality check for others, we must not forget that these are not easy stories to tell (Lodhi, 2022).

Lodhi's review of *Farha* is a masterclass in using praise and sympathy rhetoric to convey the impact of the film. From the outset, Lodhi employs language that is highly emotive and evocative, using words like "harrowing" and "heart-wrenching" to immediately draw the reader in and create a sense of empathy. By doing so, Lodhi is able to establish a connection with the reader, making them more receptive to the message she wants to convey. Furthermore, Lodhi's use of language is highly complementary, praising the film's ability to tell a story that is both powerful and poignant. Lodhi notes that the film's focus on the tale of a teenager is a much-needed perspective on al-Nakba, and that it succeeds in telling the story of an entire nation through a singular tale. The use of language to evoke sympathy for the characters in the film, particularly the protagonist Farha. Lodhi notes that the film depicts the upheaval and displacement of an entire people, and that Farha's transformation from a naive teenager to a changed individual is a powerful representation of the emotional toll of these experiences.

On December 3rd, 2022, Murtaza Hussain published “Netflix’s “Farha” And The Palestinian Right To Process Pain Through Art” in *The Intercept* where he attempts to shed light on one of two sides in the story. Hussain means that “people who suffered through the Nakba and their children have a right to memorialize their experience through art should not be denied, even if, as is likely, the stories they tell make some people uncomfortable in the present day” (Hussain, 2022). The use of the word "right" is a strong rhetorical choice that appeals to the audience's sense of justice and fairness. By saying that those who suffered through the Nakba have a "right" to memorialize their experience through art, Hussain is framing the issue as one of basic human rights, rather than simply a matter of artistic expression. Silverstone also touches on this, explaining that “[b]ut what should we remember and who has the rights of narration and inscription?” (Silverstone, 1999, p. 110), posing a fundamental question about the construction of memory and the power dynamics that exist in the act of remembering. Memory is not simply a passive recollection of the past but is an active process of interpretation and meaning-making that is influenced by social, cultural, and political factors. The act of remembering is also inherently selective, as certain events, experiences, and perspectives are privileged over others (Silverstone, 1999, p. 110). It highlights the fact that the act of remembering is not neutral but is shaped by power dynamics that determine whose stories are heard and whose are silenced. In the case of al-Nakba and the film *Farha* (2021) there are multiple narratives and perspectives, and the question of who has the right to tell these stories and how they are told is a matter of significant debate and contention.

Silverstone's question of "what should we remember and who has the rights of narration and inscription" is particularly relevant in the context of postcolonialism. In postcolonial theory, there is an emphasis on the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the historical, social, and cultural legacy of colonialism and its impact on both the colonized and the colonizers. Silverstone's question speaks to this idea of power and representation, and it is particularly relevant in the context of al-Nakba and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian rhetoric. The struggle over memory and representation is central to the conflict, with both sides seeking to shape the narrative in their favor.

Additionally, the phrase "should not be denied" is also a strong rhetorical choice, as it implies that there are forces or individuals who are actively seeking to deny this right to those who suffered through al-Nakba (Arria, 2022). This language is meant to evoke a

sense of injustice and oppression, which further strengthens Hussain's argument and appeals to the emotions of the reader. Furthermore, "even if, as is likely, the stories they tell make some people uncomfortable" is also an interesting rhetorical choice. By acknowledging that the stories told in the art may make some people uncomfortable, Hussain is preemptively addressing a potential counterargument to his position, as shown in the condemnation of the film. Essentially stating that even if the art makes some people uncomfortable, that discomfort should not be used as a reason to deny the right of those who suffered through al-Nakba to express themselves through art.

On December 22nd, 2022, Alaa Elassar published "Palestinians relive the raw and painful history of al-Nakba in Netflix's new film 'Farha'" on CNN discussing the themes and messages of the film by including Giried, an 82-year-old Palestinian refugee that survived al-Nakba. Elassar, quoting Giries, says "[a]ll I could say was, 'That's me. Farha is me. That's me in that room' she said, her voice cracking as tears threatened to return" (Elassar, 2022). The tagline "Farha is me" underscores how relevant the film's message is to Palestinians. Elassar emphasizes the film's capacity to connect with the real-life hardships and experiences of Palestinian refugees by selecting this specific phrase to share. This quotation furthers the notion of a common Palestinian identity and a sense of shared suffering, both of which are important concepts in postcolonial discourse (Loomba, 2005, p. 40, Masalha, 2012, p. 13).

Elassar writes:

Many Israelis deny the events of al-Nakba because it cuts to the heart of Israel's founding, said Julia Bacha, creative director for Just Vision, a nonprofit media group comprised of Israelis, Palestinians and others who envision a "pluralistic, just and rights-respecting future in the region." /.../ "Bringing the nation's dark past into the public discourse could weaken the pristine image that patriots hope to project," Bacha said. "[p]erhaps worse, it could delegitimize the very foundations on which the nation stands (Elassar, 2022).

Elassar goes on to describe the impact that the film can have on its audience, using the voice of an 82-year-old Palestinian refugee, "[n]ot a day goes by that Giries doesn't wonder what life would have been like if her family was not forced to leave their home in Ein Karem, now part of Jerusalem," writes Elassar, quoting Giries. Continuing:

When I went back 37 years later, I realized I remembered every single house and building that used to be there,” Giries said. “That’s how many times I traveled to Palestine in my mind, every single day, wanting to go back home /.../ She still has the bag her mother grabbed for her as they ran for their lives while the village burned, she said. It’s framed and hanging on a wall in her California home, alongside the key to her family’s Palestinian home, which was reduced to rubble (Elassar, 2022).

The strong narrativization and empathetic language used by Elassar in her portrayal of Giries' story is an important rhetorical choice that serves to create a connection between the reader and the experiences of Palestinians. By emphasizing the personal belongings that Giries still cherishes, such as the bag her mother grabbed for her as they fled and the key to their home that was reduced to rubble, Elassar creates a vivid and emotional image of the trauma and loss experienced by Palestinians during al-Nakba. This choice of language and emphasis serves to further highlight the relevance and importance of the film's message, and to deepen the reader's understanding and empathy for the Palestinian perspective on this historical event through *Farha* (2021).

Through the inclusion of Giries' voice, Elassar highlights the emotional impact that the film can have on its audience, reminding readers that the themes explored in *Farha* (2021) are rooted in the real experiences of millions of people and indeed not a denial (Nassar, 2022, p. 3, Masalha, 2012, p. 245). Furthermore, the article underscores the need for alternative narratives that challenge dominant discourses and representations of history. By discussing the potential impact of *Farha* (2021), Elassar confronts the erasure of Palestinian history and the denial of al-Nakba by some Israelis (Assi, 2022; Steinberg, 2011; Maslaha, 2012, p. 5). The use of voices adds a humanizing element to the article and helps readers to connect with the lived experiences of Palestinian refugees. The emotional weight of the testimonies, as they describe their longing to return home and presents a powerful postcolonial rhetoric that centers the voices and experiences of Palestinian refugees and highlights the importance of alternative narratives (Loomba, 2005, p. 40) and survivor testimonies in challenging dominant discourses and representations of history.

Concluding the article, Giries reiterates that:

Everyone needs to see ‘Farha,’ because it is not a fictional story of this girl, it is my story, it is the Palestinian story,” she added. “We don’t care who tells us it isn’t true.

We lived it and our stories need to be heard because the injustice against Palestinians did not end with al-Nakba and it is far from over (Elassar, 2022).

Giries implies that there are people who may deny the truth of their experiences, but the speaker insists that their stories need to be heard and recognized. The language is passionate and emotive, conveying a sense of frustration and determination to share the Palestinian perspective with the world. Elassar's article that refer to survivor testimonies fit well with what Silverstone writes about news reporting, which are supposed to present a "truth". The witness presents what they experienced, i.e., their truth - "Believe me, I'm of the world" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 32). The phrase "it is not a fictional story of this girl" emphasizes the authenticity of the story and its real-life implications, which counters the argument that the film is simply propaganda. The call for others to watch the film underscores the need for wider recognition and acknowledgement of Palestinian history and struggle. This aligns with postcolonial theory's emphasis on challenging dominant narratives and amplifying Palestinian voices (Masalha, 2012, p. 177). In contrast, prior reviews that demanded the film be taken off Netflix seem to be motivated by a desire to uphold established narratives and stifle critical discourse. By juxtaposing these two viewpoints, one can see how the postcolonial discourse regarding *Farha* (2021) is indeed multifaceted.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation is to look at the discussions surrounding the film *Farha* (2021) in various newspaper articles and blog. The starting point has been to examine, based on the post-colonial theory, how condemnation against the film contra praise and sympathy are portrayed in a power relationship with each other. The investigation has also looked at how the use of violence between the parties is justified or condemned. This is based on the following research questions:

- What rhetoric is used to express sympathy and praise of *Farha* (2021)?
- What rhetoric is used to express opposition and condemnation of *Farha* (2021)?

The authors' articles have been analyzed through a qualitative text analysis by looking at what and how they express their opinions about the film. The purpose of this dissertation is not to see whether the newspaper published a certain amount of pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian debate posts, but only to examine the rhetoric surrounding the film. The

analysis shows that in the newspaper and blog entries, a clear stance for sympathy and praise contra opposition and condemnation surrounding the film *Farha* (2021).

The more Israel-friendly opposition to the film like to highlight outside factors when discussing the film rather than the content of it and the story behind it. For example, opposition argue that the film can increase antisemitism, and say that the film can cause divisions between Israelis and Palestinians who they suggest do get along. Furthermore, authors reinforce a binary narrative of us versus them, and when discussing the content of the film, it is labelled as historically incorrect, denying al-Nakba's occurrence as well as stamping the film as a propaganda scheme. Authors also make use of accusatory tone and rhetoric to get their point and idea across about the supposed false-history narrative in the film. Authors of articles who praise and sympathize with the film individually with rhetoric that calls attention to the representation of the Palestinian people, that it is a much-needed story that narrate the pain of those who experience al-Nakba. To do so for example, an author uses the voice of a survivor of al-Nakba, others discuss why Israelis would find the film controversial as a supporting claim to the opposition's stance for propaganda claims. The pro-film writers use more value-laden words in their rhetoric such as empathetic language to depict the impact of the film. And thus, the authors shift the focus to the content of the film and its meaning as portrayed by Sallam rather than outside arguments.

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the sociological dynamics surrounding discussions of *Farha* (2021). It demonstrates how power relations influence the portrayal of condemnation, praise, sympathy, and opposition in relation to the film. The findings suggest that the rhetoric used in these discussions reflects different perspectives and ideological positions. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of analyzing media discourse to gain insights into societal attitudes and perceptions regarding sensitive topics such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Undertaking this research has provided valuable insights and raised new questions for further exploration. While the qualitative text analysis method allowed for a comprehensive examination of the rhetoric used, alternative research methods could be considered to capture additional dimensions of the discourse. Future studies could delve deeper into the societal implications of media representations, exploring how these discussions shape public opinion, influence attitudes, and contribute to social change.

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