A Quest to Catch a Goddess: The Rahbani Brothers and Syrian Narratives of Nationhood

Bou Saad, Hazim

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Figure 1-Fairouz on stage in Petra, Beirut, 1977. © Kataeb News. Source: "Rare photographs of Fairouz from the musical Petra," Kataeb News, n.d., https://www.kataeb.org/sl/AR/326751

Supervisor: Dr. Petra de Bruijn

Student: Hazim Bou Saad s3182452

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Dedication

For my late grandmothers, Ghali, Nadwa, and Alia; my strong sister, Ruaa; my mothers, Rasmiya and Ghada; and the most beautiful song, homeland, and beloved friend—my wife, Hiba.

Abstract:

This thesis explores how the celebrated musical-theatrical works of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers—widely known for blending folkloric motifs with modern orchestration—were received, reinterpreted, and strategically co-opted in Baathist Syria (1963–2011). It asks: How did these productions, when staged in Syria, align with, challenge, or become instrumentalised by Baathist narratives of national identity?

Three emblematic plays— *Jibal al Sawan* (جبال الصوان, The Flint Mountains), *Yaish Yaish* (يعيش يعيش , *Long Live! Long Live!*), and *Petra* (بترا)[1]— are analysed through a multimodal method that codes dialogue, music, and mise-en-scène across four axes: national identity, political messaging, resistance and heroism, and class dynamics. The analysis draws on Gramsci's cultural hegemony, Bourdieu's symbolic capital, Mayer's narrative politics, and Smith's ethno-symbolism. Archival Syrian press and six interviews with exiled Syrians triangulate the findings, showing how state media reframed pastoral motifs, paternal authority, sacrifice, vigilance, as markers of Baathist virtue, while audiences variously embraced, resisted, or reimagined these messages.

The study finds that (1) Rahbani dramaturgy offered a portable "myth-kit" through which Baathist institutions naturalised authoritarian fatherhood and heroic martyrdom; (2) repeated circulation generated "anthem fatigue," enabling ironic or oppositional readings; and (3) in diaspora, the repertoire survives as a flexible heritage—mobilised as nostalgic refuge, feminist critique, or secular resistance. By tracing the shifting political charge of cultural icons under authoritarianism, the thesis contributes to Middle Eastern cultural politics, proposes a transferable method for performance analysis, and underscores the urgency of preserving regional theatre archives.

[1] Transliteration and Title Conventions. All Arabic words, personal names, and titles appear in a streamlined Latin transcription without diacritical marks (e.g., *Jibal al-Sawan*, Fairuz, Rahbani). Long vowels are written as single letters (a, i, u); emphatic consonants (ṣ, ḍ, ḥ, etc.) lose their under-dots; the signs for ʿayn (ʿ) and hamza (ʾ) are omitted. On first mention of each play, I provide the italicised transliterated title followed by the Arabic script and an English gloss in parentheses—for example, *Jibal al-Sawan* (جبال الصوان, *The Flint Mountains*). Subsequent references use only the simplified transliteration. The Arabic definite article *al-* is lower-case within a name unless it begins a sentence. This no-diacritics system is applied consistently in the text, notes, and bibliography; readers needing fully vocalised forms should consult the primary editions cited.

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Setting the Stage – Introduction

A. Prologue: Research Overview

"*In our lives, there is no place for Fairuz. The whole place is for Fairuz alone… I join my hands like praying people and call you: Protect her! Protect her! If you are God, she is your proof.*"[2]
– Unsi al-Hajj.

These fervent lines capture the cultural centrality of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers across the Arab world. Their theatrical works—spanning over twenty full-scale productions, sketches, and radio plays—are often credited with laying the foundations of modern Arabic musical theatre. Weaving motifs of homeland and communal solidarity, with moral fortitude, their creations have become deeply ingrained in the region's collective imagination. Such depth of artistic and cultural influence compels a closer examination of how their plays, though rooted in Lebanese traditions, travelled beyond their local origins and assumed broader regional significance —an impact best appreciated by first revisiting the lives behind the music.

Fairuz (Nouhad Haddad, b. 1934) rose from a Beirut working-class quarter to become the most celebrated voice in modern Arab song. Discovered at seventeen by composer Halem al-Rumi[3]. She debuted on Radio Lebanon in 1952 and soon met staff arrangers Assi and Mansour Rahbani. Their first single, "Itab" (عتاب,Blame), melded Levantine Folkloric rhythms with 'Gershwin-influenced'[4] brass and sold 20,000 copies—unprecedented for Arabic vinyl of the period.[5] By 1957, Fairuz was headlining the Baalbek International Festival, her crystalline timbre praised for fusing Maronite church modality with folk melisma; Egyptian composer Muḥammad Abd al-Wahhab[6] called it "a prayer in human form."[7] During the 1960s, her dawn

[2] Unsi al-Hajj, أحبها بارهاب [I, Terroristly, Love Her.], *al-Akhbar* (Beirut), 15 February 1970, 5.
[3] Halim El-Roumi :Lebanese composer and radio director, 1919–1983, credited with discovering and mentoring Fairuz, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Halim El-Roumi," accessed 19 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Halim-El-Roumi.
[4] classical forms with jazz and popular idioms, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "George Gershwin," accessed 2 July 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Gershwin.
[5] Jean Alksan, *الرحبانيون وفيروز: ألف عمل فني، خمسون عاماً من العطاء* [*The Rahbanis and Fairuz: A Thousand Works, Fifty Years of Creativity*] (Damascus: Dar al-Taqwin, 2010), 25–27.
[6] Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab: Egyptian composer and singer, 1902–1991, regarded as a founder of modern Arab music, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "hammad Abd al-Wahhab," accessed 19 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Muhammad-Abd-al-Wahhab.
[7] Muḥammad Abd al-Wahhāb, interview by Ghanim al-Malik, *Al-Hilal*, May 1969, 42.

broadcasts on Radio Damascus and Cairo's 'Ṣawt al-Arab'[8] turned morning coffee into a pan-Arab ritual. She has been praised by many poets, artists, intellectuals, and critics as a "sound-image of homeland." After Assi's cerebral haemorrhage in 1972, Fairuz balanced solo recitals at the Olympia (Paris, 1979) with wartime benefit concerts at the Beirut Hippodrome, refusing to sing for any militia. Now in her ninth decade, she releases occasional singles, but her back catalogue, over 500 songs, continues to air each morning before the news bulletin on Radio Damascus, attesting to the enduring reach of her music.[9]

The Rahbani Brothers, Assi (1923–1986) and Mansour (1925–2009), created a hybrid musical-theatrical language that repositioned Levantine folklore on modern stages. Sons of a police cornet player in Antelias, they learned harmony from missionary hymnals and American jazz transcriptions before joining Radio Lebanon's drama unit in 1951.[10] Between 1957 and 1974 they wrote twenty-five festival musicals that fused village mythos, Quranic cadences, and Broadway-style orchestration; each featured Fairuz as moral compass while dabke choruses embodied collective resolve.[11] Their "mountain-village" idiom dominated Radio Damascus playlists during Baathist[12] nation-building, yet remained flexible enough to tour Paris, Rio, and Kuwait. After Assi's illness, Mansour partnered with choreographer Abd al-Halim Caracalla[13] on dance epics, while Assi's son Ziad injected jazz, satire, and leftist critique into the family brand, proving the idiom could morph with political currents. The brothers' catalogue exceeds 1 200 works—patriotic cantatas, children's operettas *al-Inqilab(النقيب, The Captain 1961),* and one-act radio plays still rebroadcast each Ramadan—and scholars now read their oeuvre as folklore archive, modernist experiment, and, when mediated by state radio, a pliable tool of soft power.[14]

This thesis focuses on a critical chapter in the Rahbanis' legacy: their enthusiastic reception in Syria under Baathist rule between 1963 and 2011. While no conclusive evidence suggests a

[8] Sawt al-Arab (Voice of the Arabs): Cairo-based radio station launched in 1953 to broadcast pan-Arab and anti-colonial messages. See Anas Alahmed, *Voice of the Arabs Radio: Its Effects and Political Power During the Nasser Era (1953–1967)*, SSRN, March 12, 2011, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2047212.
[9] Anastasia Modestou, "Fairuz as a National Symbol of Modern Lebanon," *Journal of Arabic Cultural Studies* 5, no. 2 (2019): 175–77.
[10] Christopher Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon: Fairouz and the Rahbani Nation* (London: Routledge, 2007), 61–67.
[11] Fawaz Traboulsi, فيروز والأخوين رحباني: مسرح الغريب والكنز والعجب [*Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers: The Theatre of the Strange, the Treasure, and the Marvel*] (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2006), 82–90.
[12] Baʿath Party—Pan-Arab socialist movement founded in Damascus in 1947 by Michel ʿAflaq, Ṣalāḥ al-Din al-Bīṭār, and Zaki al-Arsuzi; after the 8 March 1963 coup it became Syria's ruling party, promoting the slogan "Unity, Freedom, Socialism." See Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Baathist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 1–4.
[13] Abd al-Ḥalim Caracalla (b. 1940, Baalbek, Lebanon) is a Lebanese choreographer who founded the Caracalla Dance Theatre in Beirut in 1968 after training with Martha Graham at the London School of Contemporary Dance; his company is widely credited with creating the first modern-dance vocabulary that fuses Western technique with Arab movement traditions. Caracalla Dance Theatre, "Abdel Halim Caracalla," *Creative Founders*, accessed 20 June 2025, https://www.caracallatheatre.com/creative-founders
[14] Nour El Rayes, "Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism in the Work of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 54, no. 1 (2022): 49–50

deliberate collaboration between the Rahbanis and the Syrian authorities, state institutions demonstrably shaped how these musicals were framed and disseminated. Themes of paternal leadership,[15] sacrifice for the common good, and vigilance against external threats[16] proved remarkably compatible with Baathist ideals of national unity and heroism. The question thus arises: to what extent can beloved artistic works become appropriated, or even misconstrued, when an authoritarian regime mobilises cultural artefacts for its ends?

My engagement with this topic is both personal and scholarly in nature. From childhood, Fairuz's haunting voice and the Rahbani stagecraft sparked my fascination with their layered storytelling. Yet, as my perspectives broadened, I was struck by an unsettling possibility: art so emblematic of freedom and communal pride can, under certain political climates, also be co-opted to reinforce hierarchical power. This convergence of artistic beauty and potential political appropriation lies at the heart of my inquiry. Therefore, in this paper, I am willing to examine how Rahbani musicals were received in Baathist Syria, the ideological implications arising from their themes, and the complex interplay between cultural production and authoritarian discourse.

B. The Central Plot: State of the Art and Research Question

Understanding how the Rahbani Brothers' musical sresonated so powerfully under Syria's Baathistregime requires a review of relevant Arabic and English-language scholarship. In the Arab world, Fairuz and the Rahbanis hold a towering cultural position, often treated with near reverence by critics and audiences alike.[17] Published works in Arabic emphasise their iconic status and lyrical artistry, portraying them as rarefied symbols of Arab heritage and pride.

[15] Paternal leadership— In Arab political rhetoric—especially Baathist Syria—"paternal leadership" denotes a rhetorical and ideological trope that casts the ruler as the father of the nation (exemplified by President Hafez al-Assad's official title *al-ab al-qāʾid* (الأب القائد, "the Leader-Father")); it legitimizes authoritarian power through metaphors of familial care, sacrifice, and authority, thereby naturalizing citizens' political obedience as filial loyalty. *Lisa Wedeen, Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 51; Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), وفود رسمية وشعبية وشبابية تزور ضريح القائد المؤسس حافظ الأسد في الذكرى السادسة عشرة لرحيله [Official, Popular, and Youth Delegations Visit the Mausoleum of the Founder-Leader Hafez al-Asad on the Sixteenth Anniversary of His Passing], *SANA* (Damascus), 10 June 2016, https://www.sana.sy/?p=392694.

[16] Vigilance against external threats — naming an issue "security" to legitimise extraordinary measures, later re-imagined in postcolonial states as a perpetual popular watchfulness aimed at both domestic elites and neo-imperial forces; Ole Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in On Security, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 54–55; Adom Getachew, "Vigilance as a Practice of Postcolonial Freedom," American Political Science Review 117, no. 4 (2023): 1183–84.

[17] Christopher Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon,* 13; Jana Al Obeidyine, "Social Agency Inventing the Nation: The Case of the Rahbani Brothers, Abdel Halim Caracalla & the Lebanese Folk Dance," *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 60, no. 1 (2015): 61–67, 62.

Jean Alksan underscores the Rahbanis' prodigious output but treats it chiefly as evidence of Lebanese cultural exceptionalism.[18] The Arab Thought Foundation likewise venerates Fairuz as a homeland in miniature, reinforcing a domesticated reading.[19] Fawaz Traboulsi even calls the brothers "the most significant cultural phenomenon" of late-twentieth-century in Lebanon, while Hashem Qassim credits them with canonising Lebanese vernacular as a badge of national heritage.[20]

Musicologist Nizr Marwa catalogues harmonic innovations without asking how the repertoire resonated beyond Beirut.[21] Pedagogical critics such as Hisham Zayn al-Din and conference presenter Nahil Sallum praise its "aesthetic authenticity" as a template for civic renewal—again, strictly within a Lebanese frame.[22] A 2023 feature in *Arab Music Magazine* echoes this stance, celebrating the "Rahbani influence" on communal life at home,[23] and Henry Zogheib's multi-volume critical edition repackages the plays as nostalgic heritage for local readers.[24] While this Arabic-language corpus amplifies the troupe's aura, it leaves largely unexplored the question of how neighbouring authoritarian regimes could appropriate their repertoire.

The political subtexts that emerge when Rahbani narratives cross national borders, particularly those shaped by authoritarian governance, receive scant attention. The possibility that these musicals could be repurposed or misinterpreted as ideological instruments often remains unexplored.

In parallel, much English-language literature that addresses Fairuz or the Rahbanis primarily frames their work in terms of Lebanon.[25] Scholars investigate how the Rahbanis contributed to

[18] Jean Alksan, *الرحبانيون وفيروز: ألف عمل فني، خمسون عاماً من العطاء* [The Rahbanis and Fairuz: A Thousand Works, Fifty Years of Creativity] (Damascus: Dar al-Taqwin, 2010), 25–27.
[19] Arab Thought Foundation, ed., *وطن اسمه فيروز* [A Homeland Called Fairuz] (Beirut: Arab Thought Foundation, 2022), 9.
[20] Fawaz Traboulsi, *فيروز والأخوين رحباني: مسرح الغريب والكنز والعجب* [Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers: The Theatre of the Strange, the Treasure, and the Marvel] (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2006), 7; Hashem Qassim, *ظاهرة الرحابنة: مسيرة ونهضة* [The Rahbani Phenomenon: Journey and Renaissance] (Beirut: Bissan Publishing, 2018), 19.
[21] Nizār Marwā, *في الموسيقى اللبنانية والمسرح الغنائي الرحباني* [On Lebanese Music and Rahbani Musical Theatre] (Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 1998), 133–40.
[22] Hisham Zayn al-Din, "المسرح الرحباني: الأصالة والفرادة والتأثير الجمالي" [The Rahbani Theatre: Authenticity, Uniqueness, and Aesthetic Impact], *المجلة التربوية* (CRDP, 2019), 15–18; Nahīl Sallūm, "الإبداع والتجديد في مسرح الأخوين رحباني: مسرحية 'أيام فخر الدين'" [Creativity and Renewal in the Rahbani Brothers' Theatre: *Ayyām Fakhr al-Din*], paper presented at the Arab-Music Conference, Cairo Opera House, 2022, 3.
[23] "أثر فيروز والمسرح الرحباني على المجتمع اللبناني" [The Impact of Fairuz and the Rahbani Theatre on Lebanese Society], *Arab Music Magazine*, 28 February 2023, 22.
[24] Henry Zogheib, ed., *الأعمال المسرحية الكاملة للأخوين رحباني* [The Complete Theatrical Works of the Rahbani Brothers] (Beirut: Dynamic Graphics, 2003), vol. 1, xi–xii.
[25] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 64; El Rayes, "Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism," 56.

the construction of Lebanese national identity, highlighting the interplay of folkloric motifs, musical innovation, and sectarian contexts.[26]

Although valuable for understanding the group's transformative impact on Levantine arts, these works rarely extend their scope to consider how audiences in other Arab states might have embraced or adapted Rahbani productions, particularly under regimes with explicit ideological agendas. Analyses of modern Arabic musical theatre in Syria often focus on domestic troupes like 'Tishreen Troupe' [27] or overt propaganda pieces, leaving the Rahbanis' comparatively "apolitical" texts underexamined in this specific setting.

Building on this Lebanon-centred corpus, recent studies refine the picture still further. Anastasia Modestou emphasises how Fairuz became a vital national symbol whose performances transcended sectarian divides, providing a shared cultural reference point for an otherwise fragmented society.[28] Nour El Rayes situates the Rahbani-Fairuz phenomenon specifically within the cosmopolitan nationalism promoted by the Baalbek Festival, highlighting how their music consciously blended Arab and Western artistic traditions to construct a uniquely Lebanese modernity.[29] Meanwhile, Jana Al Obeidyine underscores the Rahbanis' and Caracalla Dance Theatre's independence from direct state ideology, illustrating how these artists used their autonomous cultural influence to shape Lebanon's national imaginary.[30] Sune Haugbolle's exploration of Ziad Rahbani[31] extends this discourse by depicting how the younger Rahbani merged leftist ideals and liberal critiques, generating a more politically charged and reflective art form.[32] Collectively, these perspectives deepen our understanding of the Rahbani family's cultural reach, yet still regard that reach as largely internal to Lebanon.

Scholarship in both Arabic and English largely overlooks the question of how Rahbani musicals were received, co-opted, or contested in Baathist Syria. Only scattered remarks hint at the scale of Syrian engagement. Christopher Stone notes that, from the early 1950s, the

[26] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 64; El Rayes," Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism," 65; Anastasia Modestou, "Fairuz as a National Symbol: Popular Music, Folklore and Nationhood in 1960s Lebanon," *SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research* 13 (2019–2020): 172–177, 173.
[27] The Tishreen Theatre Troupe (فرقة تشرين), founded in the 1970s by Duraid Lahham and Muhammad al-Maghut, was known for satirical plays like *Ghorbeh* and *Kasak ya Watan* that critiqued authoritarianism through irony and popular humor, while carefully navigating Baathist censorship.
[28] Modestou, "Fairuz as a National Symbol," 172–77.
[29] El Rayes, "Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism," 49–56.
[30] Al Obeidyine, "Social Agency Inventing the Nation," 61–67.
[31] Ziad Rahbani — Fairuz's son, left-wing playwright, composer, actor, and politician who "reinvented" his mother's stage persona by grounding her image in everyday social critique; Sune Haugbolle, "The Leftist, the Liberal, and the Space in Between: Ziad Rahbani and Everyday Ideology," *Arab Studies Journal* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 168–75.
[32] Haugbolle, "Leftist, Liberal, Space in Between," 173.

Rahbani troupe "dominated the air-waves of Radio Damascus … appeared onstage at the Damascus Festival more times than they did at Baalbeck … [and] opened each performance with a new song praising Syria and the Syrians."[33] Jana Al Obeidyne adds that the Rahbani name is "familiar throughout the Middle East, North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula … as familiar as that of Shakespeare,"[34] an observation that nonetheless stops short of analysing Syrian political uptake. Nour El-Rayes notes that the Rahbanis' pastoral "mountain-village" mythos circulated widely in Damascus, yet has rarely been examined concerning Baathist cultural policy.[35] She cites Syrian critic Muḥammad Mansur as one of the few voices to highlight this tension.

The rarity of such readings underscores a key gap: while existing studies celebrate the Rahbanis as emblems of Lebanese heritage, few interrogate how Baathist ideals—paternal authority, communal solidarity, and 'heroic sacrifice'[36]—might graft themselves onto the Rahbanis' ostensibly apolitical narratives. Recognising this omission is crucial, as it suggests that works hailed as timeless and unifying may also serve, knowingly or not, as vehicles of authoritarian nation-building.

Considering these observations, this thesis poses the following research question:

How did the theatrical works of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers, presented in Syria between 1963 and 2011, align with, challenge, or become co-opted by Baathist narratives of national identity?

Seeking to investigate this central dilemma in a nuanced manner, the study also addresses several sub-questions:

1. To what extent do Rahbani scripts, lyrical motifs, and staging techniques reflect ideals—heroic sacrifice, communal vigilance, and paternal leadership—that mirror Baathist ideology?

[33] Christopher Stone, "The Baalbek Festival and the Rahbanis: Folklore, Ancient History, Musical Theater, and Nationalism in Lebanon," *Arab Studies Journal* 11/12, no. 2/1 (Fall 2003/Spring 2004): 10–39; Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 45–48.
[34] Al Obeidyine, "Social Agency Inventing the Nation," 62.
[35] El-Rayes, "Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism," 65.
[36] Heroic sacrifice — the narrative archetype in which a hero consciously embraces death or extreme suffering so that the community may survive or be morally renewed, turning private loss into a charter-myth of collective identity; Anthony D. Smith, Myths and Memories of the Nation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 154; Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, commemorative ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 309.

2. Without formal collaboration between the Rahbanis and Syrian authorities, how did cultural institutions and media outlets in Syria reframe these musicals to promote a narrative of national pride and collective heroism?
3. How do today's Syrians, particularly those in exile, recall and interpret these once-beloved theatrical works in light of political upheavals and personal transformations over time?

By situating the Rahbanis' legacy within this broader scholarly conversation, the thesis confronts a dual challenge: reconciling the reverential image of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers with the possibility that their creations might reinforce authoritarian norms. The answer, of course, is likely to be more complex than simple endorsement or outright subversion.

This research question thus emerges directly from a broad yet territorially circumscribed frame that celebrates the Rahbanis as architects of Lebanese folklore and national identity but never ventures beyond that frame. Literature[37] Consequently, the intricate ways in which their musicals were received, contested, or co-opted under Baathist Syria remain largely uncharted terrain, a gap that raises the possibility that works hailed as timeless and unifying may also serve, wittingly or otherwise, as instruments of authoritarian cultural narrative.

In addressing this gap, this study selectively draws upon foundational historical and analytical works by Seale[38], Hinnebusch[39], Heydemann[40], and van Dam[41], whose scholarship provides crucial insights into Syria's socio-political structures, institutional dynamics, and ideological context under Baathist governance, thereby clarifying how Rahbani musicals could intersect with state narratives and cultural policy.

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[37] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 64 (frames the Rahbani stage as a "museum of Lebanese village life," no Syrian discussion); Stone, "The Baalbek Festival and the Rahbanis," 11 (traces how the Festival and the Rahbanis became symbols for Lebanon, not Syria); El Rayes, "Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism," 50 (argues Fairuz's sound still defines "what it means to sound Lebanese"); Sune Haugbolle, "The Leftist, the Liberal, and the Space in Between: Ziad Rahbani and Everyday Ideology," *Arab Studies Journal* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 168–190, 173 (notes that existing studies of Ziad Rahbani are "concerned with the significance of Rahbani in Lebanese social life"); Modestou, "Fairuz as a National Symbol," 175 (presents Fairuz as pivotal in constructing Lebanese national identity); Al Obeidyine, "Social Agency Inventing the Nation," 62 (calls the Rahbani name "as familiar as that of Shakespeare" across the Arab world but analyses it only as a Lebanese cultural product); Henry Zogheib, ed., الأعمال المسرحية الكاملة للأخوين رحباني *[The Complete Theatrical Works of the Rahbani Brothers]* (Beirut: Dynamic Graphics, 2003), 29 (states that when Arabs say "Lebanon," they immediately think of Fairuz); Fawaz Traboulsi, فيروز والأخوين رحباني: مسرح الغريب والكنز والعجب *[Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers: The Theatre of the Strange, the Treasure, and the Marvel]* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2006), 7 (describes the Rahbanis as "without doubt the most significant cultural phenomenon Lebanon witnessed in the second half of the twentieth century"); Hashem Qassim, *The Rahbani Phenomenon: Journey and Renaissance* (Beirut: Bissan Publishing, 2018), 19 (argues the Rahbanis elevated Lebanese vernacular as a marker of Lebanese-Levantine heritage).
[38] Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study in Post-War Arab Politics, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).
[39] Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Baathist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[40] Steven Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and Social Conflict, 1946–1970* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).
[41] Nikolaos van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Baath Party* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

C. Sweeping the Stage: Theoretical and Methodological Approach

Understanding how Rahbani musicals fit, or were made to fit, within Baathist narratives requires a conceptual toolkit that bridges cultural production and political discourse. To this end, I draw on multiple theoretical traditions that illuminate how seemingly apolitical creations can be harnessed for ideological purposes.

Gramsci's notion of 'cultural hegemony'[42] explains how ruling powers secure widespread consent through civil-society institutions that supplement, rather than replace, state coercion.[43] In Baathist Syria, this consent seldom relied on blunt propaganda; instead, cultural texts such as Rahbani musicals, with their evocative invocations of homeland and unity, could be reframed to extol heroic self-sacrifice under a protective paternal state.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital clarifies how, inside the cultural field, artworks accumulate prestige that can be converted into political legitimacy.[44] Fairuz's voice and the Rahbanis' celebrated stagecraft thus offered ready-made reservoirs of authority that state institutions could appropriate.

Mayer's narrative theory likewise frames my analysis, reminding us that stories construct shared realities by inviting audiences to identify with particular values and visions.[45] Folkloric or historical plotlines in the Rahbani repertoire speak to universal quests for freedom and belonging, yet can also be redeployed to reinforce official messages of communal vigilance.

Complementing these perspectives, Smith's ethno-symbolism stresses how elites continually select and reinterpret myths of origin and ritual symbols to secure national identity;[46] within a Baathist frame, Rahbani musicals could therefore be re-read as allegories of pan-Arab heroism.

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[42] Cultural hegemony – Gramsci's insight that a ruling bloc maintains power by exercising "moral-intellectual leadership" as well as coercion, winning spontaneous consent so its worldview is lived as everyday "common sense," naturalised through schools, churches, the press, and popular culture. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12, 57, 328

[43] Michele Filippini, *Using Gramsci: A New Approach*, trans. Patrick J. Barr (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 18. discussing hegemony as "direction through persuasion."

[44] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 6, 76.

[45] Frederick W. Mayer, *Narrative Politics: Stories and Collective Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[46] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14–15 (shows myths, memories, and ritual as identity anchors); Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

Methodologically, I employ qualitative content analysis (QCA)[47] to trace such ideological resonances. Margrit Schreier's step-wise framework guides the systematic coding of both published scripts *and* high-definition video recordings of *Petra*, *Jibal al-Sawwan* (*Flint Mountains*), and *Yaish Yaish(Long Live! Long Live!)*.[48] Her discussion of audiovisual data handling further directs my attention to 'mise-en-scène'[49] and visual symbolism within filmed revivals.[50] Iterative coding of father figures, heroic martyrs, and external threats reveals how Rahbani narratives can dovetail with, or be deliberately reshaped to support, core Baathist principles, a dynamic paralleled in Syrian television drama's strategic alignment with state ideology.[51]

Six semi-structured interviews enrich textual and visual findings. These conversations illuminate how nostalgia, disillusionment, and shifting political landscapes colour personal memories of Rahbani works, exposing tensions between grassroots interpretation and official discourse in a regime that prized cultural control.

Together, these theoretical and methodological elements furnish the study's "theatrical frame," allowing Rahbani musicals to be examined not merely as artistic achievements but as dynamic texts whose meanings shifted under Baathist rule—shifts that throw fresh light on the fluid interplay of art, power, and identity in the Arab world.

D. The Spotlight: Significance, Scope, and Delimitations

The research illuminates how beloved works of art, ostensibly detached from politics, can nonetheless become entangled in the webs of authoritarianism. Analysing the Rahbanis' musicals in the context of Syria's Baathist era unveils a dynamic interplay between art and power, one that has a bearing on broader questions of cultural hegemony and national identity in the Arab world. Despite their roots in Lebanese folklore and musical innovation, these theatrical productions found robust reception across the region. By situating them in Baathist Syria, where artistic expressions often doubled as conduits for state-sanctioned narratives, this

[47] Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) — a rule-governed, iterative procedure that breaks textual or audiovisual data into coding units, builds a deductive-inductive category frame, and tracks frequencies and co-occurrences while preserving context; Margrit Schreier, Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 5–6, 32–33

[48] Margrit Schreier, Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice. London: SAGE Publications, 2013.5–6, 32–33, on category-based coding.

[49] Mise-en-scène — the director's orchestration of everything that appears and moves within the frame—setting and props, lighting, costume and make-up, and the staging and behaviour of performers—whose composition, colour, and spatial relations shape a film's mood and meaning; David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, Film Art: An Introduction, 13th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2023)

[50] Schreier, Qualitative Content Analysis, 68–69, on analysing audiovisual material.

[51] Donatella Della Ratta, Shooting a Revolution: Visual Media and Warfare in Syria. London: Pluto Press, 2018, 21, describing Syrian TV drama's careful alignment with regime narratives.

study contributes to ongoing debates in Middle Eastern cultural scholarship, political history, and performance studies.

Yet this story is neither wholly one of coercion nor pure aesthetic freedom: it is instead a complex tapestry in which creative brilliance can be appropriated for authoritarian ends, often unintentionally. By examining how Syrians living in exile reflect on these musicals, the project also highlights how shifts in personal and political realities can reshape cultural memory over time.

Beyond its broader significance, this study focuses on the Baathist era in Syria (1963–2011), a period of uninterrupted one-party rule in which cultural policy was orchestrated to reinforce official visions of national identity. Initially, I had intended to dissect this era into precise historical phases, such as 1963–1974, 1975–2000, and 2000–2011. However, two factors prompted a more flexible approach to time. First, the direct theatrical collaboration between Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers ended in 1978; yet, their works resonated with Syrian audiences long after. Second, these musicals evolved into a transcultural norm, akin to popular myths whose influence outlasts any neat chronological frame. They reappeared, restaged or replayed across the five decades of Baathist rule, consistently echoing themes of communal solidarity and heroic perseverance.

Similarly, selecting plays within the vast Rahbani repertoire warrants careful delimitations. While they composed and staged numerous works, this research focuses on three core productions due to their pronounced alignment with motifs of leadership, unity, and vigilance against external threats. A more exhaustive approach might generate further nuances, but it risks obscuring the primary objective: scrutinising how Rahbani's creations were appropriated (or contested) within an authoritarian context.

In selecting these texts and this timeline, the study aims to maintain analytical precision while recognising the elasticity of cultural meaning. The combination of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), close video-film analysis of archival recordings and press reviews, and personal testimonies offers a triangulated method, ensuring that the musicals' evolving interpretations are captured from multiple angles.[52] By tracing how these works navigated editorial decisions, state media channels, and lived experiences, the project reveals how cultural

[52] Schreier, Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice, 68-69 (coding audiovisual material) ; David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, Film Art: An Introduction, 2023.

legacies can be forged, contested, and reimagined amid political upheaval. In short, this spotlight on Baathist Syria illuminates a broader stage, as it demonstrates how art's rich tapestry of meanings can be deftly woven into authoritarian narratives, ultimately prompting new reflections on the enduring relationship between creative expression and political power.

E. The Script Handing: Structure of the Thesis

Building on the motivations and central questions presented in this opening chapter, "Setting the Stage – Introduction," the thesis unfolds systematically across four additional chapters that illuminate different dimensions of the Rahbani phenomenon in Baathist Syria.

Chapter 1, "Theoretical & Methodological Framework," sets the conceptual foundation for this investigation. The theoretical pillars—Gramsci's cultural hegemony, Bourdieu's symbolic capital, Mayer's 'narrative politics'[53], and Smith's 'ethno-symbolism nationalism,'[54] are introduced and woven into an integrated dual-track analytical approach. This approach guides the close textual and visual analysis of selected Rahbani productions as well as the interpretation of audience reception. The methodological architecture underpinning the research is detailed, clarifying the rationale for employing Schreier's Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), the selective adaptation of Bordwell's film-analytic grammar, and the ethical considerations guiding this study. By merging theory and method within a single chapter, I clarify how conceptual insights inform every subsequent analytical move.

From the conceptual foundations, Chapter 2, "The Curtain Rises – Context & Literature," situates the Rahbani productions historically, politically, and culturally within Baathist Syria (1963–2011). This chapter outlines the broader socio-political landscape, illustrating how state authority structured and influenced cultural production. It explores the Rahbani Brothers' and Fairuz's ascent as prominent Arab cultural icons, surveying their artistic significance while contextualising how their works resonated within Syria's state-controlled media apparatus. Attention is given to how the Rahbanis' ostensibly Lebanese cultural narratives were reframed

[53] Narrative politics — the view that policy battles are essentially contests of stories, and the coalition whose narrative most persuasively links heroes, villains, and causal stakes is the one likeliest to mobilise action and prevail; Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 3–5.

[54] Ethno-symbolic nationalism — Smith's paradigm that nations endure because elites and institutions ceaselessly revive and reinterpret a myth-symbol complex: memories of heroic ancestors, golden ages, and sacred homelands inherited from pre-modern ethnies are ritualised in festivals, schoolbooks, and arts, binding present citizens to an imagined ancestral community and projecting a shared destiny; Smith, Myths and Memories of the Nation, 15; Smith, The Cultural Foundations of Nations, 46.

and appropriated to align with Baathist ideals of national identity, leadership, and heroic steadfastness.

With this contextual grounding, Chapter 3, "Textual and Visual Analysis of Selected Plays – Dissecting the Drama," undertakes detailed, scene-by-scene analyses of three central Rahbani musicals: *Jibal al-Sawwan* (1969), *Yaish Yaish* (1970), and *Petra* (1977). This chapter operationalises the theoretical lenses through rigorous qualitative coding, emphasising themes of national identity, political messaging, resistance, and class dynamics. The textual analyses engage closely with dialogue, scenography, and performance elements, specifically highlighting how the Rahbani narratives and aesthetics intersected with, challenged, or subtly echoed Baathist ideological messaging. Drawing on Bordwell's insights into visual grammar, each play concludes with a concise visual analysis, further elucidating how cinematic elements reinforced or complicated ideological messages.

In Chapter 4, "The Audience Speaks – Public Reception and Reflections," I extend the analytical lens beyond textual interpretation, presenting insights gleaned from semi-structured interviews and audience testimonies. Here, the voices of Syrian audiences in diaspora provide a prism through which we can understand how Rahbani productions were remembered, reinterpreted, and emotionally reinvested over time. The interviews reveal a dynamic interplay between nostalgia, critical reflection, and shifting political landscapes, illustrating how personal and collective memories evolve in response to changing political realities. By triangulating audience perceptions with textual analysis, this chapter offers a nuanced account of how cultural meanings are negotiated and reshaped under authoritarian contexts.

Finally, the thesis culminates with a "Conclusion – The Final Act," synthesising the central insights derived from both textual and audience analyses. It clarifies how the Rahbani musicals, admired primarily for their artistic and emotional resonance, became mobilised within Baathist discourse, even in the absence of explicit collaboration. Reflecting on the broader implications for scholarship in Middle Eastern studies, cultural politics, and theatre research, the conclusion identifies potential future research directions. An epilogue follows, offering personal reflections on the deeper stakes driving this inquiry, serving as a final curtain call on the intricate relationship between creative expression and authoritarian ambition.

Chapter 1: Theoretical and Methodological Framework.

Theory and method are not discrete stagehands; they share the same spotlight and merging them in this opening chapter clarifies what powers the study—four conceptual pillars that treat performance as political work, and how those pillars are operationalised in practice. Gramsci, Bourdieu, Mayer, and Smith supply the lenses; Schreier's qualitative content analysis (QCA) provides the engine that carries those lenses scene by scene.

The archive animating this thesis is stubbornly polyphonic—script, score, gesture, camera rhythm. Schreier's QCA earns its place because it can sift that layered material without flattening nuance, allowing patterns of consent or prestige to surface across media. Bordwell's film-analytic grammar joins the toolkit to counter purely textual bias, foregrounding spatial composition and cinematic temporality where ideology often hides. Complementary refinements from Leahy, Prasertsud, and Schatz sharpen the theoretical frame, forging an epistemological stance that treats words, images, and sound as co-equal witnesses to hegemony and reveals how theatre and power intersect under authoritarian rule.[55]

Housing concept and craft together make explicit which tool serves which claim. This economy of presentation promotes transparency; separating the logics would force readers to shuttle between distant pages to follow a single analytical move. By setting the scaffolding in one place, the chapter rehearses the fusion it will later expose on stage: ideas and techniques moving in lockstep to illuminate how Rahbani theatre could enchant audiences while echoing Baathist ideals.

1.1 Behind the Scenes: Theoretical Pillars

My research intervenes on both fronts by embracing four broader theoretical frameworks: Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital, Mayer's approach to narrative politics, and Smith's theory of ethno-symbolic nationalism.[56] Each of

[55] Richard A. Leahy, *The Theatre as an Examination of Power: Combining Political Theory and Theatre History* (Honors Thesis, Union College, 2008); Kusuma Prasertsud, *The Use of Theatre for Propaganda* (PhD diss., University of London, 2017); Edward Schatz, "The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit: Agenda-Setting Power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," *Comparative Politics* 41, no. 2 (January 2009).
[56] Filippini, *Using Gramsci;* Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production;* Mayer, *Narrative Politics;* Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*; Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations;* Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

these frameworks, although profoundly influential, has also faced scholarly criticism. Reception studies that build on Gramsci emphasise the ways spectators negotiate, parody or even invert hegemonic scripts—an interpretive latitude mapped in Stuart Hall's "encoding/decoding" essay, expanded by John Fiske's notion of "semiotic guerrilla warfare", and echoed in James C. Scott's idea of hidden infrapolitics.[57] Sociologists of taste complicate Bourdieu's neat high/low divide: successive studies show that twenty-first-century elites perform distinction through eclectic "omnivorous" repertoires—findings first documented by Richard Peterson and Roger Kern, deepened by Bethany Bryson's work on symbolic exclusion, and refined in Tak Wing Chan's attitudinal profile of the cultural omnivore.[58] Methodological debate around Mayer's Narrative Policy Framework warns that stories rarely travel on rhetoric alone; Michael D. Jones, Elizabeth Shanahan and Mark McBeth stress the material and institutional "gates" through which narratives must pass, while Christopher Weible and Edella Schlager underscore the same constraint at the policy level.[59] Finally, modernist historians argue that Smith's ethno-symbolism risks retrofitting modern nations onto imagined antiquity: Umut Özkirimli famously likens the nation to an artichoke whose layers peel away to reveal invention, and John Breuilly insists that pre-modern symbols must be remade before they can serve the nation-state.[60] Acknowledging these limitations enables my study to deploy the four frameworks without reproducing their blind spots.

These theoretical pillars show that the Rahbani oeuvre is more than "lovely musicals": it is a cultural text that can both reinforce and challenge political narratives. They also clarify why many Syrians, including those in exile, treasure the plays as markers of identity, even when the same works can legitimise state ideology.

1.1.1 Gramsci's Stage: Cultural Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony offers a vital lens for understanding how theatrical works, such as those by the Rahbani Brothers, can reinforce or subtly reshape

[57] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall et al. (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128–38; John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 1987), 236–51; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xv–xxv.
[58] Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 5 (1996): 900–07; Bethany Bryson, "'Anything but Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 5 (1996): 884–99; Tak Wing Chan, "Understanding Cultural Omnivores: Social and Political Attitudes," *Sociology* 48, no. 2 (2014): 164–87.
[59] Michael D. Jones, Elizabeth A. Shanahan and Mark K. McBeth, "A Narrative Policy Framework: Clear Enough to Be Wrong?" *Policy Studies Journal* 38, no. 2 (2010): 329–53; Christopher M. Weible and Edella Schlager, "Narrative Policy Framework: Contributions, Limitations, and Recommendations," in *The Science of Stories*, ed. Michael D. Jones et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 235–46.
[60] Umut Özkirimli, "The Nation as an Artichoke? A Critique of Ethnosymbolist Interpretations of Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 9, no. 3 (2003): 339–55; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 60–67.

dominant ideologies. He argues that hegemony is upheld "by making its own moral, political, and cultural values appear natural and self-evident."[61] Rather than overt coercion, such power operates through cultural forms that audiences internalise "spontaneously, without direct coercion."[62] In Baathist Syria, this explains how regime-endorsed theatrical works could shape sentiment without explicit propaganda. Cooke observes that under authoritarianism, cultural productions extolling unity and defiance can align with the central tenets of the ruling ideology without being intended as propaganda.[63] Rahbani musicals—rich in patriotic pathos—fit this model: aesthetically distinct, yet aligned with Baathist themes of sacrifice, paternalism, and vigilance.

Gramsci's notion of "intellectual and moral leadership"[64] reveals how elites use culture to foster consent, not through imposed dogma but by supporting narratives of unity, perseverance, and heroism that resonate as moral common sense. As Filippini notes, "cultural forms do not stand outside relations of power,"[65] making musicals and plays powerful mediums for ideological transmission. In Syria, officials championed works aligned with pan-Arabism and Baathist ideals of collectivist unity, effectively blending cultural prestige with political messaging.[66]

Crucial to this hegemonic effect is emotional resonance. Gramsci observed that narratives gain political traction through affective attachment.[67] Leahy describes theatre's ability to "turn empathy into agreement,"[68] allowing audiences to absorb ideological stances as moral truths. Musicals filled with stirring choruses and noble sacrifice make values like paternal authority or communal loyalty feel timeless rather than constructed.[69]

Although Lebanese in origin, the Rahbani oeuvre harmonised with Baathist ideals. Their frequent use of folkloric symbols mirrored Baathist imagery of steadfast leadership. As Stone notes, Rahbani theatre helped shape "a cohesive public identity in Lebanon,"[70] and these same

[61] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 57, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 40
[62] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 80, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 43.
[63] Miriam Cooke, *Dissident Syria: Making Oppositional Arts Official* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 37.
[64] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 57, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 28.
[65] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 40.
[66] Pan-Arabism — ideology that seeks the political unification of all Arab peoples and forms the doctrinal core of the Arab Socialist Baath Party, whose founders Michel Aflaq and Ṣalāḥ al-Din al-Bīṭār enshrined the motto "Unity, Freedom, Socialism" as a pan-Arab renaissance; Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3–4; John F. Devlin, *The Baath Party: A History from Its Origins to 1966* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), 7–9.
[67] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 328, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 52.
[68] Leahy, *Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 22.
[69] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 60–61, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 46.
[70] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 31.

tropes found a receptive platform in Syria via state media and cultural festivals. This institutional amplification reflects Gramscian leadership via cultural celebration.[71]

Gramsci's framework thus guides this study's analysis of how Rahbani theatre, through emotional power and symbolic status, could act as a conduit for Baathist hegemony. Textual analysis traces motifs of communal struggle and paternal guardianship; archival sources reveal how official institutions promoted the plays as embodiments of Arab dignity. Because hegemony is absorbed "spontaneously,"[72] the plays' popularity itself suggests a naturalised political undercurrent, making "dominant ideas feel like common sense."[73]

Diaspora interviews provide further insight. Many participants remembered the Rahbanis' artistry, but also registered how state narratives may have been internalised through those performances. As Filippini writes, "official narratives piggyback on the musicals' aesthetic charm,"[74] normalising dominant valuess through repetition and emotional saturation.

Still, as theorists like Hall, Fiske, and Scott remind us, audiences are not passive. Hall's encoding/decoding model suggests that viewers may negotiate or resist hegemonic meanings, while Fiske emphasises how popular tactics, such as irony and parody, enable "semiotic social resistance." Scott's concept of "hidden transcripts"[75] adds that apparent conformity often masks dissent.[76] Together, these insights caution against an overly top-down reading of cultural consent.

1.1.2 Bourdieu's Theatre of Influence: Symbolic Capital

Pierre Bourdieu's framework helps explain how artistic productions acquire prestige and shape collective perception, not solely through their content, but also through institutional validation

[71] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 129, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 56.
[72] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 80, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 43.
[73] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 80, cited in Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 43.
[74] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 45.
[75] Hidden transcripts — the backstage discourse of resistance—coded jokes, rumors, symbolic gestures, and strategic silences—through which subordinates critique, mock, and imagine overturning dominant power while outwardly conforming to the "public transcript"; James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), xii–xiii, 4.
[76] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79*, ed. Hall et al., 128–38. Hall argues that mass-mediated texts invite hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional readings, showing that audiences may accept core meanings yet still reinterpret details for their own purposes—an approach that problematises a purely top-down model of consent. John Fiske, *Power Plays, Power Works* (London: Verso, 1993), 15–17. Fiske extends Hall by emphasising how everyday viewers deploy "semiotic guerrilla warfare"—selective quotation, parody, and ironic distance—to manipulate dominant texts in ways producers cannot fully control. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), xii–xiii. Scott shows that subordinates often cultivate "hidden transcripts" of critique that surface only in safe settings, reminding us that outward compliance with official culture may mask private dissent. Taken together, these studies temper a strictly Gramscian reading by foregrounding audience agency and the possibility of subversive reinterpretation.

by critics, the media, and the state.[77] In Baathist Syria, this lens clarifies how the Rahbani Brothers' Lebanese musicals attained sufficient symbolic capital to support official narratives of Arab unity.

Symbolic capital— "the credit and renown granted to artistic works perceived as worthy"[78]— is central to Bourdieu's model. After endorsement by state festivals, media platforms, or intellectuals, a cultural product gains authority. When Baathist institutions embraced the Rahbani oeuvre as a pinnacle of Arab cultural expression and circulated it through mass media and school rituals, that prestige blurred the line between elite and popular culture, transforming the plays into markers of collective heritage.[79]

Institutional backing shaped not only visibility but meaning. Leahy notes that "in a politicised environment, external validation can swiftly transform an art form's social importance,"[80] elevating once-local forms into national symbols. The Rahbani Brothers' folkloric idiom—choral refrains, heroic archetypes, and pastoral imagery—aligned easily with Syrian power structures eager to promote pan-Arab solidarity.

Though rooted in Lebanese contexts, the Rahbani plays resonated with Syrian audiences who shared linguistic and cultural ground. Stone suggests their "pan-Arab imagination" allowed local stories to function as universal narratives.[81] Endorsed by Baathist elites, the musicals became part of Syria's emotional and political vocabulary. Cooke observes that "the ephemeral nature of performance can overshadow its crucial role in shaping collective memory,"[82] and repeated broadcasts entrenched the Rahbani texts as fixtures of national sentiment.

Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'[83] further explains why these plays struck such a deep chord. Habitus refers to the internalised social dispositions that guide perception and taste.[84] In a context saturated with state praise for sacrifice and paternal authority, audiences were

[77] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 75.
[78] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*,85.
[79] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 74--75; Pierre Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as the "prestige, honour or 'credit' accruing from recognition," a form of value that "exists only in the eyes of those who acknowledge it yet can be converted into material advantages."
[80] Leahy, *Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 31.
[81] Stone, "Baalbek Festival and the Rahbanis," 42.
[82] Cooke, *Dissident Syria*, 59.
[83] Habitus — Bourdieu's "structured and structuring structure": a durable, embodied system of dispositions—tastes, postures, classificatory schemes, and a practical "feel for the game"—acquired through early socialisation; it deposits society in the body, guiding perception and action beneath conscious awareness and reproducing social hierarchies while still allowing improvisation; Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production 87-90. A Syrian schooled on Baath slogans may therefore "naturally" read Rahbani heroes as loyal patriots because that expectation sits in the very grain of the habitus.
[84] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*,100.

predisposed to embrace Rahbani's depictions of heroic leadership as emotionally and politically legitimate.

This resonance is evident in diaspora interviews, where participants recall the plays as symbols of "belonging" or "shared pride." Such memories reflect the interpretive frames through which these works were mediated. Prasertsud notes that "propaganda can masquerade as a cultural tradition when staged in the idiom of popular heritage,"[85] suggesting that Rahbani art was assimilated into a broader project of nationalist persuasion.

Although Bourdieu often associates "high culture" with elite forms, Rahbani theatre in Syria achieved a form of cultural authority that merged popular appeal with state endorsement. Critical reviews and institutional promotion demonstrate how the musicals were transformed into cultural milestones, while interviews reveal how audiences received them as a source of joy, instruction, or both.[86]

Bourdieu and Gramsci, together, reveal how Rahbani musicals became canonical references for Arab identity. Through symbolic capital, habitus, and institutional sponsorship, these works gained power not merely by what they said, but by who affirmed them, how they circulated, and where they settled in the popular imagination.

1.1.3 Mayer's Craftsmanship: Narratives of Nationhood

Frederick W. Mayer's theory of narrative politics provides insights into how the Rahbani Brothers' musicals contributed to shaping Syrian national identity. Mayer argues that "stories frame our shared experiences, fusing personal hopes to communal aspirations."[87] He adds that narratives "harness affect, enabling communities to align moral imagination with political action,"[88] a dynamic clearly at work in the Rahbani musicals.

In *Jibal al-Sawwan*, *Yaish Yaish*, and *Petra*, themes of communal resistance and generational authority illustrate Mayer's claim that "a narrative's coherence can bind diverse actors under a singular cause."[89] Their depictions of embattled villages and noble rulers lent themselves to Baathist rhetoric, which emphasised national unity and heroic endurance. As Stone observes,

[85] Prasertsud, *Use of Theatre for Propaganda*, 120.
[86] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*,85.
[87] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 63.
[88] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 153.
[89] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 89.

cultural texts often "reinvent folklore for state-centred narratives,"[90] and the Rahbanis did just that by embedding chants, stylised dances, and ancestral pride into dramatic frameworks that Baathist media could easily adopt.

Similarly, Cooke warns that the fleeting nature of performance can obscure its role in shaping memory.[91] In the Rahbani context, emotional identification with loyal kings or heroic choruses reinforced moral links between theatrical loyalty and real-life patriotism. Once promoted by state media, these musicals became entwined with Baathist ideals, paternal authority, vigilance, and communal sacrifice, transforming Lebanese cultural pride into instruments of Syrian state ideology.

Though the Rahbanis never explicitly aimed to support Baathist messaging, Mayer's framework explains how regimes can strategically recontextualise popular stories. Ministries, festivals, and media outlets reframed Rahbani plots as national epics, transforming their folkloric narratives into "emblems of an unassailable Arab heritage." Leahy highlights that "the performer's ability to unify disparate individuals underscores theatre's political implications."[92] Through state rhetoric, the musicals affirmed paternal power and collective defence while subtly discouraging individual dissent.

It is worth noting that Mayer's theory is employed here as an interpretive framework, not a methodology. While he reveals how stories emotionally bind audiences, this study uses other tools for data analysis. Critics of narrative politics caution that focusing on shared stories may overlook structural inequalities or conflicting interpretations. Nevertheless, Mayer's insights remain vital for understanding how narratives function as ideological glue, emotionally aligning audiences with embedded values.

In sum, Mayer's concept of narrative craftsmanship sheds light on how the Rahbani musicals, through heartfelt communal storytelling, became adaptable cultural instruments within a regime seeking to instil generational loyalty and historical grandeur.

[90] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 42.
[91] Cooke, *Dissident Syria*, 37.
[92] Leahy, *Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 49.

1.1.4 Smith's Orchestra: Nationalism and Identity on Stage

Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolic framework offers a compelling lens for understanding how the Rahbani Brothers' myth-infused musicals resonated with Baathist nationalism. While modernist theorists highlight state structures and material change, Smith contends that "the symbolic resources of the past—epic heroes, sacred rituals, and folkloric motifs—remain crucial in forging modern national identities."[93] The Rahbanis' evocations of ancient battles, ancestral figures, and communal rites served as these symbolic resources, allowing their productions to reimagine an enduring Arab ethos.

According to Smith, "nations emerge where myths of ancestry and territory converge in a compelling historical narrative."[94] In *Petra*, for example, the besieged city becomes a timeless stronghold, linking contemporary viewers to mythic defenders. These emotionally charged scenes illustrate how the Rahbanis invoked mythic history to evoke a sense of timeless Arab kinship. Stone echoes this, noting that "the staging of local folklore can create illusions of national uniformity."[95] Through such portrayals, the Rahbanis conveyed the impression of a deep-rooted, unified Arab identity.

Smith further argues that "the power of an ethno-symbolic tradition lies in its capacity to unify diverse groups under a single, evocative cultural vision."[96] Rahbani musicals, with their stirring anthems and heroic arcs, model this effect. Their emphasis on ancestral triumphs and shared cultural heritage dovetailed with Baathist ideals, providing the regime with a ready-made script to legitimise political authority. As Cooke notes, recontextualised performances can gain "persuasive power beyond mere entertainment."[97]

Ethno-symbolism's notion of a 'usable past'[98] helps explain why these musicals, once endorsed by Syrian state media, served to link ancient heroism with modern governance. Their dramatisations affirmed Smith's claim that "selected myths readily legitimise contemporary power structures, provided they awaken genuine historical emotions."[99]

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[93] Smith, *National Identity*, 5.
[94] Smith, *National Identity*, 22.
[95] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 58.
[96] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 36.
[97] Cooke, *Dissident Syria*, 44.
[98] Usable past — Anthony D. Smith's idea that modern nations actively sift, reshape, and ritualise fragments of earlier myths, memories, and symbols to forge a persuasive lineage linking ancestral glory to present and future political projects; Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 64.
[99] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 110.

Yet this unity is not without costs. As Smith warns, "the mobilising force of myth can obscure differences, promoting unity at the cost of minority voices."[100] The Rahbanis' emphasis on solemn duty and collective identity reinforced the Baathist vision of an eternal Arab nation. Leahy observes that a "shared sense of history heightens emotional commitment, rendering dissent akin to cultural betrayal."[101] These plays thus framed loyalty as sacred, drawing on what Smith terms a "sacred covenant"[102] to preserve and defend ancestral legacies.

It becomes clear why Baathist Syria so readily embraced the Rahbani oeuvre. Their romantic patriotism closely echoed the Baathist motto, "One Arab Nation, with an Eternal Message."[103] Through Smith's lens, we see how folklore and emotional memory were co-opted to serve authoritarian unity. While critics caution that ethno-symbolism can idealise continuity and obscure the constructed nature of modern nationhood, Smith's insights remain crucial for showing how mythic tradition can be politically harnessed to forge powerful, unifying identities.

1.1.5 Melpomene[104] Coming: Integrating Theoretical Lenses into a Dual Analysis Approach

This study weaves together four core frameworks into a dual-method grid: close analysis of three Rahbani plays and reception study via press archives and diaspora interviews. Supplementary "assist lenses" (Leahy, Prasertsud, Schatz) sharpen the interpretive focus.

Situating these theories in Baathist Syria requires historical grounding. Heydemann, Hinnebusch, Van Dam, and Seale trace the state's cultural machinery—festival sponsorship, media control, and siege rhetoric—that enabled Rahbani musicals to migrate from Beirut stages to Syrian homes. Their work ensures analytic moves remain tethered to concrete institutions.

This framework sees theatre not as a reflection but as a production of politics. Through myth, melody, and memory, it naturalises paternal authority and sacrificial virtue. State-affiliated reviews and festival programmes circulate symbolic capital, embedding ideological cues. Yet interpretation remains fluid: exile audiences reframe scenes through memories of loss,

[100] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 78.
[101] Leahy, *Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 61.
[102] Smith, *National Identity*, 93.
[103] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Baathist Syria, 5.*
[104] Melpomene — in Greek religion, one of the nine Muses and patron of tragedy and choral song; Greek art typically shows her with the tragic mask and the club of Heracles, and some traditions name her as mother of the Sirens by the river-god Achelous; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Melpomene," accessed 15 August 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Melpomene.

censorship, or longing. Interviews thus explore where nostalgia upholds Baathists' unity, and where it fractures into dissent.

1.2 The Playbook: Methodological Architecture

This section outlines the methodological architecture I employ to interrogate Rahbani theatre as a crucible of nationalist ideology, detailing the materials that comprise the corpus, the examination of each layer, and why the fusion of qualitative content analysis, visual-semiotic reading, archival triangulation, and reflexive interviewing is indispensable for exposing the plays' political work. Each subsequent section builds upon the previous one, starting from qualitative content analysis, through the selection of relevant plays, systematic data collection, rigorous coding and thematic analysis, triangulation with interviews, and concluding with ethical and reflexive considerations, ensuring apparent cognitive coherence and logical sequencing.

1.2.1 The Director's Vision: Adapting Schreier's Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is "a systematic yet flexible technique for describing and interpreting large amounts of qualitative data whose meaning is complex, holistic, and context-dependent." Because its category system is refined in continuous dialogue with the material, QCA occupies an interpretivist middle ground that avoids the mechanical tallies of classical content analysis without dissolving into impressionism. That manoeuvrability is indispensable for Rahbani musical theatre, where melody, gesture, and chromatic spectacle fuse with lyric narrative to stage political myth rather than merely recount plot. Schreier herself notes that QCA can be tailored to "multimodal, theatrical material in which words, sound, and gesture form one meaning unit." [105] Because her scheme codes the segment rather than the medium, it allows me to treat dialogue, music cues, blocking, and costume within a single frame, rather than fracturing the play across separate film, music, and text analyses.

Respecting multimodality and Schreier's 'one-meaning-per-segment criterion,'[106] each coding unit integrates dialogue, musical cues, and representative visual frames, with a dedicated column for symbolic colours and costumes.[107] Analysis prioritises dialogue and narrative;

[105] Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 44–45.
[106] Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 133.
[107] Appendix A.1 Hierarchical Coding Framework.

visual or musical elements are coded only when they directly amplify or subvert the verbal theme, adhering to Schreier's relevance criteria.[108]

Segmentation aligns with Rahbani's dramaturgy, treating each numbered scene, defined by musical cadences and scenic changes, as a single integrated meaning unit. *Petra*, for example, yields five such units: its opening scene lasts eighteen minutes, yet the kingly oration, martial chorus, and crimson pageantry enact paternal heroism only in concert. Scene headers anchor all subsequent annotations in 'Hierarchical Coding Framework A,' [109] preserving the full semiotic weave. Schreier herself notes that a unit of coding "may be as large as an entire article," [110] if that span best captures the relevant aspect, and the project adopts that latitude to maintain the integrity of both verbal and visual registers.

The analytic procedure then circulates through five iterative passes: segmentation → open coding[111] → hierarchical framing → constant comparison[112] → analytic memoing. Schreier's qualitative content analysis manual outlines eight generic stages, but they are condensed here for the sake of parsimony and clarity. Stage 1 (formulating the research question) and Stage 2 (selecting material) were completed during the project design phase, so restating them in the methods workflow would be redundant. Stages 5–6 (trial coding; evaluate/modify) merge naturally into the fourth pass because, as Schreier notes, single-researcher studies typically fold piloting and revision into a continuous reflexive loop. Stage 8 (interpret and present) is reserved for the substantive chapters that follow; its analytic core therefore joins Pass 5 (analytic memoing), while the narrative exposition appears in the Textual Analysis chapter. This streamlined sequence retains a complete audit trail and meets Schreier's quality criteria of consistency and validity.[113]

Open coding of the pilot play produced 184 provisional labels, which were iteratively sorted into a thirteen-branch frame: Authority/Loyalty/Obedience, Sacrifice and Martyrdom, Cultural

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[108] Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 8.
[109] Appendix A 2.5 Textual Coding Scheme of the Play "Petra" and Appendix A 2.6 Visual Coding Scheme of the Play "Petra".
[110] Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 132.

[111] Open coding — the first grounded-theory step "for discovering concepts in your data," carried out by conceptualising, grouping, and structuring emergent categories before any axial links are drawn; Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 112–13. (Hence, when I jot "paternal-chorus" beside Petra's opening stanza, that is open coding.)

[112] Constant comparison — Schreier's cyclical routine of re-checking every newly coded unit against earlier ones "until no important aspects are overlooked," thereby sharpening categories and signalling theoretical saturation; Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 41–42. (In my QCA spreadsheets I keep revisiting each heroic-sacrifice scene until no fresh nuance appears.)

[113] Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, 30–34.

Authenticity versus Foreign Threat, and so forth.[114] Constant comparison across *Petra*, *Jibal al-Sawan,* and *Yaish Yaish* sharpened each definition: labels such as 'comic relief' were discarded when they carried no ideological freight, whereas sub-nodes were split when fresh evidence destabilised earlier boundaries. Schreier requires that frames remain unidimensional and mutually exclusive, and the present taxonomy complies with this requirement, even when two branches expand to a third tier. [115] Analytic memos accompany each coded excerpt, linking interpretations to historically grounded Baathist ideological keywords (Unity, Martyrdom, Leadership, Homeland, Revenge, etc).

Reliability in a single-researcher design hinges on transparency rather than intercoder statistics. Following Schreier's safeguard for lone analysts, I re-coded ten per cent of the material after a four-week interval; discrepancies prompted definition tweaks until the second pass converged with the first.[116] All spreadsheets, frame versions, and memos are archived in an encrypted repository, whose change-tracking log preserves every revision. My supervising professor and two colleagues regularly review this audit trail.

Because many of the Rahbani themes intersect with political authority, ideological legitimacy, and collective identity, it is essential to ground the QCA results within the socio-political logic of Baathist Syria. Foundational scholarship clarifies how culture and power intersect under authoritarian rule. Steven Heydemann argues that authoritarian institutions "manage the symbolic dimension of social conflict" to maintain ideological coherence.[117] Raymond Hinnebusch shows how populist socio-economic reforms wove messages of paternal authority and communal sacrifice into state structures, sustained by "populist mobilisation and ideological indoctrination."[118] Nikolaos van Dam details how sectarian and factional balances shaped both cultural production and regime stability.[119] Patrick Seale's history of post-independence Syria traces the emergence of heroic-defiance narratives that later underpinned Baathist legitimacy.[120] Taken together, these studies supply the historical and institutional context within which I interpret the Rahbani phenomenon.

[114] Appendix A 1. The Hierarchical Coding Framework.
[115] Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 75–76 (key point on unidimensionality and mutual exclusiveness of coding frames).
[116] Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, 157–58 (single-coder reliability: recommends double-coding at least ten per cent after a delay).
[117] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 12.
[118] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*, 88; Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, 64.
[119] Van Dam, *Struggle for Power in Syria*, 121.
[120] Seale, *Struggle for Syria*, 184.

1.2.2 Reading the Frame: A Lean Schreier-Bordwell Pas de Deux

Syrians learned the Rahbani canon by ear. Except for the televised *Petra*, the plays breezed through homes as radio waves, not flickering film. Even so, the missing pictures mattered. Festival photographs, programme stills, and the odd TV reprise wrapped the melodies in a skin of colour and posture—low-angle monarchs, scarlet cloaks, radial choruses—that quietly ratified the hierarchies the lyrics celebrated. To keep those silent cues from slipping through a text-first net, I graft a pared-down slice of David Bordwell's film grammar onto Schreier's QCA.

After each scene is segmented for dialogue, the footage runs once more; I pause on a single emblematic instant and note the play title with an hh:mm:ss stamp—*Petra* 01:22:15, for example—in a new Visual Register column beside the textual codes. Five signals travel with that stamp: camera angle, body geometry, costume hue, emblematic prop, and uninterrupted shot length. A low-angle coronation image is logged because it magnifies paternal rule and so reinforces Authority / Loyalty / Obedience; a crimson-gold cloak nods toward Sacrifice & Martyrdom or Bourdieu's prestige capital; a radial chorus tableau slides into National Identity & Cultural Unity; ancestral swords buttress Cultural Authenticity vs. Foreign Threat; and an unusually lingering take often marks Mayer's narrative pivot toward Resistance & Heroism. One line of prose links each cue to its verbal partner: "low-angle king + crimson cloak → Authority / Sacrifice." The Register and its memos live in the same encrypted archive as the QCA spreadsheets and undergo the same supervisory audit.

Why this slice of Bordwell? First, the source material is essentially a static multi-camera taping of stage action; variables such as depth-of-field shifts or axial cuts appear rarely and add little ideological torque. Second, radio-first audiences processed the plays schematically, retaining headline images (cloak colour, throne height) rather than cinephile minutiae; the five cues chosen mirror that economy of perception. Third, each cue maps cleanly onto an existing QCA branch—no new taxonomy, no inflation—satisfying Schreier's insistence that additional layers remain "tractable, transparent, and consonant with the primary category system."

In this lean form, the visual layer honours Schreier's one-meaning-per-segment rule while showing how colour, camera height, choreography, and duration quietly stiffened—or, for some exiles, strained—the songs of loyalty that Syria's airwaves kept alive.

1.2.3 Casting the Plays: Selection Criteria

The Rahbani dramatic catalogue for Fairuz comprises twenty-five theatrical works, preserved in Henry Zogheib's authoritative twenty-five-volume critical edition, and available via publicly accessible YouTube channels.[121] High-quality audio versions of all three study plays are publicly available on YouTube; each file reproduces the original Syrian radio reel, accompanied by a static frame that follows Zogheib's dialogue line by line.[122]

From this extensive corpus, this study focuses on three specific plays—*Petra* (1977), *Jibal al-Sawan* (1969), *Yaish Yaish* (1970)—each chosen for its thematic alignment with nationalist motifs central to this research: heroic sacrifice, paternal authority, and perpetual external menace. These selected plays sustain narrative arcs in which textual dialogue, musical motifs, and scenic tension collectively articulate significant ideological messages. The remaining works, while musically rich, tend toward lighter village comedies or tableau-like presentations whose ideological dimensions are insufficiently prominent for the current analysis.

The broader Rahbani oeuvre comprises twenty-five full-scale musical plays composed between 1957 and 1984, twenty of them in collaboration with Fairuz. Most debuted on the open-air stage of the Baalbek International Festival in the late 1950s and 1960s, with later Lebanese first runs at Beirut's Piccadilly Theatre (1970-77) and occasional Damascus premieres (1960, 1969, 1973). Early pastoral pieces such as *Ayyam al-Hassad* (أيام الحصاد,*Days of Harvest*, 1957) and *Bayaa al-Khawatim* (بياع الخواتم ,*The Ring-Seller*, 1964) celebrate village life; mid-period epics like *Hala wal-Malik* (هالة والملك, *Hala and the King*, 1967) and *Sah Ennawm* (صح النوم ,*Did You Sleep Well?*, 1970) broadened the canvas to national allegory; while late "nation-in-crisis" works—including *Mais el-Reem* (ميس الريم ,*The Meadow of Reem*, 1975), *Petra* (بترا, *Petra*, 1977-78), and *Ar-Rabih Assabeh* (الربيع السابع ,*The Seventh Spring*, 1984)—foreground resistance and collective heroism amid growing regional turmoil. The trend of mobilising an alternative historical imagination to reinforce Arab nationalist ideals may be even more pronounced in other Rahbani productions—most notably *Ayyam Fakhr al-Din* (أيام فخر الدين, The

[121] Henry Zogheib, ed., *الأعمال المسرحية الكاملة للأخوين رحباني* [*The Complete Theatrical Works of the Rahbani Brothers]* (Beirut: Dynamic Graphics, 2003).

[122] Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers, جبال الصوّان *[Jibal al-Sawan]* (audio, 2 h 06 m 30 s), YouTube video, posted 17 Feb 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyg4I_a_CSY (accessed 15 June 2025); يعيش يعيش *[Yaish Yaish]* (1 h 51 m 31 s), YouTube video, posted 8 Feb 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weSQ8LcKgEg (accessed 15 June 2025); بترا *[Petra]* (1 h 31 m 06 s), YouTube video, posted 20 Mar 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEyiXEjmhUA (accessed 15 June 2025). Subsequent notes cite these recordings by play title plus the time-code (e.g., *Petra* 01:31:06).

Days of Fakhr al-Din), a historical epic not analysed here due to its limited airplay and circulation within Syria, despite the enduring popularity of its songs among Arab audiences.

All three selected plays hold significant historical importance in Syria, having been prominently performed at festivals and extensively broadcast via Syrian State Radio, thereby embedding their messages into daily life. Regular rebroadcast schedules in contemporary newspapers, notably *Tishreen*[123] and *Al-Thawra*[124], document their persistent presence throughout the 1970s and 1980s, underscoring their embeddedness in the Syrian national cultural imagination.[125]

Although *Petra*[126] was mounted on the main stage of the Damascus International Fair[127], no film of that Syrian performance survives. Only two complete videos are extant. One records the Jerash Festival staging in Jordan's Roman Amphitheatre; the other preserves the Piccadilly Theatre production in Beirut, Lebanon. The Piccadilly cut is the version later licensed to Syrian Television, listed in the 1978 and 1980 programme schedules, and replayed during Fair Week broadcasts; therefore, it serves as the primary visual source here. The Jerash tape, absent from all Syrian state listings, is used only as a control when the Beirut angles blur choreography or costume details.

For *Jibal al-Sawan,*[128] *Yaish Yaish*,[129] no continuous video exists; analysis instead draws on high-fidelity audio transfers of Syrian radio reels, each cross-checked against Zogheib's critical editions and contemporary press reports. Access to Syrian audiovisual archives was closed in late 2024; § 1.2.4 details the alternative chain of sources assembled to fill that gap.

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[123] Tishreen/Tishrīn— Damascus-based Arabic daily launched 2 October 1975 by Legislative Decree No. 68 as an official mouthpiece of the Syrian Ministry of Information and the ruling Baath Party; David Commins and David W. Lesch, *Historical Dictionary of Syria*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 252.

[124] Thawra/Al-Thawra — Arabic daily launched in July 1963 as the official mouthpiece of Syria's ruling Baath Party, used to promote party ideology and state policy; Commins, *Historical Dictionary of Syria, 254.*

[125] *Al-Thawra, Tishrīn, Al-Watan, Al-Baath* (Damascus dailies) and *Al-Safīr, An-Nahar* (Beirut aailies), assorted issues 1978–1986 — consulted as contemporaneous press coverage.

[126] *Petra* (بترا, *Petra*) debuted July 1977 at Amman's Royal Cultural Palace and the Damascus Citadel, was revived in March 1978 at Beirut's Piccadilly Theatre, and subsequently travelled to Kuwait City, Baghdad, and the Carthage Festival (Tunisia). Jean Alksan, *الرحبانيون وفيروز: ألف عمل فني، خمسون عاماً من العطاء* [The Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz: A Thousand Artistic Works, Fifty Years of Giving] (Damascus: Dar al-Taqwin, 2010), 169–70.

[127] Damascus International Fair — state-run trade-and-culture mega-festival inaugurated in 1954 and held annually (with interruptions after 2011) to showcase Syrian industry and national imagery.

[128] *Jibal al-Sawan* (جبال الصوان, *Mountains of Flint*) premiered 31 July 1969 at the Baalbek International Festival and was restaged on 29 August 1969 inside the Damascus Citadel. Alksan, The Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz, 166-67.

[129] *Yaish Yaish* (يعيش يعيش, *Long Live!*) opened 8 February 1970 at Beirut's Piccadilly Theatre, launching a tour that later reached Cairo and several Gulf capitals. Alksan, The Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz, 166-67.

Christopher Stone's reception study confirms the canonical status of the Piccadilly *Petra* but reads the Rahbani corpus chiefly as a vehicle of Lebanese identity-building. [130] My focus diverges: the same Piccadilly images are examined here as raw material for Baathist cultural engineering—evidence of how Syrian state broadcasters recast a Lebanese folk epic as an ideological lesson.

1.2.4 Collecting the Props: Data-Collection Methods

In response to severe archival constraints, this study strategically assembled and authenticated a multi-layered corpus of primary and secondary sources. These materials were carefully selected to substantiate our central inquiry.

The study's textual foundation relies on Henry Zogheib's authoritative twenty-five-volume critical edition of the Rahbani scripts, which provides stable and accurate references.[131] These texts are complemented by high-fidelity audio recordings digitised from original Syrian broadcast reels, now widely available on YouTube. Meticulously cross-checked against Zogheib's editions, these recordings reflect the historically transmitted versions once disseminated through Syrian state media—their canonical status affirmed by Christopher Stone's scholarship on Rahbani reception.

Visual analysis primarily draws on three archival video recordings, also accessible via YouTube, selected for their completeness and historical reliability..[132] Chief among these is the full Beirut performance of *Petra*, which serves as the primary visual reference. Select stills—most notably Petra's crimson-and-gold coronation tableau—were extracted for their symbolic articulation of authority and sacrifice.[133] Scenes chosen for detailed visual coding were identified based on their thematic intensity and symbolic clarity, in alignment with the analytic categories established through qualitative content analysis. Each was systematically

[130] Christopher Stone, "The Baalbek Festival and the Rahbanis," 10–39; Christopher Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon,* chap. 2.
[131] Zogheib, *الأعمال المسرحية الكاملة*, vol. 6, 9 ,17
[132] Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers, *بترا [Petra]*, complete video of the Piccadilly Theatre production, Beirut 1977; digital copy, OnLebanon YouTube channel, posted 3 Apr 2021, accessed 15 Jun 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5W3kmlPDtM (licensed and rebroadcast by Syrian state television, 1978 and 1980); *جبال الصوّان [Jibal al-Sawan]*, high-quality video with on-screen script, Nasr Eldin YouTube channel, posted 21 Mar 2023, accessed 15 Jun 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jRm-my3bAs; *يعيش يعيش [Yaish Yaish]*, rare excerpt with Fairuz and Antoine Kerbaj, Mutasem Shehadeh YouTube channel, posted 15 Dec 2017, accessed 15 Jun 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77j76JBZXCA.
[133] Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, eds., *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), ix–x.

examined using Schreier's QCA protocol, enriched by visual-interpretive techniques drawn from Bordwell and Thompson.

Due to archival constraints, secondary artefacts were curated primarily from Syrian newspapers (*Al-Baath*[134]*, Tishreen, Al-Thawra*, 1969–1984), with selected supplements from Lebanon's *An-Nahar*[135] and *Al-Safir.*[136] Coding focused on headlines, lead paragraphs, front-page images, and festival announcements, informed by Edward Schatz's theorisation of 'soft authoritarianism,'[137] emphasising visually potent symbolic media framing. Enric Castelló further validates this focus, highlighting how selective visual portrayals significantly influence the construction of national identity.[138]

To triangulate these textual and visual sources, the study also conducted six online semi-structured interviews with members of the Syrian diaspora; the recruitment process, timetable, and full interviewing protocol are detailed in §1.2.6.

Practical considerations led to Word-based coding tables rather than software like NVivo or Excel. The coding scheme comprised four primary thematic categories—National Identity and Cultural Unity, Political Messaging and Propaganda, Resistance and Heroism, Social Structures and Class Dynamics—further subdivided into thirteen explicit subcategories. Each coded segment was specified by its exact timeframe within the performance, maintaining analytical clarity. Visual observations (costumes, symbolic colours, spatial arrangements) were recorded separately, enriching core thematic interpretations.

Thus, despite substantial archival limitations, this rigorously structured methodological design—integrating authoritative texts, historically validated recordings**,** targeted scene-selective visual analysis that codes one emblematic still per unit via a lean Schreier-Bordwell protocol**,** strategically curated newspaper archives, and diverse reflexive audience interviews—

[134] *Al-Baath* — Damascus-based Arabic daily founded in 1948 as the official organ of the Syrian Regional Branch of the Arab Socialist Baath Party; David Commins and David W. Lesch, *Historical Dictionary of Syria*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 252.
[135] An-Nahar — Beirut's oldest liberal daily, founded on 4 August 1933 by journalist–publisher Gebran Tueni; long regarded as Lebanon's "newspaper of record" and noted for its outspoken criticism of Syrian influence during and after the civil war; https://www.annahar.com/.
[136] *Al-Safir* — pan-Arab, Arab-nationalist daily launched in Beirut on 26 March 1974 by Talal Salman under the slogan "Voice of the Voiceless"; one of the country's largest papers until financial pressure forced its closure on 31 December 2016; http://www.assafir.com/.
[137] Soft authoritarianism — Edward Schatz's label for regimes that keep opposition on a tight leash chiefly through *agenda-setting power*—framing public debate, managing media, and channeling political outcomes—rather than through mass terror, while still retaining coercive tools in reserve; Edward Schatz, "The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit," 203–206.
[138] Castelló, "The Nation as a Political Stage: A Theoretical Approach to Television Fiction and National Identities," *International Communication Gazette* 71, no. 4 (2009): 303–320.

ensures a transparent, replicable basis for examining Rahbani theatre as a powerful vehicle shaping Syrian nationalist discourse.

1.2.5 Decoding the Dialogue: Coding Framework & Thematic/Narrative Analysis

The hierarchical coding framework serves as the explicit analytical tool, structured according to Schreier's qualitative content analysis (QCA) methodology and systematically aligned with the theoretical lenses of Gramsci, Bourdieu, Mayer, and Smith. It comprises four main thematic categories derived directly from these theoretical foundations. National Identity and Cultural Unity (five subcategories) addresses explicit ideological constructions of nationalism, unity, collective identity, historical mythology, and cultural authenticity, drawing on Smith's ethno-symbolic nationalism and Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. Political Messaging and Propaganda (three subcategories) encompasses dramaturgical and narrative elements that promote political legitimacy, authoritative loyalty, and moral or religious justification, aligning with Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital and Gramsci's notion of ideological consent. Resistance and Heroism (three subcategories) highlights narratives of revolution, martyrdom, and heroic sacrifice, directly reflecting Mayer's theory of narrative politics, emphasising collective storytelling and political mobilisation. Finally, Social Structures and Class Dynamics (two subcategories) examine representations of social hierarchy and gendered leadership roles, informed by Bourdieu's concept of symbolic distinction. Each subcategory was defined based on core thematic inquiries, ensuring transparent interpretation and analytical coherence.[139] Appendix A 1.3 provides a structured mapping of how each subcategory aligns with its core theoretical anchor.

The theoretical framework was operationalised through close narrative and visual readings of specific scenes.[140] Following Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, thematic categories such as "Sacrifice for the Nation" were interpreted as culturally and politically naturalised ideological constructs. Queen Shakila's choice to prioritise national sovereignty over her daughter's life in *Petra* illustrates Gramsci's conception of how ideological narratives internalise and valorise personal sacrifice as collective virtue.[141] Bourdieu's symbolic capital

[139] Appendix A 1. Hierarchical Coding Framework
[140] Appendix A 1.3 Theoretical Anchor Glossary
[141] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 12–13 (clarifies Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony as the naturalisation of dominant ideology through cultural institutions); Leahy, *Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 12–15 (highlights how theatre functions as a persuasive tool that reinforces ideological consent through narrative).

guided explicit interpretation of visual symbolism, such as regal attire and hierarchical staging, underscoring authority and social legitimacy, thus reinforcing political hierarchies symbolically enacted on stage.[142] Mayer's narrative politics shaped the analysis of storylines illustrating national struggle, resistance, and heroism, highlighting how these narratives strategically mobilised audience emotions and collective identity formation.[143] Finally, Smith's ethno-symbolism informed an explicit analysis of historical narratives, such as the symbolic portrayal of *Petra* as a timeless emblem of Arab cultural authenticity, evoking collective memory and nationalist mythology.[144]

To enhance interpretive precision, the framework enabled comparative analysis of thematic recurrence and narrative coherence across scenes and plays. This process clarified subtle distinctions in subcategories such as 'Resistance and Revolution' and revealed how similar motifs operated differently across the Rahbani repertoire. Insights from qualitative interviews added further nuance and served to corroborate emerging interpretive patterns.

Thus, the structured coding framework, which integrates textual analysis, visual symbolism, and theoretical interpretation, ensures methodological coherence and analytical validity, demonstrating Rahbani theatre's role in shaping Syrian nationalism.

1.2.6 Calling the Chorus: Structuring the Interviews

Between June and August 2024, participants were identified through targeted online searches across diaspora social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, and cultural forums) and informal diaspora networks. Approximately fifty personalised invitations, explicitly outlining the research objectives and ethical commitments, were then sent to prospective participants. Fifteen invitees responded positively, but seven later withdrew because of political sensitivities, safety concerns, or discomfort discussing politically charged topics. From the remaining cohort, I purposefully selected a final group of six interviewees, balanced by gender, age, ethnicity, and religious affiliation, and deliberately excluded academics to foreground

[142] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 37–42; Bourdieu explicitly examines the "field of restricted production," highlighting the autonomy of artistic creation and symbolic value separate from market logic. He discusses the interplay of artists, critics, and cultural institutions in consecrating artistic works, thus defining their symbolic value and cultural legitimacy independently from purely economic considerations.
[143] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 125–142; Mayer explicitly describes how effective political narratives function to mobilise collective identity and action. He argues that shared stories emotionally resonate with audiences, enabling individuals to unite around common political goals and ideals, thereby overcoming barriers to collective action.
[144] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation,* Preface.
Smith clearly outlines his ethno-symbolic approach, emphasising the critical role of myths, collective memories, symbols, and cultural traditions in shaping enduring national identities. He argues that such historical narratives foster a profound sense of communal continuity and unity, essential for sustaining national consciousness.

experiential rather than analytical narratives.[145] This intentional selection prioritised lived experience and emotional engagement, illuminating how Rahbani theatre shapes perceptions of identity, memory, and collective experience across diverse Syrian social contexts.

From October 2024 to May 2025, the study ultimately conducted six online semi-structured interviews with Syrian diaspora members, following Galletta's methodology.[146] The reduction to six interviews was due to political instability, safety concerns, and difficulties accessing participants during the Syrian conflict. Participants (aged 30–68; three men and three women) were non-academics unknown to the researcher, strategically chosen from six Syrian cities (Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, Idlib, and As-Suwayda). The interviews also served to triangulate textual and visual findings, situating them within the frameworks of narrative politics and ethno-symbolic nationalism.

The interviews followed a structured yet flexible guide adapted from Galletta's three-phase structure.[147] The guide comprised three defined segments: an Opening Segment (Memory Warm-up), a Middle Segment (Critical Recall), and a Closing Segment (Retrospective Identity).[148] The Opening Segment allowed participants to share personal backgrounds, connections to Syria, and familiarity with the Rahbani Brothers' productions, establishing personal rapport and comfort. The Middle Segment explored participants' perceptions of themes identified previously in the analytical framework, including national identity, cultural authenticity, political messaging, resistance and heroism, and social hierarchies. Each thematic area included carefully crafted and sensitively phrased probes, reflecting the anticipated political and emotional sensitivities in the interviews. The final segment encouraged participants to reflect on how their experiences with Rahbani theatre had shaped their ongoing perceptions of Syrian identity, history, and collective memory, particularly within contemporary political and diasporic contexts. Given practical limitations, ethical considerations, and the sensitivity of discussions, audio recordings were avoided. Instead, I systematically compiled detailed written notes and analytical summaries, ensuring a clear and accurate representation of participant narratives. The interview findings were then presented in analytical summaries, serving primarily as supplementary material to enrich, validate, and triangulate thematic interpretations derived from textual and visual analysis. These interviews

[145] Appendix B 1. Participant Profiles
[146] Galletta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview*, 45–74.
[147] Galletta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond,* 45–72. Galletta emphasizes a flexible three-phase interviewing structure designed to facilitate reflective personal narratives and in-depth critical discussions.
[148] Appendix B 2. Semi-Structured Interview Guide," which provides the complete, structured interview guide explicitly utilized in this study, detailing the specific questions and follow-up probes aligned with Galletta's methodological framework.

did generate new thematic categories, and their qualitative interpretations aligned with Schreier's qualitative content analysis framework, contributing valuable depth and experiential nuance to the research findings.[149]

Overall, participant interviews provided an essential human dimension, grounding theoretical interpretations in lived experience and emotional resonance. Reflexivity regarding my positionality as a Syrian researcher guided the moderation of interviews, data interpretation, and ethical practice throughout the interviewing process. Explicit considerations related to participant withdrawal, confidentiality, emotional sensitivity, and ethical rigour are discussed comprehensively in the subsequent section.[150]

1.2.7 Respecting the Narrative: Ethical & Reflexive Considerations

To uphold rigorous ethical standards, this research adhered to formal protocols for obtaining informed consent, maintaining anonymity, and ensuring data security. All participants signed written consent forms, and all notes and analytic summaries were stored in an encrypted, password-protected archive.[151] Ethical approval and ongoing oversight were granted by my supervising professor, who reviewed each methodological report, protocol, and analytic summary.

Recognising my cultural and emotional ties to Fairuz and the Rahbani legacy, I adopted a continuous reflexive stance. Informal peer-debrief sessions—with two Syrian colleagues (MA-level, unaffiliated)[152] and my partner (a political-science specialist) —enabled critical scrutiny and disconfirming feedback throughout the analytic process. This structured reflexivity helped ensure that personal admiration did not compromise scholarly rigour or interpretive balance.

Furthermore, I wish to clarify my ethical and interpretive stance regarding the Rahbani Brothers' relationship with the Syrian government. I reject any suggestion that Fairuz or the Rahbani Brothers consciously colluded with, or endorsed, Baathist authoritarianism. Their works consistently expressed pro-Syrian and humanitarian values and, at times, subtly resisted

[149] Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice,* 5–6. Schreier emphasizes methodological transparency and systematic categorization in qualitative data analysis, underscoring the importance of aligning interview analysis clearly with predetermined thematic categories.
[150] Ethical considerations, confidentiality, reflexivity, and detailed implications of participant withdrawal are explicitly addressed in Section 3.6, "Respecting the Narrative: Ethical & Reflexive Considerations.
[151] Appendix B 3. Consent Form for "A Quest to Catch a Goddess: The Rahbani Brothers and Syrian Narratives of Nationhood"
[152] I am grateful to Ammar Hatem (M.A. *Art and Context*, Universität der Künste Berlin, 2023) and Jana Shalgheen (M.A. *Media Studies – Cultural Analysis*, Leiden University, 2020) for independently re-coding a 10 percent sample of scenes and helping to reconcile discrepancies; any remaining errors are my own.

oppressive structures through artistic means. My exploration instead considers how the Baathist regime may have appropriated these cultural productions to bolster its ideological narratives. I also recognise that, if misconstrued, my findings could be exploited by Syria's current totalitarian religious authorities to delegitimise the Rahbani legacy and reinforce anti-artistic discourse. To mitigate this risk, I consistently reaffirm my deep respect for the Rahbanis' work and approach their legacy with critical impartiality. This study aims to illuminate the historical interplay between art, politics, and authoritarianism, without diminishing the enduring artistic and humanistic value of their contributions.

I further acknowledge certain limitations inherent in this research. The small-scale, qualitative approach—shaped by political sensitivities, logistical challenges, and ethical responsibilities—means that the findings, while rigorously developed, remain contextually situated and should not be generalised uncritically. Moreover, due to external constraints, some areas of inquiry could not be fully explored. Nonetheless, this study represents one of the first dedicated scholarly attempts to examine the cultural and political reception of the Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz within the context of Baathist Syria.

To improve linguistic accuracy, clarity, and lexical variety, I used Grammarly, a computerised proofreading application, strictly as a proofreading aid. The software flagged grammar, spelling and punctuation issues and offered synonym suggestions. I manually reviewed every suggestion and accepted or rejected it at my own discretion. Grammarly was not used to paraphrase, rewrite or generate content. All conceptualisation, argumentation, organisation of ideas and substantive wording are entirely my own.

1.3 Interplay of Theory, Method & Research Questions

Gramsci, Bourdieu, Mayer, and Smith step onto the stage as cue-masters, each triggering a distinct analytic move. Gramsci's drama of consent steers the QCA codebook toward sacrifice, loyalty, and paternal rule—moments where obedience is sung, not shouted. Bourdieu's ledger of symbolic capital redirects the spotlight to press dossiers and scholarly autopsies of Baathist Syria (Seale, Hinnebusch, Stone, etc.), letting newsprint and archival commentary expose how prestige is narrated within the plays themselves—who gets to speak, who is silenced, whose honour is traded like a coin. Mayer's compass of narrative pivots insists on scene-level segmentation so a single choral swell or plot reversal can be isolated, spotlighted, and scored. Smith's myth-symbol complex justifies a visual-semiotic layer: still frames capture ancestral

insignia, desert fortresses, and ritual colours that carry yesterday's legends into today's politics. Together, theory tells method where to look and what to count, ensuring every conceptual line has a concrete stage direction.

This circuitry feeds straight into the inquiry. RQ 1—Do the plays mirror Baathist ideals? Gramsci-driven codes reveal how heroic sacrifice and paternalistic authority are reflected across text, melody, and mise en scène. RQ 2—How were the musicals reframed within Syrian discourse? Bourdieu, read through journalistic archives and political scholarship, uncovers how symbolic capital is woven into plotlines, elevating loyal heroes and marginalising dissenters. RQ 3—How do Syrians now remember them? Interview testimony is re-read through the same Gramsci-Bourdieu-Mayer-Smith grid, measuring resonance, dissonance, and quiet defiance. With the logic chain now lit from wings to footlights, Chapter 2 shifts the gaze outward, situating the Rahbani phenomenon within the broader Baathist cultural context.

Chapter 2: The Curtain Rises—Context and Literature

This chapter establishes the socio-political and cultural contexts essential for understanding Rahbani theatre within Baathist Syria from 1963 to 2011. It systematically situates the Rahbani Brothers' works within the broader historical context of Baathist authoritarian governance, highlighting the interplay between cultural production and political discourse. The analysis begins by outlining the foundational historical conditions of Baathist Syria, which are informed by authoritative studies from Heydemann, Hinnebusch, Van Dam, and Seale. It then explores the cultural significance of the Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz in the broader Arab region through the scholarship of Stone, Traboulsi, and Modestou.[153] Subsequent sections outline the theoretical underpinnings that inform this study, drawing on critical perspectives from Gramsci, Bourdieu, Mayer, Smith, Cooke, Leahy, and Prasertsud. The chapter further introduces key Rahbani theatrical works, illustrating how their thematic narratives resonated with, contested, or were appropriated by Syrian state narratives. Concluding with an exploration of how these works were received within Syria, supported by archival newspapers and scholarly analyses, the chapter creates a nuanced transition toward a detailed textual examination of the Rahbani plays.

2.1 Historical Backdrop of Baathist Syria

The Baath Party's rise to power in 1963 marked a profound reordering of Syria's political and social landscape, widely characterised as a "revolution from above."[154] Through sweeping reforms, especially land redistribution and nationalisation, the regime dismantled traditional landholding and mercantile elites, channelling resources to marginalised groups and embedding socialist-nationalist ideals into the structure of daily life.[155] These transformations reconfigured power relations, establishing the Baathist state as the dominant agent of socioeconomic authority.[156]

[153] Anastasia Modestou, "Fairuz as a National Symbol," *SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research* 13 (2019/2020): 172–185.
[154] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, 46.
[155] Ibid., 47.
[156] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 167.

This project of institutional consolidation aimed not only to redistribute wealth but to manage Syria's diverse social tensions. Rather than evolving organically, Baathist structures were deliberately engineered to integrate disparate groups—peasants, workers, students, and professionals—into a unified authoritarian framework that enabled top-down cohesion and restricted political expression.[157]

A key component of this cohesion was the regime's tactical engagement with Syria's sectarian and ethnic pluralism. While Baathist rhetoric officially condemned sectarianism and upheld secular pan-Arabism, the regime in practice instrumentalised communal divisions through selective balancing to reinforce its own centrality.[158] Sectarian identities were not openly institutionalised, but informally leveraged to secure internal stability.[159]

Cultural policy mirrored these dynamics. Cultural productions were tailored to resonate across sectarian and regional boundaries, subtly embedding communal distinctions without overtly legitimising them. In doing so, state-sponsored institutions became essential to maintaining regime stability, projecting national unity while containing pluralism beneath an integrated state model.[160]

This ideological strategy was further anchored in the regime's selective embrace of Arab-Islamic heritage. Despite its secular and socialist orientation, Baathist discourse consistently invoked Syria's Islamic and pan-Arab past, especially its 'Umayyad'[161] legacy, to position the state as guardian of a venerable civilizational lineage.[162] These appeals resonated strongly with Syria's Sunni majority, bolstering regime legitimacy without explicit sectarian alignment.[163]

The Baathist state also cast external threats, mainly from Israel and Turkey, as existential challenges to Arab sovereignty. By invoking regional conflict and historical grievance, the regime justified authoritarian centralisation as a necessary defence of national dignity.[164] In

[157] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 170; Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, 62.
[158] Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, 62.
[159] Ibid., 75.
[160] Ibid., 75.
[161] Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 CE) — the first hereditary Muslim dynasty, headquartered in Damascus, whose rule stretched from the Iberian Peninsula to the Indus and whose monuments—above all the Great Mosque of Damascus—remain key symbols of modern Syrian heritage; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Umayyad dynasty," accessed 23 Novmber 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Umayyad-dynasty-Islamic-history.
[162] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*, 60.
[163] Ibid., 43.
[164] Ibid., 58.

this framing, security, identity, and political obedience were braided into a single ideological fabric.

Cultural production was central to the ideological apparatus. Della Ratta demonstrates how Syrian television dramas advanced progressive social themes within state-defined ideological limits, employing what she calls a "top-down enlightenment."[165] Cooke similarly describes "commissioned criticism," whereby intellectuals expressed dissent through approved platforms, thereby reinforcing regime narratives even as they appeared to challenge them.[166]

Together, these strategies—societal structural engineering, sectarian management, symbolic inheritance, and cultural choreography—composed the matrix of Baathist authoritarianism. Understanding this matrix is crucial to situating Rahbani theatre within Syria's political culture, where artistic texts could be embraced, reframed, or redeployed within an apparatus deeply invested in cultural soft power.

2.2 Cultural Significance of the Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz

Against the ideological backdrop outlined above, the musical-theatrical project created by the Rahbani Brothers and voiced by Fairuz offered Baathist Syria a ready-made artistic vocabulary of Arab unity and moral steadfastness. Their earliest productions, staged at Baalbek in 1957 and immediately rebroadcast by Radio Damascus, fused Lebanese village lore with classical Arabic poetics and Western orchestration—demonstrating that a local aesthetic could modernise without losing its folkloric authority.[167] The resulting "mountain-village" idiom circulated through Syrian airwaves, where listeners heard songs praising both Lebanon and "Syria the brave," signalling the repertoire's utility for multiple nationalist imaginaries.[168]

Central to this cross-border appeal was Fairuz's voice, widely described by Arab critics as a "sound-image of homeland," condensing memories of exile, longing, and perseverance into a single melodic phrase. Arab poets amplified this perception: Mahmoud Darwish[169] wrote that her voice "guides us to what makes enemies a family," while Muhammad al-Maghut[170] claimed

[165] Donatella Della Ratta, *Shooting a Revolution: Visual Media and Warfare in Syria* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 16–22.
[166] Cooke, *Dissident Syria*, 4–6, 65–80.
[167] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 25–26.
[168] Ibid., 47–48.
[169] Mahmoud Darwish: Palestinian poet, 1941–2008, known for writing on exile, resistance, and national identity, *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Mahmoud Darwish" accessed 29 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahmoud-Darwish.
[170] *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Mohammed al-Maghout" (Syrian poet and playwright, 1934–2006, pioneer of Arabic prose poetry and known for his satirical critique of Arab politics), accessed 29 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mohammed-al-Maghout.

that "a song of Fairuz is more important than the poetry of 'al-Buhturi'[171]." Badawi al-Jabal,[172] Saʿid Akl,[173] and Nizar Qabbani[174] all composed lyrics for her, confirming her status as a bridge between elite letters and popular sound. These songs, first embedded in dramatic scenes that paused the plot for emotional climax, soon migrated beyond the stage, circulating on 45-rpm discs and looping on Radio Damascus until they gained independent emotive power. When she premiered *Zahrat al-Madain* (زهرة المدائن, *The Flower of the Cities*) in 1967, its fusion of Quranic and Christian cadences framed Jerusalem as the spiritual capital of the 'Arab Umma.'[175] Syrian student unions adopted it as a hymn of resistance. By the early 1970s, such songs had become a recurring feature at rallies and in cassette stalls, allowing Damascus officials to promote unity without recourse to overt ideology.[176]

The Rahbanis routinely staged peasants, prophets, or martyrs whose triumphs validated collective survival.[177] Such redemptive structures mirrored Baathist preferences for narratives of sacrifice and renewal; fittingly, a 1977 Damascus season opened with *Petra*, whose climactic self-sacrifice echoed official invocations of *sumud* (صمود, steadfastness).[178] Meanwhile, choreography elevated 'Dabke'[179] from rustic ritual to stylised spectacle, illustrating how rural forms could be modernised and re-exported—an approach later mirrored in Syrian television heritage programs.[180]

Equally significant was the repertoire's linguistic strategy: songs and dialogue pivoted between Levantine Amiyya for immediacy and strategic bursts of Fusha for gravitas. This hybridity

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[171] al-Buhturi: Abbasid-era Arab poet, 820–897 CE, noted for his courtly and descriptive poetry, *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "al-Buhturi" , accessed 29 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/al-Buhturi

[172] Badawi al-Jabal: Syrian neo-classical poet and public intellectual, 1905–1981, known for his classical style and nationalist themes, *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Arabic Literature: Categories and Forms", accessed 30 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/art/Arabic-literature/Categories-and-forms.

[173] Said Akl: Lebanese poet and language reform advocate, 1912–2014, known for contributions to Lebanese nationalism, *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Said Akl", accessed 29 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Said-Akl

[174] Nizar Qabbani: Syrian poet and diplomat, 1923–1998, known for romantic and political poetry, *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Nizar Qabbani, accessed 29 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nizar-Qabbani.

[175] The term *umma* originally denoted a tribal or kinship-based group in pre-Islamic Arabia. With the rise of Islam, it was redefined by the Prophet Muhammad to signify a moral and spiritual community of believers, transcending lineage, ethnicity, and geography. In the twentieth century, Arab nationalist movements—particularly the Baʿth Party—revived and secularised the term, deploying *umma* to articulate a vision of pan-Arab unity rooted in shared language, culture, and destiny rather than religious faith. See "Ummah," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last modified May 8, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/ummah.

[176] زهرةُ المدائن [The Flower of the Cities]—a 1967 Jerusalem anthem with lyrics by Saʿīd ʿAql and music by ʿAṣī & Manṣūr Rahbani, premiered by Fairuz at the Cedars Festival weeks after the Six-Day War and issued on the LP Al-Quds fī l-Bal; the song's mournful-defiant plea for the city's liberation quickly became the best-known Arab popular hymn to Jerusalem and a touchstone of pan-Arab sentiment. Stone, Popular Culture and Nationalism, 227

[177] Fawaz Traboulsi, فيروز والأخوين رحباني: مسرح الغريب والكنز والعجب *[Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers: The Theatre of the Strange, the Treasure, and the Marvel]* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2006), 45.

[178] Arab Thought Foundation, «وطن اسمه فيروز: «فيروز مطربة الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل *[A Homeland Called Fairuz: "Fairuz, Singer of the Past, Present and Future]* (Beirut: Arab Thought Foundation, 2022), 40.

[179] Dabke (دبكة) — a Levantine line-and-circle folk dance of rhythmic foot-stomping performed at weddings and village festivals across Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan; the Rahbani Brothers' 1960s stage musicals set professionally choreographed dabke troupes beside Fairuz, turning a rural custom into a national emblem of Lebanese identity; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Dabkah," accessed 15 June 2025, https://www.britannica.com/art/dabkah

[180] Hashem Qassim, الظاهرة الرحبانية: مسيرة ونهضة *[The Rahbani Phenomenon: Journey and Renaissance]* (Beirut: Bissan Publishing, 2018), 47.

aligned with Arab debates on the legitimacy of spoken dialects in serious art, demonstrating that vernacular vitality and nationalist gravitas could coexist.[181] The troupe's refusal to perform palace eulogies—publicised in 1965 when they cancelled a tour after declining an ode—enhanced their legitimacy as popular artists, bolstering their credibility within Syria's rhetoric of sovereignty rooted in the people rather than in rulers.[182]

A dedicated Fusha–Amiyya dynamic underpinned this effect. Everyday scenes, jokes, and romance unfolded in Amiyya, inviting identification, while climactic refrains and pan-Arab invocations switched to classical Fusha, drawing on a shared scriptural register. By braiding both within a single performance, the Rahbanis showed that vernacular expression could bear emotional weight while classical form conferred ceremonial heft, modelling a performative unity that paralleled the political one Syrians were taught to revere. Damascus critics cited this as evidence that modern theatre could honour both the vernacular soul and the literary heritage of the 'Umma,' a stance that was eagerly adopted in televised debates on language reform.[183]

This dynamic ran deeper than the register alone. Levantine Amiyya, shaped by contact with Aramaic and Syriac, retains guttural lenition, simplified case endings, and agrarian lexicon that foreground communal memory.[184] Classical Fusha, by contrast, represents the "high" prestige register in Arabic diglossia—canonised through scripture and courtly prose, and associated with the authoritative voice of state and scripture.[185] When the Rahbanis wove Amiyya's intimacy into their plots and crowned key moments with Fusha, they symbolically aligned village authenticity with metropolitan power, subverting classical hierarchy even as they invoked its prestige. Through this linguistic choreography, the Rahbani–Fairuz corpus mobilised nostalgia, resistance, and musical modernism in equal measure. For Syrian audiences, it offered both emotionally charged images of Arab solidarity and culturally prestigious material through which the state could affirm its nationalist imaginary. The theoretical stakes of this dynamic are taken up in the next section.

[181] Modestou, "Fairuz as a National Symbol," 173.
[182] Arab Thought Foundation, *A Homeland Called Fairuz,*162 .
[183] Arab Thought Foundation, *A Homeland Called Fairuz,* 303, 305.
[184] "A Guide to Levantine Arabic," Industry Arabic, n.d., accessed 17 february 2025, https://industryarabic.com/levantine-arabic-guide/.
[185] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Diglossia," accessed 17 February 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/diglossia.

2.3 Theoretical Underpinnings and Analytical Lenses

To trace how performance gains political traction under authoritarian regimes, four interlinked frameworks are synthesised here—previously outlined in theory, now applied—alongside key scholarship on authoritarian performance culture.

First, cultural hegemony explains how power is sustained less through force than through consent: popular art "naturalises" official values by aligning them with emotional intuition.[186] In Baathist Syria, repeated rebroadcasts of Rahbani musicals fostered just such assent, enabling the regime to appear both modern and authentically "Arab" without overt enforcement.[187]

In tandem, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital clarifies how cultural hegemony depends not only on emotional resonance but also on institutional validation: state festivals, critics, and media confer legitimacy, transforming aesthetic prestige into political capital. Once the Rahbani repertoire entered this endorsement circuit—through school assemblies, military concerts, or radio specials—its artistic cachet was transformed into symbolic credit for the regime.[188]

A third lens, narrative politics, reveals that stories do more than transmit ideology—they bind listeners into collective identities. This perspective asks how dramaturgy organises experience into arcs of exile, sacrifice, and redemption, inviting spectators to identify and act in unison.[189] Rahbani choruses of loyal villagers and prophetic leaders offered archetypes readily absorbed into Baathist rhetoric, especially in moments of national crisis.[190]

These stories also pull from older sources. Ethno-symbolism shows that national myths and sacred symbols are not invented whole, but revived and repurposed. Rahbani theatre dramatised village hospitality, Quranic resonance, and pan-Arab solidarity, tapping into shared mnemonic reservoirs that reinforced a supralocal Arab-Islamic imaginary while retaining Lebanese stylistic features.[191]

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[186] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 18.
[187] Ibid., 60.
[188] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 55.
[189] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 47.
[190] Stone, "Baalbeck Festival and the Rahbanis," 55.
[191] Smith, *National Identity*, 29; Arab Thought Foundation, *A Homeland Called Fairuz*, 86.

Finally, studies of performance under authoritarian rule warn that spectacle can both mask coercion and project an illusion of refinement. Regimes from Francoist Spain to Phibunist Thailand have used emotionally charged theatre to cultivate obedience while showcasing cultural vitality.[192] Yet spectators are rarely passive: as Schatz reminds us, audience reception is often ambivalent, oscillating between reverence and ironic distance.[193]

Taken together, cultural hegemony, symbolic capital, narrative politics, and ethno-symbolism form the scaffolding for the analyses that follow. They allow each lyric, gesture, and plot turn to be interpreted not simply as artistic form, but as a vehicle for consent, contestation, and national memory within Baathist Syria's broader ideological theatre.

2.4 Primary Rahbani Works Under Study

Viewed collectively, the three selected Rahbani plays form a coherent thematic cycle whose treatment of authority, communal sacrifice, and national resilience mirrors key motifs in Baathist Syria's political culture. Detailed close-readings begin with the three core texts—*Jibal al-Sawan* (1969), *Yaish Yaish* (1970), and *Petra* (1977).

Jibal al-Sawan opens with villagers under a decade-long occupation by the tyrant Fatik until Ghorba—the slain king's daughter—returns to lead resistance and willingly embraces martyrdom. Her sacrifice transforms personal grief into public victory, crystallising the Baathist ideal of steadfastness (*sumud*) as collective endurance against foreign threats. Ghorba's proclamation, "Do not be afraid... no prison can fit all people," embeds martyrdom within patriotic norms.[194]

In contrast, *Yaish Yaish* adopts a satirical stance, exposing the cyclical nature of authoritarianism through an emperor who regains power only to perpetuate oppression. The final refrain, "Shepherds in one valley, flock in another," captures both widespread disillusionment and the enduring desire for authentic leadership—a duality Baathist rhetoric often sought to manage.[195]

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[192] Cooke, *Dissident Syria*, 147.
[193] Schatz, "The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit," 206.
[194] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 126; Arab Thought Foundation, .195 "بناء الأيقونة.. فيروز في شخصياتها المسرحية," *وطن اسمه فيروز*, Ghorba's speech symbolizes collective resistance and martyrdom.
[195] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 132–33; Arab Thought Foundation, "فيروز... زهرة متفتحة في حديقة الذاكرة المصرية," *وطن اسمه فيروز*, .230 The play critiques cyclical authoritarianism, embodying public ambivalence toward leadership.

Dramatically, the arc culminates in *Petra*, where Queen Shakila sacrifices her daughter rather than yield to Roman demands. This tableau of maternal martyrdom circulated as a hymn of survival, affirming loyalty and unity as nationalist imperatives.[196] The foreign enemy is depicted as unambiguously hostile, underscoring the need for total allegiance to both homeland and ruler.[197]

Together, the three plays offer a modular myth-kit of sacrificial leadership, external menace, and collective discipline—readily adaptable to Baathist narratives of unity, vigilance, and obedience. This foundation underpins the detailed textual and reception analyses that follow.

2.5 From Reception to Appropriation: The Rahbanis in Syrian State Media

Syrian cultural pages quickly reframed the Rahbani repertoire from a Lebanese export into evidence that Baathist modernity could sing in an authentically Arab voice. When *Jibal al-Sawan* toured Damascus in 1969, *Al-Thawra* praised Ghorba's "blood that waters the mountain so freedom may sprout,"[198], presenting the drama as a parable of *sumud* against foreign tyranny. Two years later, *Al-Baath* lauded the troupe's "peasant epics" for turning "popular heritage into disciplined revolutionary theatre"—language echoing the regime's call for *thaqafa multazima* (committed culture).[199]

Throughout the 1970s, *Tishreen* regularly paired front-page war bulletins with Rahbani lyrics, most famously invoking Queen Shakila's self-sacrifice in *Petra* (1977) as "a mirror of Syria's steadfastness on the Golan."[200] *Al-Thawra*'s broadcast grids featured at least one Rahbani score in prime-time rotation into the late 1980s.[201] Meanwhile, Radio Damascus replayed full soundtracks on national holidays to "make the masses sing their unity."[202] Editorials bypassed dramatic nuance, extracting keywords—karama (كرامة, dignity), ghuraba (غرباء,strangers), Horas al-Aard (حراس الأرض, Guardians of the soil)—and redeploying them as affirmations of

[196] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 107–8; Arab Thought Foundation, «.41 ,وطن اسمه فيروز», «فيروز مطربة الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل» Queen Shakila's sacrifice functions as an exemplary narrative of maternal martyrdom and nationalist survival.
[197] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 107.
[198] *Al-Thawra* (Damascus), "غربة تقدّم دمها" [Ghorba Offers Her Blood], 22 Aug 1969, 5.
[199] *Al-Baath* , Riyad Ismat, "الخيال الأنثوي"["the Female Fantasy"], July 14 1971, 12; Thaqafa multazima ("committed culture") — a left-wing Arab notion of art that is *intentionally mobilised for political struggle*, offered as an "alternative culture" (*thaqafa badīla*) to both state-sponsored production and apolitical entertainment; it has long been invoked by Baathists to praise art that serves their revolution and resistance narrative; Mohamed-Salah Omri, *Confluency (tarafud) between Trade Unionism, Culture and Revolution in Tunisia* (Tunis: UGTT, 2016), 57–58.
[200] *Tishreen* (Damascus), «تضحية شاكيلا صورة الصمود» [Shakila's Sacrifice… An Image of Resilience], 4 August 1977, 7.
[201] *Al-Thawra* (Damascus), «جدول الافتتاحيات» [Openings Schedule], 15 January 1981, 9.
[202] *Radio Damascus*, «جدول البث» [Broadcast Schedule], 8 March 1984 (programme log, n.p.).

regime virtue. During the 2011 civil war, the Rahbani march "*Khabatet Qadamkom" (*خبطة قدمكم, *The stamp of your feet)* resurfaced as an unofficial anthem for Syrian Arab Army offensives.[203] At the same time, pro-regime station Sham FM looped Fairuz's *Indi Thiqa Fik* (عندي ثقة فيك, I have confidence in you) to signal unwavering support for state forces.[204]

Lebanese media took note of this cultural reappropriation. A 1991 *An-Nahar* feature noted that Damascus audiences "knew every refrain by heart,"[205] and when the Baalbek Festival clashed with the Rahbanis in 1997, *As-Safir* quoted Syrian officials who described the troupe as "strategic partners in disseminating Arab dignity."[206] A 2022 state-TV retrospective echoed the sentiment, dubbing Fairuz "our ambassador to the stars who taught Syrians how to love the homeland aloud."[207]

Christopher Stone attributes this embrace to ideological compatibility: pastoral solidarity, paternal authority, and redemptive martyrdom in Rahbani dramaturgy dovetailed with Baathist strategies for masking sectarian realities beneath the veneer of pan-Arab unity.[208] By circulating these plays through tightly controlled platforms, Syrian authorities converted artistic prestige into cultural authority, projecting cosmopolitan sophistication while reinforcing hegemonic messaging.[209]

This chapter has woven together historical context, cultural biography, and theoretical framing to demonstrate how the Rahbani corpus functioned in Baathist Syria as both an echo chamber and an amplifier. Baathists appropriated the brothers' village-modern aesthetic to dramatise steadfastness, sacrifice, and Arab unity. The plays themselves, rooted in older mythic codes, resonated with state narratives yet preserved ambivalent spaces for irony and dissent. By

[203] *Al-Watan* (Damascus), «خبطة قدمكم … نشيد الجيش» [Your Footsteps… The Army Anthem], 10 October 2013, 4.
[204] Sham FM, July 3 2013, https://sham.fm/article/1372882219. Throughout the Syrian civil war, the pro-regime Sham FM radio station broadcast Fairuz's patriotic songs, linking them to the Syrian army's battles. A famous line, uttered by broadcaster Hiam Al-Hamwi, became a staple of every radio program, linking Fairuz's song عندي ثقة فيك[I Have Confidence in You] to the Syrian Arab Army
[205] *An-Nahar* (Beirut), Mahir Abi-Samra, «تجربة الرحابنة» [The Rahbani Experience], 22 May 1991, 3.
[206] *As-Safir* (Beirut), «الرحباني يردّ على لجنة بعلبك» [Rahbani Responds to the Baalbek Committee], 2 July 1997, 8.
[207] *Syrian Arab Television*, cultural-magazine segment «ذكرى بيترا… فيروز إلى الكواكب» [Petra Anniversary… Fairuz to the Planets], broadcast 16 April 2022.
[208] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 47–48, 107 (noting that "from the early 1950s … the Rahbani Brothers dominated the airwaves of Radio Damascus; after their first Damascus season they now always opened with a new song praising Syria and the Syrians, and broadcasts of their work in Syria soon out-numbered those in Lebanon," and later, in *Petra*, that "the war against Roman tyranny is won, but the daughter is sacrificed … the price of freedom is the life of the ethereal character Ghorba," evidence of the pastoral solidarity, paternal authority, and redemptive martyrdom that appealed to Baathist cultural brokers).
[209] Stone, "The Baalbeck Festival and the Rahbani Brothers," 33 n. 2 (observing that "many of these plays were also performed at the Damascus International Festival," indicating Syrian state sponsorship of the troupe's prestige repertoire); Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 47–48 (on the sustained prime-time rebroadcasts that "kept the Rahbani soundtracks in constant Syrian rotation," converting artistic cachet into symbolic capital for the regime).

mapping this layered dynamic, cultural circulation, ideological reframing, and textual motifs, we have defined the interpretive horizon within which the following close readings unfold.

Chapter 3. Textual and Visual Analysis of Selected Plays – Dissecting the Drama[210]

This chapter turns the project's Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) scaffolding into scene-by-scene close readings of *Jibal al-Sawan* (1969), *Yaish Yaish* (1970) and *Petra* (1977). Following the methods outlined in Chapter 1, every play was cut into narrative units that privilege dialogue and action; music, costume and scenography were logged separately so they nuance—but never overshadow—the textual core. Each unit was coded under four thematic umbrellas that mirror the study's theoretical lenses. Analytical memos were tagged with recurrent ideological keywords (unity, martyrdom, leadership), and a 10% reliability check after four weeks ensured consistency.

Instead of analysing the corpus thematically, the discussion proceeds play-by-play, allowing each drama's internal tensions to surface before comparison. Dialogue is quoted first in an English gloss; the original Arabic appears in the corresponding footnote. Every citation includes both a Zogheib page reference and a corresponding video timestamp. At strategic junctures, the reading loops back to the four theorists, illustrating how ritual, charisma, or satire mediates Gramscian consent, converts to Bourdieuian symbolic capital, or activates Mayer's narrative pivots. Each play then closes with a concise Visual Grammar Coda that revisits key scenes through the camera's eye, tying lens angle, palette, blocking and shot length back to the thematic codes logged in the QCA register.

By shifting from coding grid to textual grain, the chapter reveals how Rahbani theatre both reflected and adapted Baathist Syria's post-1967 ideological agenda, setting the stage for the next chapter's audience-reception analysis.

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[210] All textual references derive from Henry Zogheib's critical edition of the Rahbani plays—vol. 6 (*Jibal al-Sawan*), vol. 9 (*Yaish Yaish*), and vol. 17 (*Petra*)—supplemented by Syrian-radio soundtracks (1969–77) and the Beirut-television recording of *Petra* (1977) And the scattered video clips from *Jibal al Sawan* (1969) and *Yaish Yaish* (1970) mentioned in a previous footnote. Page numbers correspond to Zogheib; parenthetical time-codes (hh:mm:ss) point to the archival audio or video. Arabic dialogue is quoted in an English gloss in the body of the text, with the full Arabic original provided in the accompanying Chicago footnote. Subsequent citations of secondary literature follow Chicago short-form (author, short title, page). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Arabic are my own. In the pages that follow, citations combine a Zogheib page number with a YouTube shorthand of play-title plus time-code (e.g., *Petra* 01:22:15); the full URLs for all recordings appear once in § 1.2.4, note 1.

3.1 *Jibal al-Sawan (The Flint Mountains) 1969*

Play-Card

Total scenes	5 continuous tableaux
Running time	≈ 2 h 06 m (complete 1969 audio broadcast) + ≈ 34 m stage video
Script length	92 pp. in Zaghib's edition (vol. 6, *Jibal al-Sawan*)
Visual coding	Scenes 1–4 (00:05:27 – 00:17:24)
Textual coding	All five scenes, four QCA lenses

3.1.1 Context & Plot Synopsis

The drama unfolds in five extended scenes that trace a whole trajectory from conquest to liberation. It begins at the mountain gate: King Mudlij's death enables the invader Fatik to seize Jibal al Sawan, abolish the annual Grape Festival, and enforce loyalty through prisons and choreographed chants. A decade later, the villagers are sustained by one promise—that the king's lost daughter will return. Ghorba, identifiable by the dynasty's gate-shaped scar, steps into the square and transforms the still-clandestine festival into an overt call for revolt. Fatik answers with a meticulously staged "Victory Day," yet the pageant collapses when the singer Abdo refuses to praise him and Ghorba exposes the spectacle as a sham. The struggle ends where it began: at the threshold. Soldiers kill Ghorba, but her death is immediately recast as martyrdom; villagers, chanting harvest refrains, surge over the terraces, drive out the occupiers, and restore the festival as a sign of regained sovereignty.

Five tableaux are all the play requires. Western crisis-reversal-resolution mechanics keep the tension taut, while Levantine folk devices—such as zajal refrains, dabke bursts, and wedding-festival imagery—wrap each pivot in village ritual. The blend is deliberate. By threading doctrines of steadfastness (sumud) and blood redemption through familiar festive forms, the script converts ideology into folklore. Textually, these moves saturate the National-Identity, Propaganda, and Resistance codes; visually, four of the five scenes echo the same motifs, a convergence that the QCA grid records at an average of 4.7 thematic hits per minute.[211]

Because only 34 minutes of film survive—and even that in uneven quality—the available footage was assembled through purposive rather than exhaustive sampling. The selection

[211] For coding frequencies and reliability calculations, see Appendix A, Table 2.

follows the procedure detailed in Chapter 1, § 1.2 "Methodological Architecture": (i) narrative centrality—each recorded segment coincides with a structural pivot in the crisis arc; (ii) thematic density—all four filmed scenes rank above the seventy-fifth percentile for combined QCA codes; and (iii) modal complementarity—each clip displays a clear intersection of dialogue, gesture, chorus, and camera grammar. The surviving footage thus satisfies the study's criterion of analytical saturation. Scene 5, although unfilmed, remains indispensable: its text-audio track contains the densest burst of martyr rhetoric and anchors the causal paths reconstructed in § 3.5. The close analysis that follows, therefore, retains all five scenes, integrating shot-level evidence where available and relying on textual and aural cues where necessary.

Read in light of the Baath regime's drive, post-1967 war, to turn military defeat into a civic theology of 'sumud', *Jibal al Sawan* reads almost like an authorised catechism. Fatik personifies the ever-present "external enemy," while the banned Grape Festival restages the demand that heritage rituals underwrite loyalty, and Ghorba's martyrdom renders in flesh the claim that blood seals national redemption. Contemporary cultural pages folded the play into this template, praising its "martyr's soil" rhetoric and rebroadcasting key scenes on commemorative dates—classic examples of the regime's routine management of meaning.[212]

3.1.2 Scene 1 – King's Death at the Gate

Running time 00:05:27– 00:08:56 | QCA density ≈ 2.0 hits · min^{-1} (NI 2\PM3\RH 2\SC 0).

King Mudlij's refusal to kneel inaugurates the play's ideological economy. Facing the invader, he insists that "death is shorter than humiliation,"[213] (RH-1) and warns that the mountains will "spit out the occupier,"[214](NI-1). Both lines score simultaneously under Resistance & Heroism (defiance) and National Identity & Cultural Unity (territorial personification). Fatik tries to overwrite the moment by ordering a victory chorus to chant "Fire, fire breaks fire,"[215] a textbook instance of Political Messaging & Propaganda that seeks to convert raw coercion into a spectacle of inevitability (PM-1).

[212] Seale, Struggle for Syria, 243.; Heydemann, Authoritarianism in Syria, 1.
[213] «الموت أقصر من الذل» [Death is shorter than humiliation.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:05:55–00:06:03}; Zogheib, 6.
[214] «جبال الصوّان رح تبصق المحتل» [The Flint Mountains will spit out the occupier.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:06:04–00:06:11}; Zogheib, 6.
[215] «نار، نار، النار بتكسر النار» [Fire, fire, fire breaks fire.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:08:12–00:08:28}; Zogheib, 7.

Mudlij counters spectacle with genealogy, vowing that "the gate will be rebuilt by people, and right never dies,"[216] (NI-2). Sacrifice thus becomes a narrative credit that the community must later repay, activating the Historical Myth-Making sub-code within National Identity. Even Fatik's deputy finally concedes that "the king's death was mightier than the sword,"[217] inadvertently assigning Mudlij the prestige Bourdieu calls symbolic capital, and adding a hit to Resistance & Heroism for martyr valorisation (RH-2).

Gramsci reminds us that hegemony germinates in feeling before argument;[218] Bourdieu shows how such prestige can circulate as political credit;[219] Smith explains why blood shed at a city gate crystallises a myth-symbol complex anchoring national memory;[220] and Mayer classifies the tableau as a "founding trauma," the hinge against which every subsequent reversal will be measured.[221] Seen through all four lenses, Scene 1's five coded hits capture more than dialogue density: they mark the precise moment consent, prestige, myth, and dramatic crisis lock together, underwriting the mobilisation that closes the play (PM-2).

The king's final assertion, that right cannot be extinguished, seals the moral ledger: the occupier wins the gate, but the mountain people retain the story (PM-3). Subsequent scenes will cash in that narrative capital, confirming the QCA pattern whereby early clusters of Resistance and Identity codes foreshadow later collective action.

3.1.3 Scene 2 – Hanna's Prophecy & Ghorba's Return

Running time 00:09:31–00:16:10 | QCA density ≈ 1.2 hits · min⁻¹ (NI 4\PM 2\RH 1\SC 1)

Ten years after the gate fell, the stage is empty save for Hanna al-Sahiliyya, leaning on her white cane. She reminds onlookers that "King Mudlij's picture still hangs in every house that lost a son,"[222] (NI-1, RH-1). The line binds private grief to shared memory, logging twin hits for National Identity and Resistance. She then reads a reddening sun and a burning walnut tree, proclaiming that "the promised daughter will return to the gate,"[223] (NI-2). Smith terms such

[216] «البوابة رح يعمروها الناس، والحق ما بموت» [The gate will be rebuilt by people, and right never dies.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:06:30–00:06:43}; Zogheib, 6.
[217] «موت الملك أقوى من السيف» [The king's death was mightier than the sword.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:08:40–00:08:50}; Zogheib, 7.
[218] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 18–19.
[219] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 75–77.
[220] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 14-15.
[221] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 129.
[222] «صورة الملك بعدا معلقة بكل بيت فقد ابن» [King Mudlij's picture still hangs in every house that lost a son.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:09:45–00:09:55}; Zogheib, 14.
[223] «البنت الموعودة رح ترجع على البوابة» [The promised daughter will return to the gate.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:10:20–00:10:33}; Zogheib, 15.

prophecy a myth-symbol complex—trauma recast as covenant, refreshing communal borders.[224]

Moments later, the prophecy walks in. A cloaked girl bearing the dynasty's gate-shaped scar mounts the square's steps while villagers argue she may be Fatik's spy. Hanna silences doubt: "The story of the gate is written on her forehead,"[225] (SC-1). Recognition flips suspicion to euphoria. Ghorba throws off her cloak and urges the crowd to "tear away black clothes and raise the banner of pride,"[226] (NI-3, RH-2). The coding sheet tallies two further National Identity hits (ancestral mark, banner revival) and one Resistance hit for the public vow. Mayer would call this the tipping-point beat: the community shifts from passive remembrance to anticipatory resolve.[227]

Rumours surface only briefly—whispers that Ghorba is an impostor, that royalists have fled—but a collective chant of Mudlij's maxim, "right never dies," dispels the fog, earning the scene's first Propaganda tag (psychological warfare) (PM-1), and confirming Gramsci's claim that popular common sense is forged in open contest, not decreed.[228] Meanwhile, Ghorba's dramatic self-reveal, timed with the symbolic revival of the dynasty, functions as a performative political message aimed at reigniting loyalty. (PM-2)

Scene 2 thus completes three ideological moves in rapid succession: prophecy tethers loss to redemption, appearance verifies prophecy, and communal song neutralises rumour. With National Identity outscoring Propaganda 4 to 2, the QCA grid predicts an escalation of symbolic contest rather than concession, precisely what unfolds in Scene 3.

3.1.4 Scene 3 – Grape-Festival Defiance & the Traitors' Whisper-Campaign

Running time 00:40:01–01:08:50 | QCA density ≈ 0.49 hits · min^{-1} (NI 6\PM 4\RH 2\SC 2)

Festival drums burst across the square, and the chorus hurls its vintage harvest taunt at occupier and accomplice alike: "Scream, fox of the valley! You will never get grapes or love from us!"[229]

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[224] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 65–66.
[225] «قصة البوابة مكتوبة على جبينها» [The story of the gate is written on her forehead.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:14:09–00:14:25}; Zogheib, 15.
[226] «شلّحوا السواد وارفعوا راية العز» [Tear away black clothes and raise the banner of pride.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:15:30–00:15:50}; Zogheib, 24.
[227] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 128–29
[228] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 20–21.
[229] «صرّخ صرّخ يا ثعلب الوادي، ما لك عنّا لا عِنَب ولا حُب» [Scream, scream, you fox of the valley! You will never get grapes or love from us!] *Jibaal al-Sawan*,{00:40:05–00:40:25}; Zogheib, 41.

Every reprise fuses soil to sentiment, scoring a National-Identity hit (NI-1) and a Resistance hit (RH-1).

Ghorba steps into the ring and re-baptises the revelry as "the festival of fertility and the festival of love,"[230], turning folklore into a manifesto. Smith calls such seasonal rites "portable temples of memory," places where myth, territory and future vow are soldered together.[231] Villagers answer with a pledge to dance till the sword swings for joy, adding a second Resistance tally (RH-2) and pushing NI to four (NI-2,3,4). [232]

Abdo sharpens satire with his scarecrow fable, a thinly veiled indictment of official corruption. He snaps the punch line, "The watchman and the fox steal together,"[233], exposing collaboration in broad daylight. The quip registers the scene's sole Social-Structure tag (SC-1), and an extra Propaganda hit for moral mockery (PM-1). Mayer would call the moment an emotive frame shift; humour stiffened into resolve.[234]

Hope summons panic in minds that rule without recognition. Shahwan corners the deputy, croaking his vision of doom—*"*This country is born for wreck and ruin; I, grandson of the devil, smell the smoke already*"*—then names his price: "Start the rumour the royalists have fled; remember, money saves blood."[235] The speech logs two further Propaganda tallies(PM-2,3), and cements Social-Structure tension: gold seeks obedience where myth refuses (SC-2). Bourdieu explains the failure: coins lack the symbolic capital that clings to Mudlij's bloodline.[236]

Songs celebrate homeland victory and popular unity (NI-5,6), while mobilising chants expose corrupt authority, adding three further propaganda hits (PM-2,3,4). By curtain call, NI stands at six, while PM stalls at four. The coding grid, therefore, foretells the next clash, Scene 4's stage-managed Victory Day, when official spectacle will buckle beneath the folk energy it hopes to drown.

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[230] «عيد الخصوبة وعيد الحب» [The festival of fertility and the festival of love.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:45:10–00:45:18}; Zogheib, 42.
[231] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation,* 147–48.
[232] «تعى يا صيف» [The festival chorus "Come, Summer," promising love's return, swords dancing with joy, foxes driven out, victory celebrations, and a plentiful harvest] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:46:32 – 00:46:45}; Zogheib, 43.
[233] «الناطور شريك التعلّب بالسرقة» [The watchman and the fox steal together.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:50:22–00:50:30}; Zogheib, 44.
[234] Mayer, *Narrative Politics,* 132–33.
[235] «هاليلد خلقانة للخراب والدمار… أنا حفيد الشيطان… المال بيحفظ الدم» [This country is doomed to ruin… I am the grandson of the devil… money saves blood.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:54:20–00:54:58}; Zogheib, 47–48.
[236] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 70–71.

3.1.5 Scene 4 – Wedding Blessing & the "Victory Day" Flash-Point

Running time 01:18:50–01:45:33 | QCA density ≈ 0.45 hits · min⁻¹ (NI 5\PM 4\RH 3\SC 0)

Hanna raises her white cane and turns prophecy into benediction. She warns that "this land, hemmed by danger, must look to the sky,"[237] then steadies the square with "the name of this land is written on the brow of glory."[238] Peril becomes promise, logging two National-Identity hits and the scene's first Propaganda tick (NI-1,2; PM-1).

Ghorba fastens a silver bangle on the bride's wrist: "It's a gift from my father, the martyred King Mudlij; he gave it to me before he died at the gate."[239] Blood inheritance turns dowry, adding a third NI mark and the scene's first Resistance score (NI-3; RH-1). The chorus seals the pledge, praying the bride will be "wheat and sugar … amber and roses … the revolutionaries' lantern from house to house,"[240] tying fertility to insurgent duty; NI rises to four, RH to two (NI-4; RH-2). Smith calls such heirlooms mnemonic relays; objects that pass ancestral vows to living hands, sustaining covenant across generations.[241]

Mid-song, soldiers seize the bride's father, Abu Sakr, on a charge of "hiding rebels' wheat," an act of naked intimidation that posts the scene's second Propaganda tally and hardens village resolve (PM-2).[242]

Drums pivot blessing into Fatik's stage-managed "Victory Day*."* Banners flare, and the marshal presents Abdo as "poet of the Flint Mountains." Abdo scans the cue card, tears it in half, and declares, "Poetry belongs to my country, not to tyrants."[243] The square erupts; a Propaganda hit flips to Resistance as the official script collapses (PM-3 → RH-3). Filippini notes that hegemony splinters when everyday common sense publicly rejects its assigned text.[244]

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[237] «هي الأرض محاوطة بالخطر ولا بد أن تتطلع للسما» [This land surrounded by danger must look to the sky.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:18:55 – 01:19:06}; Zogheib, 49.
[238] «اسم هي الأرض مكتوب على جبين المجد» [The name of this land is written on the brow of glory.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:19:45–01:19:57}; Zogheib, 49.
[239] «هي سوارة من بيّي، عطاني ياها قبل ما يموت عالبوابة» [It's a bracelet from my father; he gave it to me before he died at the gate.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:32:18–01:32:26}; Zogheib, 50.
[240] «كوني قمح وسكر، كوني طيب وعنبر، وقنديل الثوار من دار لدار» [Be wheat and sugar, be amber and roses, a lantern for the revolutionaries from house to house.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:32:45–01:33:05}; Zogheib, 51.
[241] Smith, *Cultural Foundations of Nations,* 114–15.
[242] «مسكوا أبو صقر بتهمة الثورة و قمح الثوار» [Seize Abu Saʿr for revolution and the rebels' wheat.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:32:45–01:33:00}; Zogheib, 54.
[243] «الشعر لبلادي، مش للطغاة» [Poetry belongs to my country, not to tyrants.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:37:52–01:38:12}; Zogheib, 57.
[244] Filippini, *Using Gramsci,* 61–62.

Stung, officials promise wheat rations and coin for applause, two swift PM hits (economic inducement, ritual co-option) (PM-3,4). Yet the villagers drown the bribe with Mudlij's maxim *"*right never dies*"* recorded (NI-5). Backstage, the deputy hisses that "coin buys thicker cheers,"[245] but admits the treasury "bleeds at every gate." Heralding a conclusion in favour of the national narrative that intruders are destined for expulsion, the episode seals its lesson in the very moment of fiscal panic.

Numbers at blackout: NI 5, PM 3, RH 3. The coding grid predicts Scene 5's gate showdown, where prestige—not payment—will decide the mountains' fate; Mayer calls such convergences a narrative *trigger-point* that unlocks collective action.[246]

3.1.6 Scene 5 – Gate Showdown, Martyrdom & Harvest Victory

Running time 01:56:31–02:05:40 | QCA density ≈ 1.3 hits · min^{-1} (NI 7\PM 2\RH 3\SC 0)

Hanna's dawn chant rises over the terraces; birds, tiles, and wild grass all "speaking of a coming renewal."[247] Prophecy collides with power when Fatik reins in at the shattered gate and roars: "Hand me Ghorba if you want peace for your houses; when my hand falls, woe falls with it!"[248] Homeland is held hostage, and one Propaganda tally and a National-Identity hit (PM-1; NI-1).

Ghorba steps forward: "at the gate, as my father did, to fulfil the vow,"[249] then repeats the lineage creed: "Behind every rock and under every tree a new son of Mudlij is born."[250] Two further NI ticks and the first Resistance score leave the ledger (NI-2,3; RH-1).

Fatik answers with steel: "One sword clears a thousand doubts."[251] His blow fells Ghorba; villagers raise her body on a wave of "Oyyyha!" The ululation is the very wedding-cry we heard in Scene 4, so its reprise here braids nuptial joy and battle fury in one breath, turning the bridal blessing into a battle standard without altering a syllable.[252] The sword-stroke logs a second RH hit (martyr trigger) and the fifth NI point as blood seals land-memory (RH-2; NI-

[245] «ذهب أكثر، تصفيق أسمك… لكن الخزنة عم ينزف من كل بوابة» [More gold, thicker applause … but the treasury bleeds from every gate.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:40:18–01:40:30}; Zogheib, 59.
[246] Mayer, *Narrative Politics,* 162–63.
[247] «العصافير والقرميد بتحكي عن بكرا الجديد» [Birds and tiles speak of a coming renewal.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:56:31–01:56:50}; Zogheib, 84.
[248] «سلّموني غُربة لتضل بيوتكن؛ إذا نزلت ايدي، بينزل معها الويل» [Hand me Ghorba… when my hand falls, woe falls with it.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:56:55–01:57:10}; Zogheib, 86.
[249] «أنا واقفة ع البوابة متل موقف بيي، لكمل النذر» [I stand at the gate as my father did, to fulfil the vow.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:57:15–01:57:30}; Zogheib, 87.
[250] «ورا كل صخرة وتحت كل شجرة يولد ولدٌ من ولاد مدلج» [Behind every rock and under every tree a new son of Mudlij is born.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:58:40 – 01:59:00}; Zogheib, 89.
[251] «سيف واحد بيمحي ألف شك» [One sword clears a thousand doubts.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {01:59:05 – 01:59:14}; Zogheib, 89
[252] «عروس لابسة الابيض وبحور من دم … أويهاا» [A bride in white and seas of blood … *Oyyyha*.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {02:04:30 – 02:05:10}; Zogheib, 92.

4,5). Mayer calls such shocks the narrative *trigger-point* that turns spectators into combatants.[253]

Reeling, Fatik unravels in a single, frantic monologue: "Everything that happened is in vain, and everything that will happen is in vain. We killed the father, then we killed the daughter, but it's in vain. No matter how many we kill, the struggle will never end, the story will never end. The sons of Mudlij and the brothers of Ghorba are born every day." [254] He orders retreat—"They come from behind the rocks, they come from under the trees… Flee, flee!"[255]—and finally cries to the hills themselves: "O mountains of Ghorba, O mountains of Mudlij, O mountains of flint!"[256] The cascade yields the scene's last Propaganda entry (open admission of defeat) and two closing NI hits (mythic mountains, perpetual lineage) (PM-2; NI-6,7). Filippini notes that such verbal capitulations often precede material flight.[257]

As soldiers scatter, the chorus crowns the corpse with a harvest hymn: a bride will arrive "in a white dress and seas of blood," reaping future joy. The refrain supplies the final Resistance tally (RH-3) and confirms Smith's claim that martyr songs braid death into seasonal renewal.[258]

The play ends where it began—at the gate—but the ledger is inverted: NI 7 overwhelms PM 2, and RH 3 eclipses every spectacle the occupier could stage. Dense early clusters of myth and sacrifice have indeed foreshadowed the popular mobilisation that now expels the invader and restores the Grape Festival for good.

Table 3.1.7 Textual–QCA Snapshot (Scenes 1 – 5)

Scene-header totals: NI 24 · PM 15 · RH 11 · SC 2 → (the whole grid in Appendix A-2, Text–Visual Coding Matrix—compiled from A-2.1 *Textual Coding Scheme of the Play "Jibaal Al Siwan (The Flint Mountains)"*—lists the complete line-by-line counts: NI 83 · PM 43 · RH 48 · SC 20).

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[253] Mayer, *Narrative Politics,* 170–71

[254] «كل شي صار عبث، وكل شي رح يصير عبث… قتلنا الأب وقتلنا البنت… وولاد مدلج وإخوة غربة عم يخلقوا كل يوم» [Everything has become futile, and everything will become futile... We killed the father and we killed the daughter... and the sons of Mudlaj and the brothers of Ghurba are being created every day.] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {02:00:21 – 02:01:00}; Zogheib, 91.

[255] «جايين من خلف الصخور جايين من تحت الحجار... اهربوا، اهربوا!» [They come from behind the rocks… Flee, flee!] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {02:01:01 – 02:01:30}; Zogheib, 91.

[256] «يا جبال غربة، يا جبال مدلج، يا جبال الصوّان!» [O mountains of Ghorba, O mountains of Mudlij, O mountains of flint!] *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {02:01:31 – 02:01:45}; Zogheib, 91.

[257] Filippini, *Using Gramsci,* 72–73.

[258] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation,* 178–79.

Full-scene time-block	Pivot quotation (English gloss)	QCA hit-string (NI · PM · RH · SC)	Dominant QCA driver[259]
00:05:27–00:08:56	"Death is shorter than humiliation."	2 · 3 · 2 · 0	Political Messaging & Propaganda
00:09:31–00:16:10	"The promised daughter will return to the gate."	4 · 2 · 1 · 1	National Identity & Cultural Unity
00:40:01–01:08:50	"Scream, fox of the valley! You'll never get grapes or love from us."	6 · 4 · 2 · 2	National Identity & Cultural Unity
01:18:50–01:45:33	"It's a gift from my father, the martyred King Mudlij."	5 · 4 · 3 · 0	National Identity & Cultural Unity
01:56:31–02:05:40	"Behind every rock and under every tree a new son of Mudlij is born."	7 · 2 · 3 · 0	National Identity & Cultural Unity

3.1.8 Visual Grammar Coda

The fragmentary footage of *Jibaal al-Sawan* nonetheless discloses a disciplined visual rhetoric that shadows every ideological move charted in the coding grid.

Martyr-king tableau (00:05:27–00:08:56). A ten-second low-angle long shot fixes Mudlij mid-struggle while twelve crimson spears flare round him like a lethal halo. Bordwell notes that such framing elevates a body even as it foretells his fall, compelling the spectator to kneel before a sovereignty already slipping into legend.[260] QCA hit bundle: (NI 1 · PM 1 · RH 1). After trumpets usher in a triumphalist dance, the viewer has time to absorb Filippini's Gramscian lesson that sacrificial consent can feel like exaltation rather than defeat.[261]

Hanna's vigil (00:09:31–00:10:40). A fixed medium-long take, lantern light glazing her face, pauses action for almost a minute while she inventories the dead and names clandestine resisters. Bordwell calls such frontal, near-monochrome setups "frames that let the word do its work."[262] The shot posts (NI 2 · PM 2 · SC 1)—memory as national glue—without adding Propaganda or Resistance hits, matching the narrative lull.

Ghorba's chromatic entrance (00:14:09–00:16:10). The camera cranes down as she climbs; villagers lie prone in black. At her shout, the cloaks drop and colour—peasant reds, greens, embroidered hems—spills across the stage in one uninterrupted sequence.[263] Symbolic capital

[259] Dominant driver = the category with the highest count in that scene (ties resolved by narrative weight).
[260] Bordwell, *Film Art*, 190-91.
[261] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 100.
[262] Bordwell, *Film Art*, 143, 145.
[263] Visual coding frame for *Jibal al-Sawwan*, {00:14:09–00:16:10} (Ghorba's return).

slides, Bourdieu-style, from Fatik's militarised crimson-gold to the heroine's royal blue, literalising Smith's claim that a "usable past" can be re-clothed for future struggle.[264] Hits: (NI 3 · RH 2 · SC 2). The long take lets spectators edit the metamorphosis themselves, binding visual awakening to communal song.

Figure 2-Jibal al-Sawan, Scene 3 (00:15:30). Ghorba's return: her raised hand and ceremonial blue cloak mark the reclaiming of national myth through popular ritual. Visual codes: NI · RH · SC

First face-off (00:16:13–00:17:24). Ghorba holds the higher stair; Fatik glints below, donning his horned crown mid-shot, yet the camera stays eye-level, refusing to ratify the emblem. The same continuous frame catches a single ululating "Oyyyha!", the wedding cry that will return over Ghorba's bier. Bordwell terms such in-shot prop shifts "micro-rebalancings that redirect attention without breaking continuity."[265] Blocking, palette and angle rehearse a Gramscian duel for consent, logging (NI 4 · PM 2).

Viewed motif by motif, the fragments knit even tighter. The martyr halo & spear crown of Scene 1 sets a visual catechism of sanctified blood. Binary staging—terrace versus square—dominates Scenes 3–4, power gazing downward while loyalty rises in the chorus below. Colour codes pit the earth-tones of communal allegiance against the occupier's unyielding crimson. Camera height marks legitimacy throughout: a low-angle reverence for the monarch or martyr, and a steadfast eye-level view for the chorus and vigil. Together, these motifs braid blood,

[264] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 64.
[265] Visual-coding frame for *Jibaal al-Sawan*, {00:16:13–00:17:24}; Bordwell & Thompson, *Film Art*, 152–53.

space, hue and vantage into a single ideological fabric: sovereignty is crowned by sacrifice, resisted in colour, and judged by the lens that will not bow to illegitimate rule (NI 5 · PM 3).

Angle, colour and shot duration add 5 NI hits, 3 PM hits, 2 RH hits, and 2 SC hits—exactly the distribution the QCA grid assigns to Scenes 1-4. Lens grammar, in other words, performs Baathist common sense: martyrdom sanctifies rule, memory sustains it, colour reclaims it, and framing tests it—until the next chorus rises.

3.1.9 Visual–QCA Snapshot (Scenes 1–4)

A compact crosswalk between the footage and our coding. Fragment totals: NI 5 · PM 3 · RH 2 · SC 2 →— visual-density ≈ 1.0 hits·min^{-1} (the complete shot-by-shot visual counts—set out in A-2.2 *Visual Coding Scheme of the Play "Jibaal al-Siwan (The Flint Mountains)"* and summarised in Appendix A-2, Text–Visual Coding Matrix—tally NI 5 · PM 8 · RH 5 · SC 5).

Full-scene time	Time-code (shot-key still)	Scene ID	QCA hits in shot	Dominant visual cue
00:05:27–00:08:56	00:05:35	Martyr-king tableau	NI 1 · PM 1 · RH 1 · SC 0	Low-angle long shot; crimson-spear halo
00:09:31–00:10:40	00:09:50	Hanna's lantern vigil	NI 1 · PM 1 · RH 0 · SC 1	Locked frontal ML; lantern-lit monochrome
00:14:09–00:16:10	00:15:30	Ghorba's colour-surge entrance	NI 2 · PM 0 · RH 1 · SC 1	Crane-down sequence; cloak-drop floods frame with peasant reds/greens
00:16:13–00:17:24	00:16:45	First face-off at stairs	NI 1 · PM 1 · RH 0 · SC 0	Eye-level standoff; Fatik crowns himself mid-shot; echoed *Oyyyha*

Texts, tunes, and lenses converge to translate Bathist steadfastness into common sense: martyr-blood crowns rule, seasonal rites recycle grief into consent, and a colour–space grammar—earth-tones pushing back militarised crimson—visualises popular ascent. While dialogue logs NI 83 and RH 48 versus PM 43, the full visual coding tilts the balance in favour of spectacle (PM 8 > NI 5 ≈ RH 5).[266] Social-structure cues remain marginal—folklore, not class, propels

[266] See *Appendix A-2, Text–Visual Coding Matrix – All Plays*

revolt. *Flint Mountains*, therefore, exemplify the Rahbani template: sanctify, remember, mobilise. The same yardstick now measures the next play, *Yaish Yaish*.

3.2 Yaish Yaish (Long Live! Long Live!) 1970

Play-Card

Total scenes	5 continuous tableaux
Running time	≈ 1 h 51 m (complete 1970 audio broadcast) + 4 m 40 s of surviving video
Script length	112 pp. in Zogheib's critical edition (vol. 9, *Yaish Yaish*)
Visual coding	Scene 2 fragment "Barhoum & Malhab warehouse"
Textual coding	All five scenes, four QCA lenses

3.2.1 Context & Plot Synopsis

The drama unfolds in five extended scenes that swing from sudden coup to recycled repression. It opens with three crackling radio communiqués: a self-styled "corrective council" seizes power in Mida, imposes curfew, and posts a bounty for the missing emperor. Within minutes, the ruler's aides shear off his beard, pin a borrowed identity card to his jacket, and install him in Haifa and Abu Dib's grocery as "Barhoum," a petty offender allegedly wanted for beating his wife and mother-in-law. Behind the counter, he meets gambler Shibli, storyteller Abu Dib, and smuggler Malhab—three survivalists whose banter and daily compromises strip every new slogan of meaning. Rumours of factional strife soon rattle the junta. Malhab recruits a band of outlaws, drafts Barhoum as literate frontman, and overruns the Radio building; the countercoup succeeds, flags are hoisted, and "Statement No. 1" promises order at dawn and to improve the lives of the people. Celebration is brief as Barhoum's first decree doubles the reward for fugitives and unleashes police raids on Haifa, Abu Dib, and their neighbours, confirming her verdict that each revolution merely "adds a new stamp to the ration card."[267]

The analysis is based on three converging sources: Henry Zougheib's 112-page critical script, a continuous 1-hour and 51-minute audio transfer of the 1969 broadcast, and the play's lone surviving 4-minute and 40-second film fragment (the Barhoum–Malhab tavern scene). These materials are parsed into the same five self-contained scenes used in the textual coding scheme, and each line is tagged according to the four QCA lenses: National Identity, Political

[267] «كلّ انْقِلاب بيغيّر الخَتْم على بطاقةِ التموين» [Every coup only adds a new stamp to the ration card.] *Yaish Yaish,* {01:44:55–01:45:06}; Zogheib, 109.

Messaging, Resistance and Heroism, and Social Structures. Dialogue and song carry most of the ideological load. Yet, the short footage still sharpens the picture: low-angle shots of stacked fuel drums, the guarded distance between the two men, and the gold watch Malhab taps while pricing loyalty all underscore class bargaining (SC) and the theatre of authority (PM), adding a quiet psychological layer that pure text cannot supply. Snapshot tables following each scene condense these patterns and guide the reader to the appendices for line-level detail. The commentary continually engages Gramsci, Smith, Bourdieu, and Mayer across the five-scene corpus.

Read against Baathist Syria's carousel of post-1963 coups and its tightening security state, the satire lands uncomfortably close to home.[268] By presenting authoritarian failure as a structural, self-replicating curse—rather than a flaw of any single leader—the play invites audiences to see corruption, surveillance, and media mendacity as endemic features of modern Arab rule.[269] The Rahbanis' comic idiom entertains while quietly exposing the moral cost of political inertia, preparing Syrian viewers to recognise their disillusionment on stage.[270]

3.2.2 Scene 1 – Coup Bulletins & the Emperor in Disguise

Running time 00:01:40–00:28:06) | QCA density ≈ 0.34 hits · min^{-1} (NI 1\PM 6\RH 0\SC 2)

The loudspeaker over Mida's kingdom gate erupts with three snapshot communiqués. The first salutes the "corrective council," the second forbids "Gatherings are forbidden… aspirations are forbidden,"[271] and the third posts a bounty for the missing ruler, each refrain hammered home with "Long live the homeland, long live the coup, security is assured."[272] Gramsci would call this the seizure of the node of diffusion, as the control of feeling precedes the control of fact, turning four seconds of sound into three Political Messaging hits (PM-1,2,3) before a single patrol appears. Villagers obey the sound and accept the new reality before they see a soldier. Filippini notes that modern media compress such "molecular" consent-building cycles, thereby accelerating the spread of hegemony.[273]

[268] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, 140.
[269] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Baathist Syria*, 58.
[270] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 95; Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 204 ("By the late 1960s the security and intelligence services had become powerful, pervasive instruments of repression, monitoring every sector of social and political life").
[271] «التجمعات ممنوعة..الطموحات ممنوعة» [Gatherings are forbidden… aspirations are forbidden] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:01:27 – 00:06:55}; Zogheib, 5.
[272] «عاش الوطن، عاش الانقلاب، الأمن مستتب» [Long live the homeland, long live the coup, security is assured] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:01:27 – 00:06:55}; Zogheib, 5.
[273] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 46–53, 142.

Inside Haifa's shop, Abu Dib waves off the din, "let pottery break itself,"[274] and heads out with his hunting rifle. An individualist retreat registers the scene's lone (NI-1) mark: community splinters even as the radio prescribes unity. A clean-shaven stranger enters to ask for work; Haifa sees only a weary traveller, unaware this is the disguised emperor. His aide has already shaved the beard and pinned a forged ID on him before he crossed the threshold; now he frets in a whisper, "Can an emperor exist without a beard?" The aide assures him it "will grow back and shade the land, scoring (PM-4)."[275] The exchange lands the first Social-Structure (SC-1) hit when paperwork eclipses pedigree, but class habitus still leaks through speech.

That leak widens when Sergeant Abud nails a Wanted poster to the shop wall and checks IDs. He pauses at the newcomer's soft palms: "These hands are too soft for washing dishes."[276] Bourdieu*'s* "embodied capital" [277] surfaces: the body remembers rank even when documents are forged. Privately, the sergeant tallies the bounty: "Catch the emperor, pay my debts, put the children through school."[278] Loyalty is priced, not pledged, adding a second (SC-2) hit and completing the (PM-5). Smith's myth-symbol logic is already at work: the radio's heroic triad rebrands a power grab as a providential rescue, masking contingency beneath ritual.[279]

The scene closes on Haifa's dry verdict: "Every coup only adds a new stamp to the ration card."[280] Making (PM-6). Stone calls such Rahbani punchlines "folk antibodies"[281] that let audiences laugh and recognise propaganda simultaneously; Mayer tags them as founding ironies that later reversals will echo. Hinnebusch's study of Baathist Syria confirms the real-world analogue: proclamation substitutes for reform while informant economies monetise obedience.[282] Even without surviving footage, Zougheib's directions—wall horns, waist-high posters—instantiate what Bordwell terms authoritative décor, spatialising the sound of power.[283]

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[274] «فخار بيكسّر بعضه» [let Pottery break itself] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:01:27 – 00:06:55}; Zogheib, 6.
[275] «في إمبراطور بلا لحية؟ … اللحية رح تطلع من جديد وبتظلّل الدولة» [Can an emperor exist without a beard? … The beard will grow back and shade the land] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:07:07 – 00:14:54}; Zogheib, 7.
[276] «هالإيدين ناعمين كتير… شكلك مو معوّد عغسل الصحون» [These hands are far too soft—you're clearly not used to washing dishes] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:14:55 – 00:28:06}; Zogheib, 14.
[277] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 76.
[278] «أنا لو بمسك الإمبراطور بوفّي ديوني وبكمّلوا الولاد تعليمُن» [If I catch the emperor, I'll pay my debts and finish the children's schooling] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:14:55 – 00:28:06}; Zogheib, 12–13.
[279] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 19.
[280] «كِلّ انقلاب بيغيّر الخَتْم على بطاقة التموين» [Every coup only adds a new stamp to the ration card] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:22:11 – 00:22:19}; Zogheib, 19.
[281] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 95.
[282] Hinnebusch, *Revolution from Above*, 140.
[283] Bordwell, Film Art, 152–53.

Scene 1 thus establishes the play's rhythm: broadcast certainty outruns fact; disguise meets class detection; loyalty comes at a price; mass tragedy or mass farce looms on the horizon.

3.2.3 Scene 2 – Headlines, Horse-Bets & the Lottery of Loyalty

Running time 00:28:06–00:34:26 | QCA density ≈ 1.4 hits·min^{-1} (NI 1\PM 4\RH 1\SC 3)

The curtain rises on Hoda's café band chanting that "the headlines are all alike, day after day,"[284] scoring the first Political-Messaging (PM-1) blow. Because the line laments a nation frozen in recycled news, it also books the scene's single National-Identity tick (NI-1). When reportage becomes déjà-vu, Gramsci's "common sense" has already hardened; Filippini shows how such molecular repetition naturalises power before argument can form.[285]

Gambler Shibli barrels in, twirling his asymmetrical moustache, examining those present, looking for those who support the coup and those who oppose it. Then, he boasts that he can "tell them by their moustaches," logging Social-Structure hit 1 (SC-1): facial style stands in for a party card; Asked what his own whiskers declare, he shrugs, "I'm with up and down."[286] Embodied capital, says Bourdieu, leaks rank even through comedy.[287] But Shibli's moustache represents a moral induction that we will see at the end of the play.

A radio bulletin crackles through, trumpeting purge verdicts and border triumphs (PM-2), then snarls, "Be silent or I won't finish the broadcast."[288] The command itself delivers (PM-3), and, because it threatens coercion, the lone Resistance/Hard-Power mark (RH-1) as no bayonet is needed when a loudspeaker polices the room. Schatz calls these techniques (patronage, surveillance, and staged consensus) part of the "soft-authoritarian tool kit," which involves the rationing of information to discipline listeners.[289] Half the patrons heckle, half hush—an instant of friction that supplies the lone Resistance-Humour mark. Some protests and others support are rising, to the point that some are confronting the regime's identity and its narrative of change with phrases like "Down with the imperial coup regimes!,"[290] But all of this is a form of

[284] «العناوين متل بعضها، من يوم ليوم» [The headlines are all alike, day after day] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:28:06 – 00:28:26}; Zogheib, 21.
[285] Michele Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 46–53 (on "molecular" repetition)..
[286] «بعرفهن من شواربن … أنا مع لفوق ولتحت» [I know them by their moustaches … I'm with up and down] *Yaish Yaish,* {00:28:26 – 00:29:40}; Zogheib, 22.
[287] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 149–151.
[288] «اسكتوا وإلا ما يكمل النشرة» [Be silent or I won't finish the broadcast] *Yaish Yaish,* {00:29:41 – 00:30:05}; Zogheib, 23.
[289] Schatz, "The Soft Authoritarian Tool kit," 206–7.
[290] «يسقط الانقلاب الإمبريالي» [Down with the imperial coup regimes!] *Yaish Yaish,* {00:30:06 – 00:30:35}; Zogheib, 25.

emptying, not a call to action, because everyone is complicit in their acquiescence and general inaction.

Shibli turns to what really matters: Hoda draws the lottery, "five-five-five." His stub holds no fives; he groans that "limited income means limited dreams—limited tomorrow,"[291] adding a Social-Structure hit 2 (SC-2) by tying aspiration to household cash-flow. Hinnebusch notes the same logic in Baath-era Syria: when the state monopolises advancement, aspiration shrinks to luck or patronage.[292] Mayer terms such switches between hope and payoff a 'hinge beat' that forces the audience to decide where they stand before the subsequent reversal.[293]

Moments later, the bulletin doubles the reward for the fugitive emperor. Shibli whoops, "One hundred thousand liras… I am the toiling masses!"[294] Loyalty now carries a price tag, sealing (PM-4) and registering (SC-3). Smith notes how ritual can cloak bribery in patriotic colours, turning bounty-hunters into would-be heroes.[295] At the same time, this surrender to money carries social and class connotations about the reality of society in this country, and the collapse of popular political will as a result of censorship, oppression, and impoverishment, which we will see in later scenes.

Nine coded blows in just over six minutes (PM 4 > SC 3 > NI 1 > RH 1). Propaganda outruns proof, yet café wit keeps puncturing the façade: recycled news breeds cynicism, moustaches map faction, and prizes monetise allegiance. Bordwell's "authoritative décor", identical broadsheets wallpapering the set while a lone microphone bisects the frame like a gavel, visually echoes the chorus's complaint.[296] Scene 2 sharpens the play's rhythm: every coup promise is a wager, and every wager rehearses the subsequent revolt.

3.2.4 Scene 3 – Closed Borders, Open Pockets & the Smuggler's Sermon

Running time 00:34:26–01:04:17 | QCA density ≈ 0 .37 hits·min-¹ (NI 2\PM 4\RH 2\SC 3)

Haifa's lament for the vanished child Shadi fades, her childhood friend who was kidnapped by wars resulting from the lust for power; Barhoum snaps the spell with the fatal credo that "men

[291] «الدخل المحدود يعني الحلم محدود يعني بكرا محدود» [Limited income means limited dreams; limited tomorrow means limited dreams] *Yaish Yaish,* {00:38:00 – 00:39:03}; Zogheib, 25-26.
[292] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, 82.
[293] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 113-114.
[294] «مئة ألف ليرة… أنا الجماهير الكادحة!» [One hundred-thousand liras… I am the toiling masses!] *Yaish Yaish,* {00:32:50 – 00:33:05}; Zogheib, 26.
[295] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 19.
[296] Bordwell, *Film Art*, 152–53.

must reach their destiny,"[297] and his fatalism scores Social-Structure hit (SC-1) and, because it sacralises a shared national fate, the scene's first National-Identity tick (NI-1): masculine honour is still priced above grief. Haifa shoots back that closed checkpoints due to war have "rotted the grain while the people starved,"[298], turning her line into Propaganda-Messaging blow (PM-1) and Resistance-Humour mark (RH-1), and completes her argument with a devastating indictment of the war economy. Here, the tavern becomes a "political stage" where national crisis is rehearsed through everyday speech that naturalises power's oppression more durably than formal decrees.[299] But in Gramscian terms, Barhoum's justification of violence based on the sake of glory indicates that the war notion has won the "war of position"—repetition has hardened into common sense before any fresh policy is aired.[300]

Grandfather Abu Deeb's entry briefly restores heroic bluster, but the moral axis tilts when Malhab the smuggler crosses the threshold. Barhoum proffers a gold watch; Malhab declines, laying out his ledger: "I smuggle food across the borders to feed my children, while officials haul gold, antiquities and oil in their bags."[301] One confession simultaneously tallies (SC-2) and (PM-2): moral capital migrates from state to outlaw. Heydemann would call this dynamic of populist-authoritarianism in the Ba'ath era the "adaptability dividend"; regimes bend, but so does legitimacy, leaking toward whichever actor credibly mitigates scarcity.[302] Gramsci would call Malhab an emergent "organic intellectual," translating the experience of subaltern life into an argument against elite hypocrisy.[303]

Barhoum protests that crime is still crime, but Malhab shrugs: "I don't hide my face; others hide their crimes behind titles and positions."[304] Leahy reminds us that theatre and politics share a single art: persuasion through role-play, while the exchange also supplies Mayer's "narrative hinge": a beat that forces spectators to choose sides before the next twist.[305] Malhab's radical transparency rewrites the scene's power script, obliging the audience to judge rather than merely watch. [306]

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[297] «الرّجال لازم تبلغ قدرها» [men must reach their destiny] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:35:14 – 00:35:22}; Zogheib, 36.
[298] «وسكّروا الحدود، والحبوب عفنت على الحدود، والناس جاعت» [They closed the borders, the grain rotted at the border, and the people starved] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:34:26 – 00:51:45}; Zogheib, 37.
[299] Castelló, "The Nation as a Political Stage," 307–308.
[300] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 98 (on the shift from "war of manoeuvre" to "war of position").
[301] «أنا بهرّب الأكل بين الحدود لطعمي ولادي، بس المسؤولين بيحملوا الذهب والآثر والنفط بشنطهم» [I smuggle food across the borders to feed my children, while officials haul gold, antiquities and oil in their bags] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:51:45 – 01:04:17}; Zogheib, 46.
[302] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria,* 8.
[303] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 70.
[304] «أنا ما بخبّي وجهي؛ بقول إني مهرّب، بس غيري مجرمين بخبوا جرايمن ورا ألقابن ومناصبن» [I don't hide my face; I admit I'm a smuggler—others hide their crimes behind titles and positions] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:00:15 – 01:08:40}; Zogheib, 47.
[305] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 113–14.
[306] Leahy, *The Theatre as an Examination of Power,* 56–57.

The quarrel peaks when Barhoum insists, "a mistake is a mistake, whatever it is;"[307] Malhab replies with cold arithmetic, "the law may wait, but the children cannot,"[308] his pragmatism seals (SC-3) and (RH-2). Moreover, to score a blow (PM-3), Malhab supports his argument by formulating a propaganda fact: "When snow blankets the fields, smuggling feeds the village."[309] Hinnebusch traces the same siege-economy logic in Baathist Syria, where border chokepoints turned hunger into a license for contraband.[310]

Outside, a ministerial convoy repeats scripted triumphs ("victory round the corner"), logging (PM-4) and provoking only yawns—déjà-vu reporting triggers (NI-2). In Mayer's terms, the regime is trying to manufacture a fresh "sense of crisis" to mobilise consent, yet Malhab's ledger shows that the real crisis is already being lived.[311]

Eleven coded blows in thirty minutes (PM 4 > SC 3 > NI 2 ≈ RH 2). Official optimism shrivels beside Malhab's ledger; closed borders breed open pockets; and the gold watch nobody will keep proves that legitimacy, like jewellery, loses lustre when hunger walks in. Scene 3 extends the play's thesis—when frontiers harden, consciences bend, and salvation may arrive wearing contraband boots.

3.2.5 Scene 4 – Police State, Frost-Bite Jargon & the Cloak-with-No-Owner

Running time 01:06:10–01:36:40 | QCA density ≈ 0.46 hits · min^{-1} (PM 5\SC 5\NI 3\RH 1)

From an overflowing and argusian[312] intelligence desk, a clerk rattles off a new circular—"Arrest anyone sporting imperial-style moustaches."[313] One sentence converts grooming into guilt (PM-1), promises coercion (RH-1), and tattoos suspicion onto the skin (SC-1). Filippini calls such follicle rules the capillary phase of hegemony, power diffusing into everyday habits in a way that makes you question your national position based on characteristics that are not logically related to nationalism.[314]

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[307] «الغلط غلط لو شو ما كان» [A mistake is a mistake, whatever it is] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:49:02 – 00:49:05}; Zogheib, 50.
[308] «القانون بينتظر… بس الولاد ما فيهن ينطروا» [The law may wait, but the children cannot] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:49:23 – 00:49:30}; Zogheib, 51.
[309] «لما الثلج يطمر الحقول، التهريب بيطعمي الضيعة» [When snow blankets the fields, smuggling feeds the village] *Yaish Yaish*, {00:42:33 – 00:43:10}; Zogheib, 35.
[310] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above,* 112.
[311] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 129–30.
[312] Argus: a figure in Greek legend whose byname derives from the hundred eyes on his head or all over his body; the gods used Argus to monitor their opponents and valuables—"Argus," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last updated December 27, 2017, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Argus-Greek-mythology.
[313] «يُعتقل كل مين عندو شوارب إمبراطورية» [Arrest anyone sporting imperial-style moustaches] *Yaish Yaish,*, {01:06:12 – 01:08:04}; Zogheib, 54.
[314] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 147–149.

The scene freezes over at the border when Sergeant Abdo, blowing on numb hands, mutters, "Everyone is cold…except that official; he's warm."[315] Temperature, not epaulette, now marks rank—Bourdieu's symbolic capital measured in degrees Celsius and the comfort of the body that expresses class and social power (SC-2).[316]

Snow keeps falling; Haifa lifts her voice in a lament, "Winter wiped the letters from our letters."[317] A private heartbreak hardens into collective meteorology (NI-1). But journalists barrel in, chanting for the regime and assuring their credibility, "How transparent the press—nothing but pure truth!"[318] logs (PM-2); Castelló terms such mirror rituals a nation applauding its own reflection; credibility by echo, not evidence.[319]

Moments later, the envoy recites his evergreen formula: "Negotiations proceeded in cordiality and rapprochement—for the common good."[320] Recycled boiler-plate scores (PM-3). But people are not fooled by such empty hypocrisy, so Haifa opts for irony: "If Grandfather Abu Dib took charge, he'd fix everything—he's from the soil."[321] The jab tallies (SC-3), pitting embodied know-how against technocratic drift between the miserable reality of the people and the ivory towers of the officials.

Abdo now leans close to Saleh: "These days you can't tell who is with intelligence."[322] Engineered misidentification deepens (SC-4); as overlapping agencies keep whole communities guessing, saving the regime the cost of constant force. Heydemann shows how the Baathist state perfected this tactic—layering agencies and cultivating informants in every workplace and alley—so that citizens police one another while the centre spends little on overt repression.[323]

The shop door bangs open and Abu Dib staggers in with the emperor's velvet cloak; The cloak that turns into a threat to its wearer. Villagers gasp: "This robe is a calamity that fell on our village!"[324] The last scrap of sovereignty itself registers PM-4. Yet hunger wins, need wins:

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[315] «الناس كلّن بردانين، إلا هالمسؤول دافي» [Everyone is cold—except that official; he's warm] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:09:17 – 01:10:03}; Zogheib, 61.
[316] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 109–110
[317] «شتّي يا دنيا… محا الشتاء حروف رسائلنا» [Winter wiped the letters from our letters] *Yaish Yaish,* {01:14:22 – 01:15:10}; Zogheib, 63.
[318] «ما أشفّ الصحافة! بتنقل الحقيقة بكل شفافية» [How transparent the press—nothing but pure truth!] *Yaish Yaish,* {01:21:05 – 01:21:30}; Zogheib, 63.
[319] Castelló, "The Nation as a Political Stage," 313–314.
[320] «جرت المفاوضات في جو من المودة والتقارب… لأجل الخير العام» [Negotiations proceeded in cordiality and rapprochement—for the common good] *Yaish Yaish,* {01:24:08 – 01:25:20}; Zogheib, 70.
[321] «لو جدّي أبو ديب يستلم، بيحلّ مشاكلهم كلّن، لأنه ابن الأرض» [If Grandfather Abu Dib took charge, he'd fix everything—he's from the soil] *Yaish Yaish,* {01:29:02 – 01:29:25}; Zogheib, 72.
[322] «هالأيام ما بقا فيك تعرف مين أمن ومين مخابرات» [These days you can't tell who is security and who is intelligence] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:18:40 – 01:19:12}; Zogheib, 66.
[323] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 192–193.
[324] «هالمشلّح مصيبة ونزلت على ضيعتنا» [This robe is a calamity that fell on our village!] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:30:18 – 01:30:25}; Zogheib, 74.

Umm Abdo, the brave and realistic, wraps the velvet around her shoulders: "This cloak will keep me from cold and heat alike."[325] Symbolic capital re-sewn into literal insulation (SC-5). Bourdieu reminds us that when objectified prestige meets bodily need, value is re-classified without apology.[326] The neighbours burst into laughter and song—"We will crown you the wise queen of kings!"[327]—adding the second identity strike (NI-2) and final propaganda beat (PM-5): the coup's emblem is annexed by the village, not the other way round.

Fourteen coded blows in twenty-seven minutes — PM 5 > SC 5 > NI 3 ≈ RH 1. Three atmospheres—paperwork paranoia, checkpoint parody, hearth-side inversion—show decrees falling like sleet only to melt in the village stove. Winter, not the coup, has the last word in shaping the horizon.

3.2.6 Scene 5 – Coup-on-a-Coup, Hired Crowds & Barhoum's Bulletin No.1

Running time 01:36:43–01:51:33 | QCA density ≈ 1.0 hits·min^{-1} (PM 6\SC 5\RH 2\NI 2)

The shop turns into a bunker. Malhab's gang marches in behind Sheikh Abu Mutab, "lord of the smugglers."[328] He declares they will "make a coup against the coup."[329] One phrase brands their plot (PM-1) and recasts smugglers as saviours (SC-1). Filippini calls such moves a manoeuvre inside a fractured bloc, when outlaws claim the state's mantle.[330]

Barhoum objects, "I'm for democracy," but Malhab laughs: "The wanted are now the majority.[331] Stigma flips to legitimacy (PM-2, SC-2). Bourdieu notes that when legality breaks down, outlaw status can be converted into political capital.[332]

Leadership is settled pragmatically: "There's no one among us who can read and write except you."[333] Literacy, not lineage, makes Barhoum chair (SC-3). Outside, Sheikh Karim's paid marchers chant, "Long live, long live!"[334]—propaganda on demand (PM-3) and the first identity pulse (NI-1). Rent-a-crowd displays commercialised mirror rituals.[335]

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[325] «هالمشلّح بيقتل البرد قتل وبردّ الشوب» [This cloak will keep me from cold and from heat alike] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:31:00 – 01:31:12}; Zogheib, 75.
[326] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 190–191.
[327] «رح نتوجّك ملكة الحكماء على الملوك» [We will crown you the wise queen of kings] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:32:47 – 01:33:05}; Zogheib, 76.
[328] «هيدا الشيخ أبو متعب، سيّد المهرّبين» [This is Sheikh Abu Mutab, lord of the smugglers] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:46:24 – 01:46:31}; Zogheib, 104.
[329] «رح نعمل انقلاب ع الانقلاب» [We'll stage a coup against the coup] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:46:32 – 01:46:40}; Zogheib, 105.
[330] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 112-115.
[331] «المطلوبين هلّق هُنّ الأكثريّة» [The wanted are now the majority] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:47:02 – 01:47:08}; Zogheib, 105.
[332] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 132 – 134
[333] «إنتَ ما في غيرك فينا بيعرف يكتب ويقرا» [You're the only one of us who can read and write] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:47:40 – 01:47:47}; Zogheib, 105
[334] «عاش… عاش!» [Long live, long live!] *Yaish Yaish,* {01:48:12 – 01:48:20}; Zogheib, 106.
[335] Castelló, "The Nation as a Political Stage," 318 – 319

Barhoum warns Malhab, "Your men may turn on you if we win."[336] Treachery counted early (RH-1). Malhab shrugs: "Glory is men's destiny."[337] The slogan supplies the second identity tick (NI-2), which we tagged before as the hinge line that precedes the moral swivel.[338]

Bulletin No. 1 is drafted and broadcast: "In the name of God and the people, we carried out the coup… double the bounty on the emperor."[339] (PM-4). Muflih's squad moves on the radio tower (RH-2). Heydemann calls this bricolage—guns plus kilohertz replace cabinet seats.[340]

Villagers gape, asking Abu Deeb why every coup begins "in the name of God and the people." He chuckles that it is "because God and the people can endure harm for a very long time,"[341] a quip that unmasks the slogan as recycled cover (PM-5).

Haifa cuts through the bravado: "Every ruler forgets the poor the moment he sees the spoils."[342] Her folk verdict pierces the pageant (PM-6) and weighs power on grain-scales (SC-4). Smith reminds us that such "moral weather" outlives any throne.[343] Barhoum vows bread, schools, and medicine for all (SC-5), but Sergeant Abdo barges in shouting: "Arrest them now—we'll decide the charges later."[344]

Fifteen coded blows in just over five minutes — PM 6 > SC 5 > RH 2 ≈ NI 2. Smugglers draft statecraft, a rented choir sells legitimacy, and the villagers land back in fetters. Regime or counter-regime, the warrant pad stays on the counter; Haifa's silence says the snow will judge them all.

Table 3.2.7 Textual–QCA Snapshot (Scenes 1 – 5)

Scene-header totals: NI 9 · PM 23 · RH 6 · SC 18→ (the whole grid in Appendix A-2, Text–Visual Coding Matrix—compiled from A1.3 Textual Coding Scheme of the Play *"Yaish Yaish "(Long Live! Long Live!)*—lists the complete line-by-line counts: NI 43 · PM 27 · RH 24 · SC 20.).

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[336] «رجالك رَح ينقلبوا عليك إذا نجح الانقلاب» [Your men will turn on you if the coup succeeds] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:48:55 – 01:49:00}; Zogheib, 106.
[337] «المجد قَدَرُ الرجال» [Glory is men's destiny] *Yaish Yaish,* {01:49:06 – 01:49:10}; Zogheib, 106.
[338] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 128 – 131
[339] «باسمِ الله والشعب قُمنا بالانقلاب…» [In the name of God and the people we carried out the coup …] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:49:42 – 01:49:55}; Zogheib, 109.
[340] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 211 – 213 (bricolage tactics in provincial coups).
[341] «لأنّ الله بس هني يلي بالن طويل كلهلقد» [Because God and the people can endure harm a long time] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:49:56 – 01:50:05}; Zogheib, 94.
[342] «كلّ انقلاب بيجي بيستعير بطّانياتنا…» [Every coup turns up borrowing our blankets …] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:50:18 – 01:50:28}; Zogheib, 108
[343] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 130 – 133
[344] «اعتقِلْهُن هلّق وبعدين منركّب التُّهَم» [Arrest them now—charges can wait] *Yaish Yaish*, {01:50:55 – 01:51:03}; Zogheib, 111.

Full-scene time-block	Pivot quotation (English gloss)	QCA hit-string (NI · PM · RH · SC)	Dominant QCA driver[345]
00:01:27–00:28:06	"Long live the homeland, long live the coup, security is assured."	1 · 4 · 0 · 2	Political Messaging & Propaganda
00:28:06–00:34:26	"The headlines are all alike, day after day."	1 · 4 · 1 · 3	Political Messaging & Propaganda
00:34:26–01:04:17	"I smuggle food across the borders to feed my children."	2 · 4 · 2 · 3	Political Messaging & Propaganda
01:06:12–01:33:05	"Arrest anyone sporting imperial-style moustaches."	3 · 5 · 1 · 5	Political Messaging & Propaganda
01:46:24–01:51:33	"In the name of God and the people we carried out the coup."	2 · 6 · 2 · 5	Political Messaging & Propaganda

3.2.8 Visual Grammar Coda

The barroom sequence pivots on a choreography of looks that turns a four-minute debate about corruption into a miniature morality play. From his first step into frame Malḥab monopolises the camera: the lens tracks his advance, then settles into a run of medium close-ups whose tight framing, as Bordwell explains, "emphasises facial expression, the details of a gesture, or a significant object,"[346] steering the viewer's moral attention toward the speaker. Each return cut lingers on his weather-scarred jacket and dusty boots, visual shorthand for a life spent on what he calls "the deserted mountains"[347] of smuggling, while Barhum's neatly pressed shirt, dangling gold watch, and leisurely pose broadcast the prestige of town society (SC-1).

The watch is more than décor. In Bourdieu's terms, symbolic capital is the "prestige, honour, or credit accruing from recognition,"[348], a resource that can be converted into social advantage. The watch, therefore, signals Barhum's class privilege—and even hints at his concealed imperial lineage. Malḥab's refusal to accept the proffered ornament becomes doubly charged: morally, a criminal in power declines to dispossess a vulnerable man; politically, an object tied to the old empire loses its worth amid upheaval. Each time Barhum flaunts the chain, the camera tilts imperceptibly below eye level—an "effortless tilt,"[349] as Bordwell calls it—then

[345] Dominant driver = the category with the highest count in that scene (ties resolved by narrative weight).
[346] Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art*, 188.
[347] «أنا من جرود التهريب الجرْدة» [I come from the bare mountains of smuggling] visual coding scheme for *Yaish Yaish*, {00 :01 :38–00 :02 :03}; Zogheib, 41.
[348] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 75.
[349] Alexander Mackendrick's phrase for the slight camera dip that reveals fresh story detail; quoted in Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, Film Art, 151.

cuts back to Malḥab at a neutral angle, visually staging the ethical wobble their dialogue explores (SC-2).[350]

Spatial geometry doubles the verbal sparring. An oblique wide shot arrays the gang's rifles and cowboy hats along the rear wall, fencing the argument inside a marketplace of violence. Haifa's white dress—one of the few bright tones in the black-and-white palette—glides between the men like a portable conscience, her entrance cueing a camera pull-back that, in Mackendrick's phrase (quoted by Bordwell), allows the director to "organise the action so that preparation for what will happen next is seen in the background of what is happening now,"[351] momentarily equalising dramatic weight across a single pictorial plane. When she pours wine, the frame holds for seven full seconds, notably longer than any prior reaction shot, allowing what Mayer calls the "pivotal moment" of a story—when antagonists discover common cause—to register as both a narrative turn and an affective pause.[352] Here, convivial equality is visualised: mugs, hookahs and faces line up laterally, and the quarrel cools as depth collapses, signalling temporary solidarity (NI-1 · SC-3).

Figure 3-Yaish Yaish, Scene 3 (01:29:20). Malḥab stands stage-right holding a wine bottle, addressing the audience with a monologue on smuggling and political disillusionment. Behind him, seated to the left, are Haifa, her grandfather, and Barhoum. Their lateral alignment visualises a fleeting moment of civic reflection and tense solidarity. Visual codes: PM · SC

[350] Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art*, 195.
[351] Alexander Mackendrick, quoted in Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art*, 151.
[352] Mayer, *Narrative Politics, 125.*

If mise-en-scène maps moral terrain, light and movement whisper the politics beneath. Lantern-high key lights catch the rims of idle gun barrels, yet leave Malḥab's features half-shadowed, a chiaroscuro emblem of what Schatz terms soft authoritarianism, where rule rests "more centrally on the means of persuasion than on the means of coercion."[353] Slow horizontal pans that shadow Malḥab's stride give him "visual prominence through sustained screen time and movement,"[354] even while Barhum speaks, converting bodily confidence into what the coding frame tags as Resistance & Heroism. Conversely, the soldiers' rifles never move; their frozen verticals stiffen the backdrop into an authoritarian grid classed under Political Messaging & Propaganda. By the time the chorus breaks into song, close-ups yield to a single oblique master shot: everyone sways, the guns remain erect, and the gold watch disappears behind Barhum's mug—an image of provisional fellowship poised against an immovable order. (NI-1 · SC-3)

Sequence total: NI 1 · PM 1 · RH 1 · SC 3 — camera work privileges class revelation, lets a single propaganda grid and a single act of embodied resistance puncture the frame, and grants national colour only a fleeting glow.

3.2.9 Visual–QCA Snapshot (bar-room fragment, 00:00:00–00:04:39)

A compact crosswalk between the continuous four-minute take and our coding. Fragment totals: NI 1 · PM 1 · RH 1 · SC 3 → visual density ≈ 1.4 hits · min^{-1} . The complete, second-by-second ledger is in A.2.4 Visual Coding Scheme of the Play "Yaish Yaish (Long Live! Long Live!)" and summarised in Appendix A-2, Master Text–Visual Coding Matrix.

Full-scene time	Time-code (shot- key still)	Scene ID	QCA hits in shot NI · PM · RH · SC	Dominant visual cue
01:27:15-01:31:40	01:27:22	Malḥab entrance track	0 · 0 · 0 · 1	Travelling MCU: cracked boots, dust jacket foreground class
	01:28:45	Gold-watch tilt / refusal	0 · 0 · 0 · 1	Two-shot; tilt to chain, levelling cut on refusal
	01:29:52	Wine-pour truce	1 · 0 · 0 · 1	Locked wide; Haifa's white dress, seven-second pour, lateral line-up
	01:31:07	Lantern & rifle grid	0 · 1 · 1 · 0	Key-rim on barrels; slow pan on Malḥab, static vertical rifles

[353] Schatz, "Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit," 203.
[354] Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art*, 199.

Texts, tunes, and lens converge on the same hierarchy flagged in §3.2.8: class revelation first (SC 3), propaganda and resistance flash once each, national colour surfaces only in Haifa's dress. Lantern light rims rifles while cracked leather boots and a dropping gold watch map a moral topography, the loudspeaker will try, and fail, to overwrite.

3.3 Petra (1977)

Play-Card

Total scenes	5 continuous tableaux
Running time	≈ 1 h 30 m (complete 1977 Beirut-TV colour capture; full audio track preserved)
Script length	87 pp. in Zogheib's critical edition (vol. 17, *Petra*)
Visual coding	Key fragments sampled: "Farewell to the King," "Arrival Caravan-Tableau," "Princess Abduction," "Face-off with Patricus"
Textual coding	All five tableaux coded across the four QCA lenses

3.3.1 Context & Plot Synopsis

First staged in 1977,[355] *Petra* transplants the Rahbani Brothers' trademark village micro-cosm to a mythic Levantine city-state locked in a late-antique showdown with Rome. Petra's prosperity rests on open trade routes, tolerant civic rites, and a fragile coalition of neighbouring tribes—an oasis of harmony that the encroaching empire brands a threat to "eternal order." With the king campaigning on distant fronts, the queen must weave diplomacy and defiance at home: she grants asylum to refugees, quells a merchants' panic when Roman garrisons seal the caravan roads, and outmanoeuvres a nest of spies recruited from Petra's grandees.

The drama's hinge arrives when Roman envoys abduct the royal daughter—tellingly christened Petra—and bargain her life for the fortress gate keys. The queen counters by executing the lead negotiator, converts the ransom demand into a martyr legend, and exhorts the populace to endure the siege rather than barter sovereignty. Her wager pays off: the king returns triumphant,

[355] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 11.

the princess is a national legend, and a collective oath swears that Petra's walls will outlast every empire that tests them under the rule of a dynasty sanctified by sacrifice.

In 1970s Baathist Syria, themes of sacrifice, cohesion, and defiance resonated strongly. The play reinforced official narratives of national unity, resistance, and steadfastness (sumud) against perceived imperialist encroachments and the common, authentic Arab identity of the region's peoples after the humiliating defeat against the Israelis, absorbed easily into the Baathist register of devotional rhetoric.[356] The plot's sacrificial economy echoes official wartime sermons: blood secures borders, maternal virtue steadies the home front, and a chorus of merchants, soldiers, and refugees fuses into a single civic voice. In Smith's terms, the queen's stand for "soil and honour" crystallises a myth-symbol complex;[357] through Gramsci's lens, her public execution of the envoy shifts consent from Roman intimidation to native resolve.[358] Bourdieu clarifies how Petra's commercial wealth—initially a lure for imperial plunder—mutates into symbolic capital once it bankrolls resistance, while Mayer would tag the daughter's kidnapping as the narrative hinge that turns private grief into collective action.[359] The result is an ideological pageant that marries antique splendour to contemporary slogans: Petra endures because its citizens agree that no ruler, native or foreign, may mortgage the city's name or its memory.

3.3.2 Scene 1 – The King's Departure & Civic Overture

Running time 00:00:00–00:18:24 | QCA density ≈ 1.5 hits·min^{-1} (NI 10\PM 9\RH 3\SC 6)

Trumpets flare; every courtier drops to one knee while the king alone stands beneath unfurled crimson standards. He hails Petra as "a class-free city with a just society" that "guarantees human freedom and dignity, an unparalleled system."[360] The panegyric elevates the city to emblematic nationhood (NI-1, 2) and serves as overt ideological promotion (PM-1). He brands Rome "the rapacious outsider come to seize Petra's women and plunder her wealth,"[361]

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[356] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, 18, 29, 135. Hinnebusch discusses the Syrian regime's propaganda, which claimed that sacrifice was unimportant as long as the resistance continued, and that as long as the resistance's "confrontational regimes" survived, the loss of vast areas in the Golan Heights, the Quneitra Plain, and Mount Hermon during the Six-Day War was irrelevant. The motto of this authoritarian propaganda was (الصمود والتصدي, Steadfastness and confrontation).
[357] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation,* 138–139.
[358] Filippini, *Using Gramsci,* 160–162.
[359] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 145–147; Mayer, *Narrative Politics,* 190–192.
[360] «بترا مدينةٌ بلا طبقات…» [Petra is a class-free city…] *Petra*, {00:02:06 – 00:06:07}; Zogheib, 7; «…نظامُها يضمنُ حرّيةَ الإنسان وكرامتَه» [Its system guarantees human freedom and dignity…] same source, 7.
[361] «روما جاي لتسبي نسوان بترا وتنهبَ ثروتها» [Rome has come to seize Petra's women and plunder her wealth] *Petra*, {00:02:06 – 00:06:07}; Zogheib, 8.

promising to "reject slavery and defend all subjugated peoples."[362] Smith's ethno-symbolism tags such fusions of land, memory, and duty as a myth-symbol complex anchoring identity.[363] Gramsci would call the roaring applause the point where nationalist myth hardens into unexamined common sense.[364] Kneeling bodies and raised standards visualise consent (SC-1) even while the pledge of armed defiance scores the first heroism strike (RH-1).

The king exits; the queen enters to choral salutes of her "greatness," lifting the royal sceptre until his return.[365] The pageant converts succession into spectacle (PM-2) while a woman now wields the kingdom's supreme emblem—two fresh social-structure blows (SC-2, 3). Bourdieu reminds us that ceremonial display turns raw power into symbolic capital recognised by the crowd.[366]

Nanny Hala praises the princess's composure; the queen replies that rulers must stay "detached from emotion, for the nation's responsibility rests on their shoulders."[367] The maxim subordinates private feeling to collective duty (NI-4) and markets royal self-denial as civic virtue (PM-4), adding a second sacrifice-for-nation mark (RH-2) while tightening the hegemonic bond that Gramsci maps between elite self-narration and popular consent.[368] Stratified deference is reaffirmed (SC-4).

Comic relief punctures the solemnity: the world-educated teacher Ayyash rattles off "Greek philosophers and Roman artists" yet flounders before Saleh the clown, master of Petra's life skills.[369] The farce ridicules imported erudition, exalting vernacular competence (NI-5,6) and dramatising, in Bourdieu's terms, a clash between cosmopolitan *cultural capital* and local *habitus* (SC-6).[370]

Three songs braid the sequence. Two martial anthems rally citizens beneath a wartime banner (NI-7,8; PM-5,6; RH-3), while a lovers' duet slips private yearning into the public score, dramatising desire versus duty (NI-9,10).[371] Mayer stresses that mobilisation succeeds when

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[362] «منرفضُ العبوديةَ ومنحمي كلَّ شعبٍ مُستضعَف» [We shall reject slavery and defend every subjugated people] *Petra*, {00:02:06 – 00:06:07}; Zogheib, 8.
[363] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation,* 14–15.
[364] Filippini, *Using Gramsci,* 20–22.
[365] Chorus: «عاشتِ الملكةُ العظيمة!» [Long live the great queen!] *Petra*, {00:07:03 – 00:08:28}; Zogheib, 8.
[366] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 75–76.
[367] «الملوكُ لازم يبقَوا فوقَ العاطفة …» [Kings must remain above emotion…] *Petra*, {00:12:11 – 00:13:41}; Zogheib, 20.
[368] Filippini, *Using Gramsci,* 12.
[369] Saleh the clown to Ayyash: «ذكور أفلاطون وأرسطو قد مبدك ، ما رح يفيدوك…» [Name Plato and Aristotle all you like…] *Petra*, {00:15:03 – 00:16:33}; Zogheib, 22.
[370] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 12.
[371] Patriotic chorus «سيوفُنا تحرسُ الفجر» [Our swords guard the dawn] *Petra*, {00:16:01–00:18:48}; Zogheib, 23; Patriotic chorus « بقولوا صغيّر بلدي…» [They say my country is small…] same source, 23; Lovers' duet «قلبُك وطني» [Your heart is my homeland] same source, 23.

hinge-moments cast "now" as the decisive chapter in a shared story, precisely what the anthem/duet/anthem triplet achieves, binding intimacy to mobilisation.[372]

Totals—NI 10 > PM 9 > SC 6 > RH 3 launch the play on a cadence of unity, obedience, and looming defiance: flags, sceptre, kneeling extras, and swelling choruses fuse history, hierarchy, and song to cast Rome as the alien and Petra's citizens as vault-keepers of freedom.

3.3.3 Scene 2 – Caravan Tribune & Treasury Pledge

Running time 00:18:30–00:33:43 | QCA density ≈ 1.9 hits·min⁻¹ (NI 12\PM 8\RH 4\SC 5)

The desert hush breaks when the caravan leader acclaims Petra as "the last stronghold of freedom and civilisation,"[373] "refuge of all those fleeing oppression,"[374] whose "high walls stand against Roman greed."[375] Three epithets strike three National-Identity blows (NI-1,2,3) while doubling as a travelling news bulletin: Rome pillages, Petra protects (PM-1). Smith calls such place-myths "sacred enclosures" that fuse territory and moral duty into an indivisible emblem of nationhood.[376]

Merchants pour onto the forecourt. The queen greets them as "beloved partners in an ancient kinship,"[377] then reminds the crowd that Petra has "always been the sad and brave sun of the East, the kingdom of those promised joy."[378] Trade is lifted into ancestry (NI-4) and, as Filippini notes, hegemony hardens when history is naturalised as common sense.[379] Chants answer from every stall—"shield of the desert, refuge of the oppressed, guardian of Oriental truth"—locking three more NI tallies (5,6,7) and a second propaganda hit (PM-2).[380]

A Tyrian "merchant" (spy Laius) probes the vault plan. The queen retorts that Petra is fighting "a civilizational war with Rome's greedy king,"[381]and Minister Ribal snaps, "In front of kings, you must learn to trust."[382] The rebuke performs obedience (SC-1) while vaulting propaganda

[372] Mayer, *Narrative Politics.* 142.
[373] «آخر حصن للحرّية والحضارة» [last stronghold of freedom and civilisation] *Petra*, {00:18:48–00:20:11}; Zogheib, 15.
[374] «آخر حصن للحرّية والحضارة» [last stronghold of freedom and civilisation] *Petra*, {00:18:48–00:20:11}; Zogheib, 15.
[375] «يا حيطانك العالية بوجه طمع الرومان» [high walls stand against Roman greed] *Petra*, {00:18:48–00:20:11}; Zogheib, 15.
[376] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 86–87.
[377] «شراكة قديمة تجمعنا» [ancient kinship binds us] *Petra*, {00:20:41–00:26:57}; Zogheib, 18.
[378] «شمس الشرق الحزينة… مملكة الموعودين بالفرح» [sad and brave sun of the East… kingdom of those promised joy] *Petra*, {00:20:41–00:26:57}; Zogheib, 19.
[379] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 45–46.
[380] Marketplace chants recorded in *Petra*, {00:20:41–00:26:57}; Zogheib, 27.
[381] «نحن بحرب حضارية مع طمع روما و الخزنة هي قضية حضارية» [we wage a civilisational war against Roman greed… The safe is a civilizational matter] *Petra*, {00:20:41–00:26:57}; Zogheib, 21.
[382] «قدّام الملوك، الناس بتتعلّم الثقة» [In front of kings, people must learn to trust] *Petra*, {00:20:41–00:26:57}; Zogheib, 22.

(PM-3). When she adds that "the treasury has become liberation, it has become battle,"[383] economic capital is transformed into symbolic capital, underwriting resistance—Bourdieu would call it the transmutation of gold into glory.[384]

Next, an Egyptian trader kneels before the throne, gifting a hereditary crown; she asks if he ever tried it on, he demurs: "Crowns have their owners."[385] His humility refreshes social-structure coding (SC-2) and plants NI-8: supra-regional fidelity to Petra's sovereignty. The queen rewards him publicly, dramatising monarchical patronage (PM-4).

Grief pierces the ceremony when Ribal confesses that "many of Petra's young men have died in the war." The queen's reply: "That is the nature of war; Petra will avenge her dead"[386] shifts sorrow into resolve, marking RH-1 and PM-5 while subsuming private loss beneath collective destiny (SC-3). A new hinge where emotion is re-keyed to action.[387]

Totals to blackout: NI 8 > PM 5 > SC 3 > RH 1. Commerce, piety and grief are braided until bullion glows like honour and mourning sounds like mobilisation. Scene 1 teaches that Petra's walls speak; Scene 2 proves that its coffers shout back.

3.3.4 Scene 3 – Sabotage Plot, Farewell Caravan & the Princess's Kidnap

Running time 00:33:43–00:58:24 | QCA density ≈ 1.3 hits·min^{-1} (NI 12\PM 10\RH 5\SC 4)

The curtain rises on ruin-lit masonry. Patricus snarls that the queen has *shamed* Rome and vows it is "better to erase civilisation than let Rome taste defeat."[388] The threat fires the first propaganda round (PM-1) and stamps Rome as Petra's *alien aggressor* (NI-1). Smith's ethno-symbolism suggests that demonising the trespassing power forges a "sacred frontier" whose menace reinforces homeland solidarity.[389] Leahy's model illustrates how staging absolutist violence attempts to recapture wavering legitimacy through coerced awe rather than civic consent; in theatrical terms, the spies rehearse tyranny for an on-stage audience.[390]

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[383] «الخزنة صارت تحرّر، صارت معركة» [the treasury has become liberation, it has become battle] *Petra*, {00:20:41–00:26:57}; Zogheib, 22.
[384] *Field of Cultural Production*, 98–99.
[385] «رأسه ما بيناسب التاج» [His head is not fit for a crown] *Petra*, {00:27:39–00:29:30}; Zogheib, 28.
[386] «بترا ستثأر لشهدائها» [Petra will avenge her dead] *Petra*, {00:29:40–00:32:26}; Zogheib, 28.
[387] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 131–32 (hinge-line re-framing).
[388] «الأفضل أن نمحق الحضارة على أن تذوق روما طعم الهزيمة» [Better to erase civilisation than let Rome taste defeat] *Petra*, {00:33:45 – 00:36:05}; Zogheib, 31.
[389] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 153-55.
[390] Leahy, *The Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 53-54.

Teacher Ayyash confronts them, boasting Petra's vault lies "so deep the sky itself guards it"[391] and that "every citizen of Petra is a security guard."[392] Three rapid identity blows (NI-2,3,4) weld vigilance to citizenship while everyday watchfulness becomes lived resistance (RH-1). Bourdieu sharpens the point: by framing the vault as a communal trust, the dialogue transmutes mere bullion into symbolic capital that confers honour on—and demands defence by—ordinary Petrans.[393] Hinnebusch's analysis of Baathist explains the spies' setback: populist-authoritarian orders survive by mobilising the "new middle strata" the empire hopes to subvert; communal solidarity blunts intrigue and nullifies fear propaganda (PM-2).[394]

Come dawn, the queen waves caravans eastward; merchants hail their "simple, close-to-the-people queen,"[395] and she sings that Beirut, Damascus and Egypt "never die."[396] Two fresh NI scores (5, 6) knit Petra's destiny to a Levantine horizon, while the upbeat war bulletin lifts morale (PM-3). Leahy again clarifies how participatory ceremony turns spectators into spect-actors—citizens rehearsing victory and thus "training" for real mobilisation, unlocking a second heroism beat (RH-2).[397]

Back among the ruins, Patricus concedes, "the people of Petra are like rocks; they cannot be bought like Macedonians."[398] His surrender posts NI-7 & -8 and confirms exceptional cohesion (SC-1). A courier orders sabotage but admits that "a united Petra has broken Rome's legend."[399] Imperial obedience (PM-4) collides with popular resistance (RH-3), dramatising the authoritarian dilemma Hinnebusch traces—force without consent breeds deeper solidarity, not submission, and also dramatising what Gramsci calls the *war of manoeuvre* misfiring against a society already entrenched in its *war of position*.[400]

Believing the threat past, the nanny, clown and teacher indulge in a game of hide-and-seek; the spies pounce and kidnap the princess.[401] The abduction re-brands Rome as a predatory outsider (NI-9) and exposes the price of complacency (SC-2).

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[391] «السّماء تحرس خزاننا» [The sky itself guards our vaults] *Petra*, {00:36:10 – 00:38:46}; Zogheib, 47.
[392] «كلّ مواطن في بترا حارس أمن» [Every citizen of Petra is a security guard] *Petra*, {00:36:10 – 00:38:46}; Zogheib, 32.
[393] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 130-31(symbolic capital & collective honour).
[394] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, 1–2 (populist-authoritarian "mobilise yet control" dilemma).
[395] Crowd chant «يا ملكة الشّعب البسيطة القريبة» [O simple queen, close to the people] *Petra*, {00:41:33 – 00:44:34}; Zogheib, 33.
[396] Queen's song «بيروت ما بتموت» [Beirut never dies] *Petra*, {00:41:33 – 00:44:34}; Zogheib, 33.
[397] Leahy, *The Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 78 (spect-actor training for collective action).
[398] «شعب بترا صخور لا تُشترى» [The people of Petra are like rocks; they cannot be bought] *Petra*, {00:48:20 – 00:49:35}; Zogheib, 33.
[399] «بترا الموحَّدة كسرت أسطورة روما» [A united Petra has broken Rome's legend] *Petra*, {00:49:44 – 00:50:45}; Zogheib, 33.
[400] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 60-62; Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, 3.
[401] Kidnap sequence, *Petra*, {00:54:15 – 00:54:45}; Zogheib, 63.

The queen denounces Rome as "the insatiable beast of civilisation" and vows, "Petra will not kneel."[402] Identity fuses with heroic defiance (NI-10, RH-4); branding child-kidnapping a war crime supplies fresh propaganda (PM-5) and rallies the polity (SC-3). Here, Mayer's lens spots a hinge moment: raw grief is spun into a renewed collective script in which every bystander is re-cast as a future avenger.[403] Leahy's notion of theatre as a "thought experiment" explains the speech's power inversion: grief is repurposed into moral supremacy, converting victimhood into renewed mandate.[404]

Six songs lace the climax: two martial anthems raise banners over grief, while four ballads of love and travel float private yearning through public alarm, completing the final counters (NI-11, 12; PM-6, 7; RH-5).

Totals — NI 12 > PM 10 > RH 5 > SC 4. Sabotage fails, unity endures; yet, one stolen child shows how a festival can pivot to a funeral in a single heartbeat.

3.3.5 Scene 4 – Victory Bulletin, Spy Alarm & Blood-Price Ultimatum

Running time 00:58:26–01:22:04 | QCA density ≈ 1.1 hits·min^{-1} (NI 10\PM 8\RH 3\SC 5)

The minister faces the crowd that Petra's army has "driven the enemies of the homeland beyond our borders; danger is ended, safety restored."[405] The blast of triumph plants the first seeds of identity and propaganda (NI-1, PM-1). Ethno-symbolism notes how naming a vanquished foe seals the "sacred frontier," converting conquered space into sanctified homeland.[406]

An Egyptian merchant steps forward, praising Petra's "generous people and popular government," then warning that Roman spies are hiding in the "inn of strangers."[407] The minister boasts Petra's "steel grip" keeps the kidnappers from leaving.[408] Two more NI blows (NI-2, 3) exalt civic virtue over Roman wickedness, while surveillance pride logs (SC-1) and

[402] «روما يا وحش الحضارة لما بيشبع … بترا مش رح تركع» [O Roma, insatiable beast of civilisation … Petra will not kneel] *Petra*, {00:56:00 – 00:58:20}; Zogheib, 51.
[403] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 151-52.
[404] Leahy, *The Theatre as an Examination of Power*, 77 (political theatre flips victimhood into empowerment).
[405] «جيش بيترا هزم الرومان وطلعنا أعداءَ الوطن من حدودِنا وانتهى الخطر، ورجع الأمن» [We have driven the enemies of the homeland beyond our borders; danger is ended, safety restored] *Petra*, {00:59:45 – 01:03:10}; Zogheib, 64.
[406] D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation,* 153 – 155.
[407] «شعبُ بترا كريمٌ وحكومتُه شعبية… لكنّ جواسيس رومان سمعتن بخان الغربا» [The people of Petra are generous and their government popular… but Roman spies remain in the inn of strangers] *Petra*, {01:03:42 – 01:06:28}; Zogheib, 64.
[408] «قبضةٌ فولاذيةٌ تمنع الخاطفينَ من الهرب» [A steel grip keeps the kidnappers from escaping] *Petra*, {01:03:42 – 01:06:28}; Zogheib, 64.

a second propaganda mark (PM-2). This raw policing is transmuted into security, reframed as collective honour.[409]

Privately, the governess hears the minister rage at Rome's "wicked low morals" for abducting a child—but he withholds the news from the king's messenger "because the country's interest requires it."[410] Information control scores (PM-3) and (SC-2). Here, hegemony is secured not only by arms but by managing what subjects are allowed to know.[411]

Patricus, after learning of Rome's defeat, bargains with the queen to surrender the seized lands or the princess will die. The queen answers, "These lands are ours, and every person must get their land back."[412] Two fresh NI strokes (NI-4,5) and (PM-4) consecrate sovereignty as non-negotiable. He presses; she declares the victory "more precious than my daughter's life."[413] Maternal love bows to collective destiny (RH-1), and this exemplary sacrifice is a deposit of moral credit that obliges the entire polity.[414]

She prophesies Rome's ruin: "the brutal military empire that plunders peoples … the curse of defeated nations will pursue your soldiers and palaces."[415] Prophecy mythologises conflict (NI-6) and adds (PM-5). Patricus breaks: her courage "has erased the history of Rome's victories … Goodbye, Rome, our crazy empire that sends its generals to assassinate children. Let the stars go out and let me sleep forever."[416] Enemy capitulation confirms (RH-2) and (SC-3); Mayer calls such "echo authority" the hinge where the antagonist's voice ratifies the protagonist's virtue.[417]

Later, the queen sings, "If a life must be taken, strike mine, not the child's."[418] The spoken plea to the gods lands (NI-7) and (SC-4), casting female sovereignty itself as the final line of defence. A choral refrain closes the hall: "Our swords guard the dawn."[419] Final

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[409] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 138 – 140.
[410] «لا تُخبِروا رسول الملك بخطف الأميرة، فمصلحةُ البلادِ تقتضي الصمت» [Do not tell the king's messenger about the princess's kidnapping, for the country's interest requires silence.] *Petra*, {01:12:35 – 01:14:30}; Zogheib, 65.
[411] Filippini, *Using Gramsci,* 121 – 123.
[412] «هي الأرض الناء، وكلّ إنسانٍ لازم يسترجع أرضَو» [These lands are ours, and every person must get his land back] *Petra*, {01:15:07 – 01:15:33}; Zogheib, 72.
[413] «النصرُ يلي دفعنا تمنو من دم أبطال بترا أغلى من حياة بنتي» [The victory bought with the blood of Petra's brave soldiers is more precious than my daughter's life] *Petra*, {01:15:34 – 01:16:05}; Zogheib, 73.
[414] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 138 – 140.
[415] «إمبراطوريةٌ عسكريةٌ متوحّشةٌ بتنهبُ الشعوب… لعنةُ المهزومين رح تُطاردُ قصورَكم» [A brutal military empire that plunders peoples… the curse of the defeated will pursue your palaces] *Petra*, {01:16:06 – 01:17:10}; Zogheib, 77.
[416] «شجاعتُك مَحَت تاريخَ انتصاراتِ روما… وداعًا يا روما، إمبراطوريتي المجنونة التي تقتلُ الأطفال» [Your courage has erased the history of Rome's victories… Goodbye, Rome, my mad empire that murders children] *Petra*, {01:18:20 – 01:19:10}; Zogheib, 79.
[417] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 157-158.
[418] «لو لازم يكون في دم ، خلوه دمي مش دم البنت» [If a life must be taken, strike mine, not the child's.] *Petra*, {01:18:58 – 01:19:10}; Zogheib, 79.
[419] Choral refrain «سيوفُنا تَحرسُ الفجر» [Our swords guard the dawn] *Petra*, {01:20:40-01:21:00}; Zogheib, 86.

identity and propaganda tallies (NI-8,9,10, PM-6,7) and (RH-3) fuse victory, vigilance and grief in one cadence: Petra's moral ledger is stamped in blood yet paid in freedom.

Scene totals – NI 10 > PM 8 > SC 5 > RH 3. Triumph is proclaimed, spies are cornered, and a mother-queen wagers her own life against an empire's threat, proving that in Petra, private sacrifice and public sovereignty are the same.

3.3.6 Scene 5 – King's Return & Celestial Anthem

Running time 01:22:26–01:30:31 | QCA density ≈ 3.2 hits·min^{-1} (NI 10\PM 8\RH 3\SC 5)

A drum roll parts the gates. The citizen chorus greets the sovereigns with a refrain exalting "the homeland, the people, the glory of war, and the greatness of king and queen."[420] The chant fuses civic pride (NI-1,2) with an ideological victory lap (PM-1) and, in the ethno-symbolic lens, seals Petra's frontier in communal memory.[421]

Ascending the steps, the king is likened to "a cedar in Lebanon, towering over the mountains," while the queen adds that he has sacrificed everything for the people and the country.[422] The image naturalises vertical rule as moral service—two fresh identity blows (NI-3,4), twin propaganda marks (PM-2,3), and a solidarity pulse (SC-1). In a capital-conversion reading, botanical grandeur is transmuted into political credit.[423]

He then announces a new alliance of free cities and reveals the cost: "The princess died so Petra might live; her blood bought our dawn."[424] Victory is renamed covenant (NI-5, PM-4), while sacrifice is folded into heroism (RH-1) and accepted as the common-sense price of freedom.[425]

Silence breaks when a lone off-stage voice—Fairuz—floats the anthem "They say my country is small," affirming historical right and a moral-civilizational struggle.[426] The melody

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[420] «الأرضُ والشعبُ العظيم، ومجدُ الحرب، وعظمةُ الملك والملكة» [the homeland and the great people, the glory of war, the greatness of king and queen] *Petra*, {01:22:26 – 01:24:04}; Zogheib, 84.

[421] Smith, *Cultural Foundations of Nations*, 100–102.

[422] «مثل الأرْز بلبنانَ، بتعلا فوق الجبال» [a cedar in Lebanon, towering over the mountains] ;« يا ملك الناس، تعبك للناس، فرحك للناس، ولادك للناس، يا ملك متوَّج على هموم الناس» [O King of the people, your toil, your joy, your children are for the people—O King crowned with the people's worries] *Petra*, {01:24:22–01:26:12}; Zogheib, 84.

[423] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 142–144.

[424] «ماتتِ الأميرةُ لتَحيا بترا؛ دمُها جاب فجرَنا» [The princess died so Petra might live; her blood brought our dawn] *Petra*, {01:26:13 – 01:27:00}; Zogheib, 84.

[425] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 124–126.

[426] On of the most beautiful songs of Fairuz's throughout her artistic career «بقولوا صغيّر بلدي» "They Say My Country Is Small." *Petra*, {01:26:12 – 01:27:51}; Zogheib, 85.

transforms smallness into moral altitude, culminating in final identity pulses (NI-6,8), two more propaganda echoes (PM-5,6), and a collective-agency hinge (RH-2).

Amid the song, courtiers salute the "wise leadership" of the king and queen together, adding (SC-2,3) and (PM-7). A last chorus repeats "Our swords guard the dawn," closing the tally (NI-9,10, PM-8, RH-3, SC-4-5). Narrative-politics logic: the anthem's echo ties private grief, public pride and future vigilance into one binding refrain.[427]

Scene totals — NI 10 > PM 8 > SC 5 > RH 3. Grief is consecrated, victory sung, and a sky-borne chorus turns a "small" Petra into a limitless moral claim.

3.3.7 Textual-QCA Snapshot – *Petra* (Scenes 1 → 5)

Scene-header totals: NI 54 · PM 43 · RH 18 · SC 25 → (the full grid in Appendix A-2, Text–Visual Coding Matrix—compiled from A2.5 "Petra Textual Coding Scheme"—lists the complete line-by-line counts for the entire play: NI 74 · PM 51 · RH 28 · SC 26) ·

Full-scene time-block	Pivot quotation (English gloss)	QCA hit-string (NI · PM · RH · SC)	Dominant QCA driver
00:00:00–00:18:24	"A class-free city that guarantees human freedom and dignity."	10 · 9 · 3 · 6	National Identity & Cultural Unity
00:18:30–00:33:43	"Last stronghold of freedom and civilisation—its high walls stand against Roman greed."	8 · 5 · 1 · 3	National Identity & Cultural Unity
00:33:43–00:58:24	"Better to erase civilisation than let Rome taste defeat."	12 · 10 · 5 · 4	National Identity & Cultural Unity
00:58:26–01:22:04	"These lands are ours; every person must get his land back."	10 · 8 · 3 · 5	National Identity & Cultural Unity
01:22:26–01:30:31	"They say my country is small… yet our swords guard the dawn."	10 · 8 · 3 · 5	National Identity & Cultural Unity

[427] Echo effect — a repeated image or line that re-positions both audiences and antagonists; *Narrative Politics*, 123.

3.3.8 Visual Grammar Coda

The prologue of *Petra* arranges power as a living frieze. A bright, evenly lit frontal long shot fixes the king mid-rostrum, while two identical ranks of bowing citizens are below, spear-bearing guards are behind, and two Commandos hold the royal weapons, armour tapering toward the vanishing point. Bordwell remarks that frontality forces the viewer's scan to lock on the axis promising the most story information, and here that axis is the royal body.[428] The king's egalitarian oath, delivered from literal elevation, travels downward across bodies already arrayed by status, turning spoken classlessness into visible hierarchy (NI-1, PM-1, SC-1, RH-1).

The king takes a gold-hilted sword from a captain's outstretched palms and, with his opposite arm, raises a ruby-topped sceptre toward the queen. Because the frame never cuts in, spectators watch as symbolic value changes hands within a single spatial order (SC-2, PM-2). Another symbolic capital that becomes convertible the moment it is recognised, and the paired transfer photographs that convert, welding martial succession and dynastic continuity into one continuous gesture that requires no dialogue (NI-2).[429]

When the queen steps forward, her crimson cloak cleaves the monochrome crowd (SC-3) and re-centres the axis on her advancing body. Such saturated invocations of antiquity are a "sacred foundation," by which nations bind memory, territory, and destiny into one emotion-laden image (NI-4).[430] The palette argues that national renewal is resacralisation, not innovation (PM-3).

Unbroken high-key illumination erases shadow and projects an air of transparency; nevertheless, the same brightness magnifies rank, as gold threads spark where wool dulls. Visibility becomes consent: spectators verify a promised equality while subconsciously ratifying its visual negation (SC-4, PM-4).

The caravan tribute extends the fresco into regional diplomacy. A slow crane-in follows delegates clad in Phoenician blue, Egyptian linen, and Babylonian burgundy as they converge on the queen. Each treasure becomes a covenant (NI-5, PM-5); the camera tilts microscopically

[428] Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art*, 151-152.
[429] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 8.
[430] Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations, 39.*

with every box—an effortless tilt can powerfully reveal a new story element.[431] The incremental motion lets viewers measure material inflow as ideological credit, recasting commerce as mutual protection (SC-5) and consolidating Petra's role as guardian and centre of a pan-Levantine past (NI-6,7).

Darkness intrudes when Roman spies abduct the princess. Lanterns gutter, handheld jolts break the frontal order, and the victim exits the frame into shadow. Bordwell links such shaky reframing to "anxious movement, as if action were glimpsed on the fly,"[432] branding Rome as a power that must hide to strike. A nine-second torch-lit close-up of the queen that follows re-establishes rigid frontality and converts private loss into a public oath (RH-2, PM-7). Objects, colours, and framings have shifted, yet symmetry persists, teaching that authority in *Petra* is a current, constantly circulating, never relinquished (SC-6).

Figure 4-Petra, Scene 4 (01:19:35). Queen and Patricus in static face-off. The frontal tableau and converging shadows reinforce Petra's ideological centre: authority may bend under siege, but never shifts off-axis. Visual codes: NI · PM · RH · SC.

The closing visuals are very similar to the opening scene, as the order has been restored, which gives us (NI-8, PM-8, SC-7) in addition to two hits of (RH-4,5) for the rising swords.

[431] Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art*, 195.
[432] Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art*, 200.

By embedding that lesson in a spectacle of perfect symmetry periodically cracked by tiny motions, the production obliges spectators to participate: to watch capital accrue, migrate, and return is already to concede the king's centrality, legitimacy, and necessity (NI-9 · PM-9 · RH-7 · SC-9).

A compact crosswalk linking the five key tableaux to our visual coding. Scene-bundle totals: NI 9 · PM 9 · RH 7 · SC 9 → the whole, second-by-second ledger is filed in B-3.2 Visual Coding Scheme of the play *Petra* and summarised in Appendix A-2, Master Text–Visual Coding Matrix.

3.3.9 Visual–QCA – Full play

A compact crosswalk between the continuous five scenes takes and our coding. Fragment totals: NI 9 · PM 9 · RH 7 · SC 9 → isual-density ≈ 0.38 hits · min^{-1} . The complete, second-by-second ledger is in A.2.4 Visual Coding Scheme of the Play *Petra* and is summarised in Appendix A-2, Master Text–Visual Coding Matrix.

Full-scene time	Time-code (shot- key still)	Scene ID	QCA hits in shot NI · PM · RH · SC	Dominant visual cue
00:00:00–00:18:24	00:02:12	"Farewell to the King"	3 · 4 · 1 · 4	Frontal "living-frieze" tableau: king centred, sword→sceptre transfer, crimson-cloak axis
00:18:30–00:33:43	00:20:06	"Arrival Caravan-Tableau"	3 · 1 · 0 · 1	Slow crane on multi-coloured tribute; commerce framed as covenant
00:33:43–00:58:24	00:55:18	"Princess Abduction"	1 · 2 · 3 · 2	Hand-held lantern chase; torch-lit queen close-up turns loss into public oath
01:15:10–01:22:44	01:19:35	"Face-off with Patricus"	1 · 1 · 1 · 1	Static face-off: queen frontal, circling spy; colour strip marks Roman collapse
01:22:26–01:30:31	01:27:56	King's Return & Celestial Anthem	1 · 1 · 2 · 1	Closing anthem tableau: kneeling crowd, cedar-lit king, "Our swords guard the dawn"

Camera, colour, and blocking reinforce exactly the narrative hierarchy traced in § 3.3.8: rigid frontality and V-shaped ranks keep status on display, while sword-to-sceptre handoffs and torch-lit vows broadcast propaganda in real-time. Each fracture in symmetry—hand-held lantern chase, crimson-cloak rupture, circling spy—sparks a resistance beat, yet the frame always snaps back to centre the royal body. Sparing bursts of national colour (queen's red, caravan blues, cedar glow) flare at hinge moments, tying personal sacrifice and civic pride into a single, self-resetting myth.

3.4 Cross-Play Synthesis

To assess how the Rahbanis recalibrate ideology across their musical trilogy, the coded results have been collapsed into scene-header aggregates (headline hits), full-text totals, and density measures for both dialogue and surviving footage. The four analytic families remain intact; National Identity & Cultural Unity (NI), Political Messaging & Propaganda (PM), Resistance & Heroism (RH), Social Structures & Class Dynamics (SC), allowing a side-by-side reading of *Jibal al-Sawwan* (1969), *Yaish Yaish* (1970), and *Petra* (1977).

3.4.1 Quantitative Profile of Three Plays

Play (year)	Scene-header totals[433]	Whole-text totals[434]	Dominant driver[435]	Mean textual density[436] (hits · min^{-1})	Aggregate visual hits[437]	Visual density[438] (hits · min^{-1})
Jibal al-Sawwan (1969)	NI24\PP15\RH10\SC 2	NI83\PP43\RH48\SS20	National identity	≈ 2.6	NI 5 · PM 3 · RH 2 · SC 2 = 12	≈ 1.0
Yaish Yaish (1970)	NI9\PP23\RH6\SS18	NI43\PP27\RH24\SS20	Propaganda	≈ 0.5	NI 1 · PM 1 · RH 1 · SC 3 = 6	≈ 1.5
Petra (1977)	NI50\PP40\RH15\SS23	NI74\PP51\RH28\SS26	National identity	≈ 1.4	NI 9 · PM 9 · RH 7 · SC 9 = 34	≈ 0.4

[433] Sum of the hit-strings heading each scene.
[434] Line-by-line totals in Appendix A-2.
[435] Largest share of scene-header hits.
[436] Scene-header hits ÷ total running-time.
[437] From visual-grammar codas (§ 3.1.8, 3.2.8, 3.3.8).
[438] Visual hits ÷ minutes of extant footage.

3.4.2 Qualitative Drift by Analytic Family

Evaluation category	Sawwan (1969)	Yaish (1970)	Petra (1977)	Cross-play trajectory
National identity & cultural unity	Myth-symbol gate unifies mountain village.	Unity fragmentary; coups recycle distrust	Royal ritual re-sacralises pan-Levantine frontier.	From micro-myth → contested nationhood → macro-myth.
Political messaging & propaganda	Coercive parades countered by folk chorus.	Media overkill—loudspeakers, hired crowds—lays rhetoric bare.	Pageantry naturalises rule; sacrifice rhetoric seals consent.	Overt force → satirical exposure → ritual legitimation.
Resistance & heroism	Clear martyr-hero code.	Heroism ironised into tragic farce.	Hybrid: maternal oath + anthem.	Affirmed → ironised → re-consecrated.
Social structures & class dynamics	Class mostly latent.	Class critique foregrounded (smugglers, lotteries, bribes).	Hierarchy ceremonial; gendered sovereignty central.	Latent → exposed → ritualised (with growing female agency).

3.4.3 Composite Implications

Elastic ideologemes: same folkloric devices—choral refrain, seasonal rite, sacrificial speech—fuel emancipatory energy in *Sawwan*, satiric unmasking in *Yaish*, and legitimation of patriarchal sovereignty in *Petra*, which means pivots on framing, not form.

Trajectory of authority: Power migrates from an external despot (Fatik) through a revolving internal tyrant (Barhum ↔ military council) to a benevolent autocrat (king/queen of *Petra*). The dramaturgical arc rehearses a passage from occupation-resistance, through disillusioned republicanism, to sacralised monarchy, mirroring the Baathist search for emotionally durable symbols of rule.

Gender as legitimising hinge: Each play elevates a woman at a decisive turn—Ghorba (martyr-avatar), Ḥayfa (ironic truth-teller), Shakila (sovereign redeemer). Gendered leadership both complicates and consolidates patriarchal myth.

Class critique as valve: Only *Yaish Yaish* sustains a systemic exposure of rent-seeking elites; its comic register functions as a "safety valve" critique that ultimately circles back to pessimistic stasis. The flanking tragedies sublimate class antagonism into transcendental unity.

Reception forecast: Because each code-family is handled in a different tonal register—tragic-epic, satiric-farce, liturgical-pageant—audiences inherit a "repertoire of positions" ranging

from uncritical patriotism to corrosive irony. Chapter 4 will test how contemporary viewers selected among those positions.

In sum, the Rahbani corpus supplies a modular myth-kit: its components can exalt sacrifice, mock authority, or sanctify rule according to the ideological needs of the moment. This plasticity—rather than any single fixed message—accounts for the trilogy's longevity across shifting Syrian political landscapes. Quantitatively, the arc is clear: mythic unity (1969) → bureaucratic fatigue (1970) → re-sacralised polity (1977).

Chapter 4: The Audience Speaks – Public Reception and Reflections.

Having decoded the ways in which three Rahbani plays refract Baathist ideals of unity, heroism, and hierarchy, I now examine how Syrian viewers remember and repurpose those inscriptions. Six semi-structured interviews with diaspora Syrians (aged 30–68) form the basis for this reception analysis.

Interviews followed Galletta's three-segment model: an opening narrative, theory-inflected probing, and a reflexive close.[439] My questions mapped directly onto the four master codes (National Identity, Political Messaging, Resistance, Social Class) used in the textual QCA, ensuring that reception data could be spliced back into the same analytical grid.[440] Interviewees reviewed transcripts in full and could veto quotations at any stage.

4.1 Echoes from the Stage: Interview Findings

Rahbani theatre's blend of folklore, satire, and martyrdom never reached Syrian ears as a single message; it splintered along lines of age, exile, and politics. To chart those fractures, I categorise the six interlocutors into three life-cycle cohorts and analyse their memories through the four codes that guided the textual analysis. The same corpus can be recycled as civic pride, ironic archive, or sectarian ammunition; an elasticity Christopher Stone calls "the mountain's paradox: rooted and portable at once."[441]

ID (pseudonym)	Gender	Age (2024)	Birth-place / Region	Current city & country	Year left Syria	Self-positioning (political / confessional)	First Rahbani exposure (year / medium)	Favourite play / scene	Key analytic tag
P1 "Umm Salim"	F	68	Suwayda – Jabal al Druze	Brussels, Belgium	2015	Druze, non-aligned; Bath voter 2003	1979 – live-TV family night	*Petra* – Shakīla's raised index finger	nostalgic pride
P2 "Khaled"	M	57	Latakia – Coast	Madrid, Spain	2013	Soft Bath sympathiser	1984 – Damascus-Fair loudspeakers	*Ṣawwān* – Mudlij at the gate	sacrifice = discipline
P3 "Rana"	F	39	Damascus	Philadelphia, USA	1999	Secular nationalist	1998 – school-choir cassette	*Yaish* – grocer joke	ironic affection
P4 "Ayman"	M	48	Aleppo	Berlin, Germany	2014	Left-liberal; 2011 activist	1986 – family VHS	*Yaish* – "Long	anthem fatigue

[439] Galletta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond,* 45–47.
[440] Appendix B 2. Semi-Structured Interview Guide
[441] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 139-40.

								Live!" refrain	
P5 "Leila"	F	34	Homs	Lyon, France	2012	Non-religious feminist	1998 – Syrian-TV rerun	*Ṣawwān* – Ghurba's death	blood-as-tax
P6 "Abu Seif"	M	32	Idlib countryside	Amsterdam, Netherland	2016	Supports HTS	2002 – official Syrian radio broadcast	*Ṣawwān* – martyr chant	selective appropriation

Elders (P1, P2): The plays still pulse with civic warmth. When "Umm Salim" recalls the 1979 rebroadcast of *Petra*, she evokes a household "as if the whole mountain sang with us," insisting that "the music belongs to us, not to any party." [442] Khaled likewise indulges in mythic liberties: "Poetry makes facts breathe; who cares if King Malik served Rome?". [443] Their tolerance aligns with Stone's claim that Rahbani pastoral trades in "affective truth, not chronicle," [444] and echoes Edward Schatz's reminder that soft-authoritarian symbols must feel locally authentic to endure. [445]

Mid-generation (P3, P4)**:** Those born in the late 1970s and early 1980s remember Rahbani theatre as both formative and frustrating, as its messages, once resonant, are now ironic or overwhelming. Rana still loops the *Yaish Yaish* cassette when editing podcasts, but Barhum's flag-and-cash montage now reads as "wholesale patriotism on sale."[446] For Ayman, the trouble was acoustic abundance: "Endless 'Long Live!' drills were the noise that pushed me into activism." [447] Their testimonies illustrate Steven Heydemann's thesis that ritual over-saturation can hollow legitimacy from within.[448]

Youngest (P5, P6): Leila freezes in Queen Shakila's torch-lit corridor, reading *Petra* through a feminist lens that reveals "blood as tax" underwrites the heroic myth, proving "a woman's voice can crack an empire."[449] By contrast, Abu Seif salvages only the mountain chorus, stripping melody of orchestration because "Arabism without *tawhid*[450] is another idol… but

[442] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P1.
[443] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P2.
[444] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 62.
[445] Schatz, "The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit," 206.
[446] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P3.
[447] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P4.
[448] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria,* 211-13 *(When regime propaganda repeats a symbol until it loses its force — a strategy of over-exposure designed to blunt oppositional meaning.).*
[449] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P5.
[450] Tawhid — in Islam, the oneness of God, in the sense that he is one and there is no god but he, as stated in the shahādah ("witness") formula: "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His prophet." To most Muslim scholars, the science of tawhid is the systematic theology through which a better knowledge of God may be reached; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Tawhid," accessed 22 February 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/tawhid.

that chorus is pure nasheed."[451] The same melody thus migrates from civic pride to jihadist chant, confirming Pierre Bourdieu's insight that symbolic capital "travels" once detached from its original field.[452]

Across six testimonies, reactions arc from nostalgia through ambivalence to ideological reuse. Humour binds them: Khaled's first corruption lesson was Shibli's quip that officials "steal bigger,"[453] and Rana recalls the beat of silence after the moustache gag, "like people realised the joke cut too close." [454] Repeated slogans drill loyalty but also dull conviction; female heroism serves as a rallying cry and ledger of unpaid labour. Still, the corpus endures as elastic heritage.[455] Rahbani songs travel easily, their political cargo repacked with each new audience.

4.2 A New Gallery: Diaspora Perspectives and Political Memory

Once outside Syria, Rahbani recordings rarely lie dormant; they become, in Khaled's phrase, "a gallery you can rearrange at will."[456] Shared by AirDrop[457], sliced into podcasts, or subtitled ad hoc, these plays now circulate on platforms beyond Baath control. This independence meets host-country debates on pluralism, gender, and faith, letting one refrain serve as civics primer, feminist warning, or jihadi proof-text. Portability, Christopher Stone says of the Rahbani "village mythology,"[458] renews itself with every WhatsApp forward. Even Umm Salim, eldest in the corpus, keeps the music as a secular shield: "I still play it here to drown out the Islamists' loudspeakers." [459]

Khaled subtitles *Sawan* for Spanish friends, foregrounding Shibli's anticlerical bar-room jab and reframing patriotic symbols as satire. Red cloaks and drumrolls have "travelled" from national to cosmopolitan field, their capital exchanged for comic critique. [460]

Rana first encountered the anthem—once sung by rote in her Damascus choir—on a dorm-room VCD. A mid-song 'breaking-news' cut shaped her activist aesthetics: "I cut protest

[451] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P6. Nasheed — unaccompanied (a cappella) Islamic chant sung in praise of God or moral themes; "What Is Nasheed? A Guide to Islamic Songs and Spiritual Chants," *Ulum al-Azhar*, accessed 23 February 2025, https://ulumalazhar.com/what-is-nasheed/.
[452] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*,7-10, 40-41.
[453] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P2.
[454] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P3.
[455] Elastic heritage — my interview code for songs whose affective power is *stretchable*: the identical tune or lyric is reused by rival movements (secular, Islamist, nationalist, leftist), its meaning bending to new ideological frames; cf. Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 82–85 on "multivocal heritage," and Christina Schwenkel, "Recycled Icons: Heritage, memory and cultural circulation," *Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 4 (2012): 923–44.
[456] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P2.
[457] Apple's encrypted, device-to-device file-sharing feature.
[458] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 62
[459] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P1.
[460] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 8.

videos so the slogans leak—songs leak."[461] Diaspora retools a school melody into a dissent template, building shared memory around collective action.[462]

Ayman screens *Yaish Yaish* in Berlin Theatre of the Oppressed workshops. Sergeant ʿAbbud's curt "orders are orders!" once haunted Aleppo; replayed abroad, it anchors seminars on bureaucratic coercion. What began as anthem fatigue[463]—ritual oversaturation—has become a mnemonic for civic vigilance.

Leila freezes *Petra* at the kidnapping. The still of Queen Shakila's seizure "shows the cost ledger behind epic loyalty,"[464] foregrounding women's unpaid labour in nationalist myth—an angle barely audible in home-country screenings.

Abu Seif (P6), by contrast, deletes most Rahbani tracks as haram yet loops Sawan's village sermon—"first the grain, then the faith"—after a battle nasheed. Diaspora here prunes the archive, preserving only verses that mesh with militant scripture.

Presenting these vignettes serves two purposes. First, it stress-tests the four master codes (NI, PM, RH, SC) beyond Baathist circuitry, showing how exile amplifies satire (Rana), recasts repetition as coercion (Ayman), grafts feminist audit onto epic lament (Leila), and still permits secular affect (Umm Salim). Second, the contrasts prepare the triangulation in § 4.3: audience talk clarifies where textual analysis might romanticise pastoral unity or overlook sonic violence. Three cross-cutting shifts stand out:

From → To	Illustrative move	Codes in play
Retain → Re-key (Elastic Heritage)	Every listener preserves at least one Rahbani hook but bends it to new ends—from Umm Salim's secular bastion and Khaled's satire to Abu Seif's Islamist filter	NI / PM
Repeat → Resist (Oversaturation)	School drills and checkpoint speakers once drilled loyalty; in exile their very repetition flags coercion and sparks critique	PM
Heroism → Ledger (Gendered Costs)	Leila's freeze-frame shifts focus from public triumph to private sacrifice, exposing the hidden economy of myth	RH / SC

[461] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P3.
[462] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 101-2.
[463] Anthem fatigue — my term for the desensitisation produced by constant patriotic songs and slogans; cf. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE, 1995), 40–46 on the daily, taken-for-granted repetition of national anthems and other symbols.
[464] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+summaries, P5.

Diaspora acts less as an archive than a slide deck: listeners overlay transparencies—discipline, satire, feminist audit, scriptural proof-text—upon familiar melodies. Syrian radio once synchronised reception; scattered galleries now multiply entries. Such multiplication, Smith says, is inevitable when collective identity is "stitched together by shared memories,"[465] making the Rahbani corpus a living interlocutor, not a sealed relic.

4.3 Interpreting the Performance: Linking the Interviews with the Plays

Our four-code grid—NI, PM, RH, SC—finds its echo in six diaspora testimonies, and the dialogue between text and memory organises itself into three moves. First, the straight match: when the script shouts, the ear repeats; the twelve coup slogans that overload the *Yaish* matrix register in Rana and Ayman as sheer "anthem fatigue." Second, the lateral shift: audience filters re-label signals; Queen Shakila's maternal pledge, tagged as RH in the ledger, returns through Leila as proof of "gendered extraction," shifting the moment toward SC. Third, the upward revaluation: jokes the page treats as throw-away accrue moral weight; Shibli's "steal bigger" aside—low in the hierarchy of lines—becomes Khaled's first crack of civic doubt and the meme Rana now loops in activist edits. The lesson is simple: political meaning takes shape in the charged space between stage and ear; a line lives only as long as listeners choose to carry it.

4.3-A.1 Code Frequency and Participant Distribution

The table below maps how key sub-codes from the four analytical categories (National Identity, Political Messaging, Resistance, and Social Class) surfaced across the six interviews. It reflects both frequency and speaker distribution, showing how themes clustered across participants.

Newsub-code (Appendix B)	Voices (n = 6)	Sample excerpt
NI-EH Elastic heritage	2 (P1, P2)	"The music belongs to us, not to any party."
PM-PF Propaganda fatigue	2 (P3, P4)	"Endless *Long Live!* drills pushed me into activism."
RH-FFD Female-fronted defiance	2 (P1, P5)	"A woman's cry can crack an empire's façade."
SC-CS Corruption satire	2 (P2, P3)	"Shiblī's 'steal bigger' line was my first economics lesson."
Others (NI-MP, PM-SR, SC-GE)	3 collective hits	

[465] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation, 208.*

Residual sub-codes—NI-MP (mythic past), PM-SR (scripted ritual), SC-GE (gendered economy)— appear only three times in total: too sparse for individual rows but noted here for completeness.

4.3-A.2 Definitions and Illustrative Excerpt

To clarify how these audience codes map ideological content onto lived memory, the following table defines all nine sub-codes and pairs each with a representative quote.

Master Code	Sub-Code	Working Definition	Indicative Excerpt (Participant)
NI	NI-EH Elastic Heritage	Rahbani material redeployed by different generations or ideologies without losing emotional charge.	"The music belongs to us, not to any party; I use it now against the Islamists." – Umm Salim
	NI-MP Mythic Pragmatism	Listeners accept—or even celebrate—historical inaccuracy when it delivers affective payoff.	"Poetry makes facts breathe; who cares if King Malik really served Rome?" – Khaled
PM	PM-PF Propaganda Fatigue	Over-repetition drains slogans of meaning and seeds later scepticism or dissent.	"Endless 'Long Live!' drills were the noise that pushed me into activism." – Ayman
	PM-SR Selective Rejection	Islamist listeners denounce secular art as haram yet salvage fragments that bolster their worldview.	"Arabism without tawhid is another idol… but that mountain chorus is pure nasheed." – Abu Seif
RH	RH-FFD Female-Fronted Defiance	Women protagonists or singers interpreted as loci of anti-patriarchal or anti-colonial resistance.	"Fairuz shouting 'Petra Will Not Kneel' gives me a feminist rush." – Leila
SC	SC-GE Gendered Extraction	National myths celebrated on stage are underwritten by women's unpaid labour or sacrifice.	"The loom scene shows who bankrolls male glory—women weaving the shroud." – Leila
	SC-CS Corruption Satire	Comic interludes expose structural graft or class cynicism, teaching civic doubt.	"Shiblī's 'steal bigger' line was my first economics lesson." – Khaled

4.3-A.3 Text / Visual / Audience Density Comparison

Convergence matrix quantifying the alignment among coded text, extant imagery, and audience recall for each master category.

Code	Text hits of 3 plays	Visual hits of 3 plays	Stage total	Interview voices[466]	Convergence	Snapshot comment
NI	200	17	2017	3	Partial – resonance narrows by cohort	Stage saturated with supra-sectarian unity; half the listeners still embrace that "elastic heritage," the rest remix or ironise it.
PM	121	17	138	3	High – slogans remembered as noise	Broadcast ritual heavy; three interviewees tag it as "anthem fatigue" or selective rejection.
RH	100	12	112	2	Mixed – revered or ironised	Martyr-parent trope dense on stage; one listener rewrites it through feminist defiance, another through jihadist idiom.
SC	66	15	81	3	High – class & gender cues vivid	Least frequent on stage, yet mid-generation viewers foreground corruption satire and gendered labour.

4.4 The Play's Impact: Broader Cultural and Political Implications

Rahbani theatre emerges as a travelling repertoire—portable, flexible, and enduring.[467] Inside Syria, daily Baathist rebroadcasts welded lyric beauty into state ritual, using affective saturation to replace overt force.[468] Elder nostalgia proves the tactic worked; yet, the same redundancy bred the "anthem-fatigue" that Ayman recalls, showing how overexposure hollows legitimacy from within.

In exile, the songs are reframed and revalued. Khaled's Spanish subtitles transform *Ṣawwan*'s red cloaks from a patriotic banner to an anticlerical joke, confirming that symbolic capital can travel and convert across fields.[469] Abu Seif's Islamist remix pares the score to a single militant

[466] Interview voices = number of distinct interviewees (out of six) who mention the code at least once; full frequency counts appear in Appendix B.
[467] Leahy, Theatre as an Examination of Power, 84. "The theatre is an instrument of power, not an end—the goals of its practitioners are independent of the instrument."
[468] Nikolaos van Dam, The Struggle for Power in Syria, 144.; Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria, 126.
[469] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 8. "Like economic capital, the other forms of capital may be mutually convertible under certain circumstances … the hierarchy of the different currencies of power is never immutable."

refrain, illustrating that portability guarantees only *shareable memory*, not fixed meaning.[470] Leila's feminist freeze-frame on Queen Shakīla pushes the corpus further: stories endure only as long as audiences renegotiate the moral accounts they carry.[471]

Three lessons follow. (1) Affective density anchors soft control: when lyrics and ritual fuse so tightly that dissent must first unmake the form itself. (2) That same density incubates resistance: oversaturation, satire, and gendered cost become future fault lines once the broadcast grid dissolves. (3) Portability safeguards the canon, not the message: each border crossing or generational shift resets the repertoire's political charge. In Gramsci's terms, cultural hegemony is a "moving equilibrium";[472] Rahbani theatre supplies the durable motifs, but audiences decide where the balance finally settles.

[470] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 80.
[471] Mayer, *Narrative Politics*, 64.
[472] Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 18.

Conclusion – The Final Act

As the lights dim and the applause fades, one thing becomes clear: Rahbani theatre sits at the crossroads of political imagination and audience memory. This study has examined how the Rahbani brothers' musicals shaped and reinforced Syrian-Arab identity under Baathist rule, crafting a resonant narrative of heroism, sacrifice, and unity through their distinctive dramatic and musical idiom.[473] These works did more than reflect prevailing ideals—they actively constructed a romanticised "usable past" that fostered emotional attachment and ideological coherence, while naturalising authority and embedding norms of obedience.[474]

Yet the research also revealed shifting interpretations within audience reception. Diaspora participants blended nostalgic affection with critical awareness of authoritarian undercurrents. The Rahbani stage thus holds a paradoxical role: it evokes collective pride and resistance, yet simultaneously conveys themes many now recognise as complicit with paternalistic and authoritarian norms.

This final chapter synthesises the project's central insights, situates them within broader debates in Middle Eastern studies and performance research, and outlines future research paths that could deepen our understanding of Rahbani theatre's evolving resonance. An epilogue reflects on the personal and academic stakes of critiquing cherished cultural icons, whose artistic brilliance is inextricably linked to their political entanglements.

A. The Curtain Falls: Key Findings

Four core findings emerged from the analysis of the selected plays and audience interviews, each demonstrating the ideological potency of performance.

First, the Rahbani musicals actively forged a romanticised national identity by blending mythic history with modern political ideals.[475] In *Petra*, the embellished depiction of King Malichus II's resistance to Rome cast the city as a symbol of Arab defiance, echoing Baathist visions of an uninterrupted civilizational struggle.[476] *Jibal al-Sawan*, meanwhile, embedded

[473] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 45, 46.
[474] Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, 42, 85.
[475] El Rayes, "Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism," 64.
[476] Malichus II—last independent Nabataean king (r. 40–70 CE), later mythologised as Petra's guardian monarch in the Rahbani musical Petra. See Jane Taylor, Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 73 (lists Malichus II as ruler "AD 40-70" and notes the kingdom's decline before Rome's annexation in 106 CE)

contemporary political motifs within emotionally charged drama, guiding identification without relying on explicit propaganda.[477]

Second, recurring themes of authority and political inertia surfaced most forcefully through satire. *Yaish Yaish* exposes the hypocrisy and moral decay of authoritarian figures, revealing the emptiness of revolutionary rhetoric and the cyclical nature of tyranny.[478] Interviewees described its humour as both entertaining and melancholic, recognising how easily grand ideals can be co-opted into instruments of control.[479] The play critiques authoritarianism but stops short of advocating revolution, underscoring the enduring frustration of seeking change within closed systems. Yet this critique is carefully contained: it mocks the repetition of slogans and the futility of false reform, but avoids naming the regime or offering an alternative. In that sense, *Yaish Yaish* operates less as a protest than as a bleak recognition of political paralysis—one that Baathist media could absorb without censorship. It should not, therefore, be mistaken for a direct challenge to Baathist power.

Third, the invocation of external threats functioned as a central dramatic device for reinforcing internal cohesion. Both *Petra* and *Flint Mountains* depict imperial Rome or foreign conspirators as existential enemies, framing unity as a moral imperative born of resistance.[480] This binary—benevolent homeland versus predatory outsider—closely mirrors Baathist propaganda and appears frequently in Rahbani narratives of Arab virtue and cultural purity.[481] Yet this idealisation did not go unchallenged. Ziad Rahbani, son of Assi and Fairuz, later satirised this constructed nationalism in *Shi Fashil* ("Failure"), criticising his family's complicity in producing a homeland he viewed as illusory—more vivid on stage than in life.[482]

Finally, diaspora perspectives revealed the Rahbani canon's enduring yet ambivalent legacy. Older participants described the plays as formative, inseparable from memories of shared identity and dignity. They found it difficult to associate the Rahbanis or Fairuz with authoritarianism, instead viewing them as symbols of secularism and cultural refinement.

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[477] Modestou, "Fairuz as a National Symbol," 182.
[478] Arab Thought Foundation, *وطن اسمه فيروز* [*A Homeland Called Fairuz*], 230; Amr Maher, عن الأخوين الرحباني وفيروز في مصر [On the Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz in Egypt], describes how the Rahbanis borrowed regime-style propaganda devices—citing the song "Yaish Yaish" and praising Fairuz's performance.
[479] Appendix B 4. Selected Interviews Excerpts+Summaries, P3, P4
[480] Arab Thought Foundation, *A Homeland Named Fairuz*, 195 (In her article," فيروز على خشبة المسرح" [Fayrouz on Stage], Hanan Qassab Hassan, who served as director of the General Authority of Dar al-Assad for Culture and as curator of the "Damascus Capital of Arab Culture 2008" celebration, reveals the influence of Fairuz in shaping the Syrian collective consciousness through her plays. She says:" ضمن هذا المكان العام .. ترتسم أبعادُ المواجهة في وجدان السوريين… بين البلد والعدوّ الخارجي.. في بتر او جبال الصوّان" [Within this public space, the dimensions of the confrontation are drawn in the conscience of the Syrians... between the country and the external enemy... in *Petra or the Flint Mountains*.])
[481] El Rayes, *Hearing Cosmopolitan Nationalism*, 64.
[482] Haugbolle, *Leftist Liberal Space*, 176; "Full Recording of Ziad Rahbani's Tribute to Assi Rahbani, Presented in 1990 on the Fourth Anniversary of His Passing," YouTube video, 21 June 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=327vDZZaAis.

Younger respondents, however, expressed discomfort with the plays' embedded authoritarian undertones, particularly scenes of choreographed loyalty. Still, many reinterpreted the repertoire through modernist or global frameworks, underscoring its emotional durability and political adaptability. Rahbani theatre persists precisely because it can be re-heard—decades later—as nostalgic solace, subtle complicity, or secular resistance, depending on the listener's frame of mind.

B. Contributions to the Field: A Standing Ovation

This thesis deepens ongoing debates in Middle Eastern studies, cultural politics, and performance research by examining Rahbani theatre as a vehicle for shaping national identity and negotiating ideological authority under Baathist rule. Its scholarly contribution spans three interlocking domains: nationalism theory, the politics of popular culture, and performance methodology.

First, through Smith's concept of ethno-symbolism, the study shows how the Rahbanis constructed a "usable past" by mythologising history to align with pan-Arabist narratives.[483] *Petra* and *Flint Mountains* reframe ancient motifs to support nationalist ideals, embedding them in emotional memory.[484] Yet this aesthetic nation-building often suppresses pluralistic identities, revealing the ambivalent function of cultural memory.

Second, using Pierre Bourdieu's idea of symbolic capital, the research demonstrates how Rahbani theatre became a medium of soft authoritarian power.[485] Rather than deploying overt propaganda, Syrian institutions harnessed the troupe's cultural prestige to naturalise patriarchal authority and solidify social hierarchies. Antonio Gramsci's notion of *cultural hegemony* clarifies how such consent is secured not by coercion but by affective resonance.[486]

Third, Frederick Mayer's theory of *narrative politics* illuminates how Rahbani dramaturgy shaped collective feeling and political meaning. Plot arcs, character roles, and visual grammar

[483] Smith, *Cultural Foundations of Nations*, 29.
[484] Al Obeidyne,"Social Agency Inventing the Nation," 66.
[485] Arab Thought Foundation, *وطن اسمه فيروز* [*A Homeland Named Fairuz*], 273 (In her article," نجمة الأجيال المتعاقبة:فيروز وما فوق الجمال"["Star of Successive Generations: Fairuz and Beyond Beauty"], Dr. Ilham Tabet discusses the formation of what she calls the "Turquoise Habitus" and its effects on reception spaces in Arab countries that adopted pan-Arabist narratives, such as Syria, Egypt, and Iraq.)
[486] Jana Al Obeidyne, "Social Agency Inventing the Nation," 63.

not only upheld dominant ideologies but also left space for reinterpretation. This pliability—texts that both legitimise and subtly resist—helps explain the repertoire's enduring relevance.

Methodologically, the thesis combines textual, visual, and reception analysis, and employing qualitative content analysis (QCA), to offer a layered model for studying performance under constraint. By triangulating script, mise-en-scène, and memory, it captures the shifting dialogue between representation and reception.

This project advances our understanding of how art mediates power and identity in authoritarian settings, placing Rahbani theatre at the centre of conversations on nationalism and cultural production in the Arab world and beyond.

C. The Next Scene: Future Directions

While this thesis provides a comprehensive account of the Rahbani Brothers' role in shaping nationalist discourse under Baathist Syria, it also opens several avenues for further inquiry. Three promising directions merit deeper exploration.

First, comparative ethnographies across Arab and non-Arab contexts could shed light on how Rahbani theatre resonates differently across cultural, political, and linguistic landscapes. While this study's diaspora interviews traced generational and ideological shifts, a broader reception study—including audiences in Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and the Gulf—could yield more nuanced insights. Fairuz's recognition among Jewish listeners in Israel and Kurdish or Alawite communities in Turkey, along with amateur adaptations by Russian and European artists in multiple languages, suggests the value of approaching Rahbani art as a transnational and cross-cultural phenomenon. Such research could examine how diverse political contexts reframe these performances and how the Rahbani corpus fosters—or complicates—intercultural dialogue beyond its original Arab nationalist frame.

Second, a focused feminist analysis could more fully unpack the ideological role of gender in Rahbani theatre. Although this thesis addressed patriarchal motifs and maternal symbolism, a more systematic inquiry is needed into how female figures—such as Queen Shakila or Ghorba—both embody nationalist ideals and reinforce conservative gender norms. This would refine our understanding of how gender intersects with power and national mythmaking, and how female representation shapes collective imaginaries in Arab performance traditions.

Third, the fragile state of Rahbani archives demands urgent scholarly attention. Ongoing conflict and censorship across the region threaten the preservation of essential materials—scripts, recordings, photographs—many of which remain in private hands. Without coordinated efforts to digitise and publicly archive these works, access risks being permanently lost. Establishing secure, open-access repositories would safeguard this cultural heritage and support future research on one of the Arab world's most significant artistic legacies.

Taken together, these research pathways would expand current conversations about the cultural politics of nationalism and deepen our understanding of how performance both reflects and reshapes identity across time, space, and ideology.

D. Between Affection and Critique: A Researcher's Epilogue

This research was shaped not only by academic curiosity but by a lifelong emotional and cultural connection to Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers—figures central to my sense of identity, history, and belonging. That personal investment informed the direction and tone of the inquiry.

Navigating between affection and critique, I encountered several key limitations. The most pressing was the inaccessibility of Syrian archives for over two years due to regime-imposed restrictions, compounded by the subsequent control of state institutions by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. As a result, the analysis relied on accessible materials: one full video of *Petra*, partial footage of *Jibal al-Sawan* and *Yaish Yaish*, as well as audio recordings and published texts. While these sources were sufficient for the project's scope, fuller archival access would have broadened its depth and scope.

Interview limitations also emerged. The original plan for extensive fieldwork had to be scaled back to just six participants due to security risks and political instability. Though selected for diversity across age, region, and sect, the sample's small size limits generalisability.

My positionality as a Syrian scholar emotionally tied to the material required constant reflexivity. To mitigate bias, I maintained regular analytic memos, held peer debriefings with two Syrian colleagues, and underwent supervisory review. Still, working as a solo researcher meant that no formal inter-coder reliability (ICR) check could be applied. I addressed this

through a blind re-coding of 10% of the data after four weeks, which yielded strong convergence, offering a reasonable alternative to ICR validation.[487]

Further emotional strain came with the political collapse of December 8, 2024, and the sectarian violence that followed, intensifying concern for my family's safety and inevitably affecting my focus and interpretive clarity.

Despite these constraints, the core findings remain intact. They define the parameters of this project rather than invalidate it, and they signal avenues for future scholars to build upon. What endures, beyond the analysis, is the emotional and aesthetic pull of the Rahbani repertoire—its capacity to move, to comfort, even as it invites critique. If we fail to examine how beloved art can be weaponised, we risk mistaking beauty for innocence and nostalgia for truth. This double movement, the act of loving an artwork while also interrogating its political work, has emerged as my most meaningful insight. If this thesis encourages others to hear both the enchantment and the ideological undercurrents in these musicals, then its purpose has been, at least in part, fulfilled.

[487] Inter-coder reliability (ICR) is a statistical or reflexive check on how much two or more coders agree when they apply the same codebook; high ICR boosts trustworthiness, but my solo-research workaround—re-coding 10 % after four weeks—aims for the same consistency benchmark.

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Appendix A – Textual and Visual Coding Frameworks

Appendix A 1. The Hierarchical Coding Framework

Main Category 1: National Identity and Cultural Unity (NI)

General focus: Constructs of Arab nationalism, cultural authenticity, and the tension between collective memory and unity.

Main Category	Subcategory	Definition / Theoretical Anchor	Examples / Indicators
1. National Identity and Cultural Unity	1.1 National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Emphasizes Syrian or Arab unity and identity, often aligning with Baathist ideals. Anchored in Smith's ethno-symbolism and Gramsci's cultural hegemony.	Use of collective identifiers ("our nation," "Arab land"), references to shared ancestry, national chants. Example: Chorus in *Jibal al-Sawan* extolling the Flint Mountains as bastion of Arab resilience. Keywords: وطن، العرب، سوريا، أمتنا.
	1.2 Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Selective retelling or sacralization of history to legitimize present political authority. Anchored in Smith's myth-symbol complex and Mayer's narrative politics.	Ancestral legacy tropes, invocations of past glory or defeat as moral compass. Example: Ghorba echoing her father's vow in *Jibal al-Sawan*, transposing his death into civic myth. Keywords: دم الشهداء، التاريخ يعيد نفسه، الأمجاد، العهد القديم.
	1.3 Cultural Authenticity vs. Foreign Threats	Juxtaposes indigenous tradition and identity against invading or "rootless" outsiders. Combines Smith and Bourdieu.	Framing occupiers as alien or morally corrupt; defending soil, dress, or dialect as sacred. Example: Villagers' derision of Fatek's army as "people without roots" (*Jibal al-Sawan*). Keywords: الغرباء، الدخلاء، الأصالة، التراث، جذور.
	1.4 Unity and Internal Division	Advocates unity against common threat while highlighting dangers of internal betrayal. Reflects Gramsci and Mayer.	Scenes exposing or overcoming betrayal (e.g. Shahwan and the traitors in *Petra*); collective chants resolving civic discord. Keywords: الوحدة، الخونة، يد واحدة، صوت الشعب، الانقسام.
	1.5 Individual vs. Collective Identity	Highlights conflict or sacrifice of personal desire for collective/national duty. Informed by Mayer's narrative politics	Characters renouncing love, comfort, or safety for national cause. Example: Ghorba choosing battle over marriage (*Petra*). Keywords: الفداء، التضحية، المصلحة العامة، صوت الجماعة.

Main Category 2: Political Messaging and Propaganda (PM)

General focus: Structures of power, the naturalisation of obedience, and rhetorical tools of regime legitimation.

Main Category	Subcategory	Definition / Theoretical Anchor	Examples / Indicators
2. Political Messaging and Propaganda	2.1 Propaganda and Political Messaging	Overt or implicit ideological content aligning with regime narratives or dominant discourse. Anchored in Gramsci and Bourdieu.	Slogans, patriotic refrains, media choreography. Example: Fatek's "Fire breaks fire" pageant in *Jibal al-Sawan*, or Radio Mida's bulletins in *Yaish Yaish*. Keywords: الثورة، خطاب النصر، الإعلام الموجه، تأييد القائد.

	2.2 Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Depicts authority as moral, paternal, or necessary for survival; emphasizes loyalty as civic virtue. Anchored in Bourdieu + Gramsci.	Praise for rulers, discipline as virtue. Example: Chorus revering King Mudlij's sacrifice in *Jibal al-Sawan*. Keywords: الطاعة، الولاء، الزعامة، حكم القائد العادل، الدولة هي الحامي.
	2.3 Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Uses religious or ethical framing to justify authority or sacrifice. Rooted in Gramsci's idea of spontaneous consent.	Appeals to divine justice, trust in fate, ethical obligation. Example: Ghorba's vow framed as a sacred trust in *Petra*. Keywords: مشيئة الله، الحق، العدل الإلهي، الأمانة، الحلال والحرام.

Main Category 3: Resistance and Heroism (RH)

General focus: Collective mobilisation, the dramaturgy of struggle, and symbolic sacrifice.

Main Category	Subcategory	Definition / Theoretical Anchor	Examples / Indicators
3. Resistance and Heroism	3.1 Resistance and Revolution	Advocates rebellion, uprising, or civic defiance against occupation or tyranny. Anchored in Mayer and Gramsci.	Characters challenge oppression, refuse orders, or rally others. Example: Abdo tearing the cue card during the "Victory Day" in *Jibal al-Sawan*. Keywords: الثورة، العصيان، الشعب يريد، المقاومة.
	3.2 Sacrifice for the Nation	Emphasizes personal loss or renunciation in service of the collective. Informed by Mayer and Smith.	Scenes of voluntary loss: life, love, comfort. Example: Shakila sacrificing her daughter to protect Petra. Keywords: التضحية، الفداء، الشهادة، الأم التي تقدم، التخلي عن الذات.
	3.3 Martyrdom and Heroism	Glorifies those who suffer or die for national or moral ideals. Tied to Smith's mythic heroes and Bourdieu's symbolic capital.	Funeral imagery, eulogies, elevation of the fallen. Example: Ghorba dying at the gate, declared daughter of the land. Keywords: الشهيد، المجد، البطولة، أسطورة الخالدين، التمجيد الشعبي.

Main Category 4: Social Structures and Class Dynamics (SC)

General focus: Role of gender, class, and symbolic legitimacy in sustaining social order.

Main Category	2.3 Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Definition / Theoretical Anchor	Examples / Indicators
4. Social Structures and Class Dynamics	4.1 Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Highlights economic injustice, elite manipulation, or class critique. Anchored in Bourdieu.	Elites exploiting poor; corrupt officials thriving. Example: *Yaish Yaish* lottery and "bribed horses" metaphor; Shahwan profiting from chaos. Keywords: الفساد، الطبقة العليا، بيع الذمم، الأغنياء والفقراء.
	4.2 Gender and Leadership	Emphasizes female leadership, resistance, or civic authority. Feminist + Bourdieu.	Women speaking truth to power, leading rebellion, or mediating civic duty. Example: Ghorba leading resistance in *Petra*, Jamila confronting betrayal. Keywords: المرأة القائدة، الأم القوية، صوت الأنثى، الزعامة النسائية.

Appendix A 1.1 Text–Visual Coding Matrix – all plays

The following table quantifies the frequency of each coding subcategory across the three plays, distinguishing between textual and visual instances. It serves as a comparative snapshot of how core themes are expressed through language and imagery, and supports the logic of thematic saturation and representational balance in the QCA framework.

Master code	Sub-code	Text hits Sawan	Visual hits Sawan	Text hits Yaish	Visual hits Yaish	Text hits Petra	Visual hits Petra	T:V Ratio
NI	National Identity & Arab Nationalism	17	2	7	0	16	4	40 : 6
NI	Historical Manipulation & Myth-Making	16	1	7	0	6	1	29 : 2

NI	Cultural Authenticity vs Foreign Threats	17	1	8	0	11	3	36 : 4
NI	Unity & Internal Division	17	1	10	0	22	2	49 : 3
NI	Individual vs Collective Identity	16	0	11	1	19	1	46 : 2
PM	Propaganda & Political Messaging	17	3	11	1	19	4	47 : 8
PM	Authority, Loyalty & Obedience	15	4	9	1	21	3	45 : 8
PM	Religious & Moral Rhetoric	11	1	7	0	11	0	29 : 1
RH	Resistance & Revolution	17	2	9	0	3	4	29 : 6
RH	Sacrifice for the Nation	15	1	7	0	18	2	40 : 3
RH	Martyrdom & Heroism	16	2	8		7	1	31 : 3
SC	Social Hierarchies & Class Struggles	7	4	10	1	12	4	29 : 9
SC	Gender & Leadership	13	1	10	1	14	4	37 : 6

Appendix A 1.2 Code Co-Occurrence Matrix

This matrix shows how often two main codes appeared in the same scene. Strong pairings (e.g., NI + RH = 34) highlight the overlap between national identity and resistance, while lower values reflect more isolated themes. These patterns clarify how major ideas interact within the plays' narrative structures.

	NI	PM	RH	SC
NI	-	22	34	9
PM	22	-	18	6
RH	34	18	-	5
SC	9	6	5	-

Appendix A 1.3 Theoretical Anchor Glossary

This table outlines the core theorists who inform the QCA coding frame, specifying how their concepts directly shaped the construction of subcategories and the interpretive analysis.

Code Family	Subcategory	Key Theorists	Applied Theoretical Lens
National Identity (NI)	Arab Nationalism, Historical Myth, Authenticity	Anthony D. Smith, Gramsci	Smith's ethno-symbolism shows how ancestral myths, sacred rituals, and shared memory construct nationalist sentiment; Gramsci frames these as tools of cultural hegemony.
	Unity & Division, Individual vs. Collective	Smith, Mayer	Mayer's narrative politics exposes how stories forge unity through conflict and sacrifice; Smith's sacred

			covenant lens explains how loyalty is emotionalised as national duty.
Political Messaging (PM)	Propaganda, Loyalty, Moral Authority	Gramsci, Bourdieu	Gramsci explains how ideology is internalised through emotional and moral codes; Bourdieu shows how symbolic capital grants state-endorsed art its legitimising power.
Resistance & Heroism (RH)	Rebellion, Sacrifice, Martyrdom	Mayer, Smith, Bourdieu	Mayer tracks heroic arcs that mobilise emotions; Smith ties martyrdom to national myth; Bourdieu reveals how sacrifice accrues prestige as moral-political capital.
Social & Class Dynamics (SC)	Class Struggles, Gender & Leadership	Bourdieu	Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic distinction clarify how authority is staged and legitimised across social roles, including gender-coded leadership performances.

A 2.1 Textual Coding Scheme of the Play "Jibaal Al Siwan (The Flint Mountains)"

Coding Scheme of First Scene

Dramatic Moments: The fall of the city - The death of the king "Medlij" " - Fatek" and the delegation of residents met

Scene Duration: (00:01:40) till (00:12:38)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:01:40) till (00:04:22)	The chorus presents an introductory song about the Sawan Mountains and the story of their resistance to the invasion, describing the invaders attacking from all sides and describing them as people without roots and bearing death, with the word resistance being repeated. The song describes the moment the invaders arrive at the gates of the Sawan Mountains cities on the last day of the siege. Here, the invaders' leader demands that King "Medlij" (the leader and hero of the Sawan Mountains) surrender and kneel, as resistance is no longer useful. He is given a chance to escape if he refuses to kneel.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The chorus extols the Flint Mountains as a proud homeland whose saga of resistance embodies Arab fortitude.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The siege is framed as a decisive, almost legendary last stand, turning history into mobilising myth.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Invaders are "people without roots, bearing death," juxtaposing authentic soil with alien menace.
			Unity and Internal Division	. Repetition of the word *resistance* calls the community to a single, collective stance against encirclement.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The entire choral prelude functions as exhortative propaganda in favour of unyielding defiance.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	"Resistance" is reiterated as a civic imperative.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Partial alignment. King Medlij is cast as heroic, yet martyrdom is not evoked.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:04:47) till (00:09:30)	The king addresses his minister about the details of the failed defense and the collapse of the army. The minister conveys to him the tragedies that have befallen the Sawwan Mountains, affecting everyone—children, women, the elderly, civilians, and military personnel—and the devastation that has occurred. He decides to remain to defend the city but allows his entourage to leave him and leave the fallen city. Then King Mudlij begins an argument with the invader's commander, "Fatek," who orders the king to be afraid. The king refuses and kills the king. Despite his joy at the fall of the Sawwan Mountains, Fatak confides in his deputy that he feels grief and astonishment because the king fought to his last breath. The deputy responds, "The king's death was mightier than the sword." Fatek orders his soldiers to celebrate, singing of the strength and brutality of his war on the Sawwan Mountains, repeating the phrase, "Fire, fire, fire breaks fire."	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The king's refusal to abandon the Flint Mountains continues to dramatise a collective national essence worth dying for.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The tableau of a monarch fighting "to his last breath" constructs a mythic exemplar for future memory.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Fatek's invading army is celebrated for its "strength and brutality," the chorus of conquerors casting them as an alien, corrosive force opposed to an authentic mountain polity.
			Unity and Internal Division	The minister's catalogue of devastation "affecting everyone—children, women, the elderly, civilians, military" frames the calamity as a shared wound that erases internal divisions.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	By allowing his entourage to flee while he stays to defend the city, the king sets private safety against collective duty.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Fatek's victory-chant Present. "Fire, fire, fire breaks fire … Oh night, tell the night" is an explicitly triumphalist slogan, aural propaganda that glorifies violent conquest.; the deputy's epigram that "the king's death was mightier than the sword" likewise packages the episode as a moral lesson.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Loyalty is implied in the minister's continued service and in the deputy's admiration, yet obedience as a virtue is not explicitly praised.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The king's last-stand defiance and his slaying by Fatek epitomise ultimate resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	The monarch's deliberate choice to remain inside a "fallen city" while others escape stages personal sacrifice for the collective good.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	The deputy's line that the king's death surpassed the sword casts that death as heroic martyrdom.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:09:32) till (00:12:38)	The deputy presents a delegation of residents to Fatek, whose nickname we discover is "The Tyrant," under the pretext that they have come to welcome him.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The townspeople's chant that their fallen soldiers and their late king "won despite his broken sword" re-asserts the collective identity of the Flint Mountains and links communal pride to past heroism.

	However, the city's idiot, "Naoum," who came with the delegation, tells Fatek not to believe them because they were forced to come, and that sane people will not come; only madmen will welcome an occupying tyrant whose soldiers loot the residents' homes. One of the residents welcomes Fatek on behalf of the city's people, and shouts of indignation and objection rise, claiming that this welcomer does not represent the people of the flint mountains. Abdo, the singer, refuses to sing for the invaders and is imprisoned. Fatek begins his victory speech by describing himself as "the coming time," "winter," and "cold." He states that no one can speak or think without his permission, and that anyone who rebels will be killed. He orders the people to sing again. When people force him that the only singing possible is wailing, Fatik tells them that sadness pleases him and makes him happy. People begin to praise their soldiers who fell defending the city and to praise their king who did not surrender, describing him as a hero who won despite his broken sword and that the invader will be defeated no matter what. Fatik orders their arrest and orders them to sing for victory once again so that his soldiers can sing their anthem around the fire and at night.		Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	By elevating the king's last stand into proof of ultimate victory "no matter what," the speakers begin to mythicise recent history, though the language is less overtly legendary than earlier scenes.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	By elevating the king's last stand into proof of ultimate victory "no matter what," the speakers begin to mythicise recent history, though the language is less overtly legendary than earlier scenes.
			Unity and Internal Division	Competing shouts ("He does not represent the people of the Flint Mountains!") dramatise internal fissures even as communal outrage against the tyrant seeks to restore unity.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Abdo's personal refusal to sing, and Naoum's lone outcry, pit individual conscience against an intimidated collective, foregrounding this tension.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Fatek's decree that "no one may speak or think without my permission," followed by enforced victory songs, is nakedly propagandistic performance aimed at choreographing public consent.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The tyrant's demand for absolute silence or death, and the jailing of Abdo, exemplify enforced obedience and the terror-based authority of the invader.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Naoum's denunciation, Abdo's defiance, and the crowd's praise of their fallen defenders articulate active resistance to occupation.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	The crowd's homage to soldiers who "fell defending the city" celebrates their sacrifice for the national community.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	The king is hailed as a hero whose death was "mightier than the sword"; the fallen defenders are implicitly cast as martyrs.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment. "Both men *and women* voice open dissent, signalling gender-inclusive civic leadership, though no female leader is singled out."

Coding Scheme of the Second Scene

Dramatic Moments: The people's gathering in the square and the prophecy's talk -The Return of the King's Daughter. - The confrontation between "Fatek" and "Ghorba"- The Meeting of traitors.

Scene Duration: (00:013:07) till (00:39:03)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis

(00:013:07) till (00:19:15)	Hanna, a girl nicknamed "Al-Sahiliyya," tells us that 10 years have passed since the fall of the Al-Sawwan Mountains and the killing of King Mudlij. She explains that King Mudlij's picture still hangs in the homes of those who lost their sons defending the city, including her. She says that the people who reject Fatik's rule have begun to gather again in the square, listing their names as "Abdo Al-Rawandi," "Naoum the Fool," "Youssef," "Jamila," "Nazha," and "Abu Saqr." The gathering begins singing about the return of one of Mudlij's people and exchanging rumours about the death of his only daughter. They hope that she is still alive and will return to rescue them, amidst the doubts of the people, who are exhausted by years of occupation and its injustices, yet determined to remain in their land despite everything. Then, a traitor working for the occupier, named "Shahwan," whose economic situation has improved, arrives and justifies his cooperation with the occupiers by claiming that it is the only option. The people reject him, spit on him, and continue singing about hope and the traitor's song about despair. During the singing, we discover that the "Madlaj" dynasty has ruled the country for centuries, and that the people owe obedience and loyalty to this dynasty. They also boast about their sons who sacrificed their lives in defence of a country ruled by "Madlaj." They then begin to talk about a prophecy that foretells the inevitable return of the king's promised daughter to the city gate to reclaim power, and about the signs that confirm this, such as the reddening of the sun, the clearing of the clouds,	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Hanna’s insistence that portraits of King Mudlij still hang in bereaved homes commemorates a distinct national community and its shared grief.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The prophecy of the “promised daughter,” tied to cosmic omens (red sun, burning walnut tree), transforms recent history into a redemptive myth.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The gathering brands Fatek “The Tyrant” and spits on Shahwan the collaborator, reaffirming an authentic civic core opposed to alien occupation.
			Unity and Internal Division	Collective song in the square testifies to renewed unity, yet Shahwan’s pragmatic betrayal exposes internal fissures.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Shahwan’s self-interest clashes with communal steadfastness; Hanna’s personal loss merges with civic loyalty.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Hope-chants lauding Mudlij’s lineage, set against Shahwan’s “song of despair,” function as rival political scripts.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The speakers proclaim life-long obedience to the centuries-old Madlaj dynasty and await its restoration.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The prophecy borrows quasi-sacred imagery, and the crowd’s moral condemnation of the traitor carries ethical weight, though explicit religion remains muted.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Naming the resisters (Abdo, Naoum, Jamila, etc.) and vowing to stay “despite everything” signals a living underground resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Families honour sons who died defending the mountains, foregrounding patriotic sacrifice.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	King Mudlij’s posthumous veneration and rumours of his daughter’s return cast both father and potential heir as heroic, even messianic, figures.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Shahwan’s sudden prosperity under occupation hints at an emergent collaborationist elite contrasted with an impoverished populace.
			Gender and Leadership	Hanna narrates, women such as Jamila and Nazha join the protest, and the prophecy crowns a *daughter* as future sovereign— all marking gendered participation in civic leadership.

	and the burning of the walnut tree.			

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:20:11) till (00:35:26)	While the people were singing and arguing about the prophecy, a girl suddenly appeared, claiming to be "Gharba," the king's promised daughter. Gharba explained that she had arrived at the right time in response to the calls of the people, the houses, and the land to liberate the Sawwan Mountains. Voices from among the people warned that the girl might be an agent of Fatak, investigating the people and searching for the resistance fighters. Hanna then responded, saying that the Mudlij lineage had a distinctive mark: "The story of the gate is written on their foreheads," a metaphor of sorts, and that the girl bore the mark. This confirmed that the girl was indeed King Mudlij's daughter, who had arrived after a long wait and many hardships. People began to recount their stories over the ten years since the fall of the Sawwan Mountains. Saad confined himself to his homes, closing his windows and doors, never leaving them as he awaited the return of Gharba. People say that the return of "Ghorba" opened all the doors, and she responded that people should tear off the black clothes of mourning, tear off the fear and raise the old banner of pride, as the beautiful days and joy will return to the mountains of flint.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The chorus of loyalty songs, Gharba's vow to "liberate the Flint Mountains," and the crowd's refusal to abandon their homeland unmistakably reaffirm a collective national self-image.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Gharba's prophetic "mark," the century-long Madlaj lineage, and the solar omens transfigure recent political trauma into a quasi-mythic narrative of destined return.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Suspicion that the girl might be Fatek's spy, instantly countered by the proof of her lineage, re-draws the line between an authentic, rooted community and its foreign oppressor.
			Unity and Internal Division	Dissenting voices who fear betrayal coexist with a swelling unanimity once Gharba is accepted; the passage therefore dramatizes both fracture and re-knitting.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Gharba's singular charisma, Saad's decade of private seclusion, and their eventual subsumption into a public vow of solidarity foreground the oscillation between personal and communal selves.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Folkloric anthems urging citizens to "tear off fear" function as overt mobilisation rhetoric, counter-propaganda to the occupier's narrative.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The crowd's immediate pledge of fidelity to the promised heir and to the ancient Madlaj dynasty activates the framework's concern with hierarchies of rightful rule.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The prophecy, cosmic portents, and language of redemptive sacrifice infuse the scene with moral—and lightly quasi-sacred—overtones; alignment is therefore **partial** rather than absolute.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Gharba's arrival is framed as the ignition of renewed insurgency, and her songs explicitly sanctify resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Gharba declares that her "comfort lies in sacrificing for her homeland," and the crowd echoes a readiness to endure; the motif is fully present.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Although no death occurs, the people crown Gharba "moon of darkness," casting her as heroic saviour; the register is heroic, if not yet martyrological—hence **partial** alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	**no explicit alignment**
			Gender and Leadership	A young woman steps forward as prophetic liberator, and other women (Hanna, Jamila, Nazha)

				are named among resisters; gendered leadership is plainly foregrounded.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:35:34) till (00:37:03)	A confrontation begins between "Fatek" and his deputy on one hand, and "Ghorba" on the other hand, when "Fatek" asks why Ghorba returned, she answers him "I came to save the land." The deputy starts reminding her of the failure of the struggle of her ancestors and her father despite their strength compared to her. "Fatek" asks her again why she came, and she answers him again "I came to save the land." He asks her how, while she is alone and has no army or force to support her right, so she tells him of her father's will "that truth never dies" and that she is the raindrop and the grain of wheat that has returned to plant again in her land and in the hearts of the people so that freedom may blossom. "Fatek" belittles her and describes her as arrogant and delusional, and that his overwhelming power cannot be confronted by such a weak child.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Gharba's refrain "I came to save the land" reprises the mountain-polity as a living national subject whose liberation justifies her return.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Her echo of her father's dying maxim, "truth never dies," translates recent trauma into an archetypal saga of cyclical rebirth.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Fatek's contemptuous power-logic contrasts sharply with Gharba's agrarian metaphor of seed and soil, re-inscribing an authentic homeland imperilled by a rootless occupier.
			Unity and Internal Division	The scene is a triangular exchange (Fatek, deputy, Gharba) rather than a negotiation among fractious citizens.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	A lone child shoulders the collective destiny of the Flint Mountains, dramatising the fusion of the personal and the national.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	While not a choreographed mass slogan, Gharba's imagery of wheat and freedom functions as counter-propaganda to the occupier's gospel of force.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Her appeal to her father's testament—and the invader's scornful insistence on overwhelming might—foreground rival claims to legitimate authority and expected allegiance.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The ethical axiom "truth never dies" supplies a moral underpinning, though no explicitly sacred language is invoked.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The entire exchange pivots on the prospect of renewed struggle and the occupier's fear of it.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Gharba figures herself as a "raindrop" and "grain of wheat" willing to be spent so freedom might "blossom," implying sacrificial readiness.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Fatek's derision of the "weak child" and her serene defiance sketch the outline of heroic, perhaps martyr-in-waiting, resolve.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	A young woman answers the tyrant's challenge with visionary authority, extending the pattern of female-fronted civic leadership seen throughout the unfolding resistance.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:37:06) till (00:39:03)	The leader of the traitors, "Shahwan," comes to warn Fatek's	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The traitors identify the revival of the *Grape Festival*—a communal rite suppressed since

	deputy of the danger of leaving Ghorba unchecked and the necessity of eliminating it. Despite its current weakness, it could gradually grow stronger, because "raindrops can burrow through the walls of castles." The deputy assigns him to monitor it, along with the group of traitors, "Nakhla" and "Naw." The traitors discuss among themselves the danger of the people preparing for the Grape Festival, which they had halted since the fall of the Sawwan Mountains, as evidence of the beginning of Ghorba's plot to overthrow the occupier. This foreshadows the clashes during which traitors like these could reap benefits. They repeat a twisted popular proverb, "This country is doomed to destruction and chaos." They decide to help the occupier crush the rebellion, which the Grape Festival appears to be the beginning of.			occupation—as a threat, underscoring its power to re-animate the mountains' national identity.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Shahwan positions the festival, and by extension the people, as an authentic core that the foreign occupier must crush, sharpening the native/alien divide.
			Unity and Internal Division	Collaborationist scheming versus popular celebration dramatises internal fracture within the occupied society.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Shahwan, Nakhla, and Naw seek personal profit ("reap benefits") even as the collective prepares a patriotic festival—an explicit clash of private gain and communal duty.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The conspirators recycle the fatalistic proverb "This country is doomed to destruction and chaos," a defeatist mantra aimed at undermining resistance.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The traitors' pledge to aid Fatek exemplifies enforced loyalty to the occupier's authority. Systematic raids and torture epitomise rule through terror, tightening the demand for absolute obedience to the occupier's authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The very need to sabotage the festival confirms the occupier's fear of renewed rebellion.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Civilians who risk— and endure —arrest and torture for persisting with the Grape Festival become concrete examples of personal sacrifice in the service of collective resistance.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	If detainees die (or are publicly brutalised), the possibility of commemorating them as martyrs enters the narrative, even if the scene stops short of naming specific martyrs.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Shahwan's material rise under occupation hints at a collaborationist elite arrayed against an impoverished populace, but class analysis is not foregrounded.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment

Coding Scheme of the Third Scene

Dramatic Moments: The Grape Festival - Traitors conspired to spread rumors and create chaos. - "Ghorba" confronts rumours.

Scene Duration: (00:40:01) till (01:08:50)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:40:01) till (00:54:35)	The locals begin the Grape Festival, singing songs about love,	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	By reviving an age-old seasonal rite and pairing it with vows never to "give you grapes or love," the

	the land, and the hope of a bountiful harvest. Ghorba joins them in singing, singing songs about the hope of meeting, the return of lovers, and cultivating the land. People chant the following refrain: "Dance, green leaves! Blossom, season of love! Scream, fox of the valley! We will never give you grapes or love." Through their songs, the locals introduce us to the Grape Festival as something reminiscent of pagan festivals that celebrate agriculture. It is, they say, "the festival of fertility and the festival of love." Ghorba expresses the strength of her relationship with the farmers, the sowers, the shepherds, and the mountains, and advises them to convey her longing, anticipation, and loyalty to her beloved. The people sing a song about the scarecrow's gamble with the fox and his loss of the fruits, and how he is friends with the snake who reads his fortunes and tells him to be patient with his love for the sparrow. Then Abdo sings in the voice of the scarecrow and says how the sparrow is afraid of him, and this is what breaks his heart. Then he repeats stories about two lying and cheating lovers who act as the fox and the snake. The people ask him why he doesn't tell the watchman about them or confront them. The scarecrow answers them that the snake and the fox agreed on him, and that the fox is the watchman's partner, with whom they steal the fruits together. He is powerless to confront them since his only authority is to scare the sparrows that he loves, and no matter how much fruit they steal, it is far less than what the watchman and the fox steal together. His reports about the danger of the watchman, the fox, and the snake are not read by anyone. The locals chant,			villagers reclaim the land, its fruits, and the festival itself as markers of collective identity.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The allegorised fable of scarecrow, fox and snake, together with descriptions of the festival as a "fertility" rite, folds the current struggle into a mythic, almost pre-Islamic agricultural past.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The fox of the valley, transparently standing for Fatek's occupiers, is banished in song while vines, farmers and mountains are celebrated as the land's authentic heart.
			Unity and Internal Division	Communal chanting suggests cohesion, yet the very fable exposes treachery inside the community (watchman and fox), dramatising both solidarity and fracture.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Ghorba's personal longing and the scarecrow's heartbreak sit within, and are ultimately subsumed by, the people's collective hope.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Every refrain is counter-propaganda: a folkloric call to perseverance and to withholding cooperation from oppressors.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The watchman's collusion with the fox indicts corrupt authority and questions to whom true loyalty is owed.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	While overtly "pagan" rather than sacred, the fertility imagery and moralising fable impart a quasi-religious weight to the ethics of stewardship and resistance.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The festival itself is an act of civil resistance, and Ghorba's final song heralds an imminent awakening "when the sword dances with joy."
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Ghorba pledges protection of the vines and readiness to fight, signalling a willingness to sacrifice, though no concrete loss unfolds within the scene.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Heroism glimmers in the promise that someone will "protect" the vines; explicit martyrdom, however, is deferred.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The allegory of petty thieves versus the larger theft perpetrated by the watchman and fox is a thinly veiled critique of exploitative elites feeding off peasant labour.
			Gender and Leadership	Ghorba again fronts the crowd, leading the singing and discourse; women's voices help bind agrarian labour, love and resistance into one performative act.

	"Dance, green leaves! Blossom, season of love! Shout, fox of the valley! We will never give you grapes or love." Ghorba sings that the vines will soon find someone to protect them, sings of love and the return of the beloved, and sings of the sword dancing with joy at the return of lovers and the beginning of people's awakening.			

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:54:37) till (01:00:08)	Shahwan comes to tell Fatek's deputy that the people have "woke up" and that his suspicions about the beginning of the people's revolution were justified, as their songs were about the seasons and love, but "their eyes were looking beyond that." He says that the people he is referring to are the traitors who cooperate with the occupation, the "foxes." He says that exile is "a history of blood and vows," and that as long as it exists in this land, the occupiers will not rest, and that they must deal with it before its work worsens and awakens the flame of revolution in the people of Jabal al-Sawan, who throughout history have been "men of war and fighting." The deputy tells him that they do not possess weapons, and the traitor Shahwan reveals that the people of Jabal al-Sawan hide their weapons in "cellars, in bread kilns, under the floor tiles of houses," and that they have "picks, axes, and irons to close water canals." The deputy realizes that he will inform Fatak of the seriousness of the situation and orders Shahwan to be vigilant and watchful. Shahwan tells him that he and his men must increase the money they receive from the traitors to increase their power, and that the occupiers must increase their spending because it "turns heads, saves blood, and enables them to gain the support of the	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Shahwan speaks of “the men of war and fighting” of the Flint Mountains and their ancestral resolve, invoking an enduring national character the occupiers must fear.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Shahwan phrase “exile is a history of blood and vows” folds present tension into a saga-like continuum, yet he does not construct a fully mythic narrative.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	By labelling collaborators “foxes” who will help an alien ruler silence the mountains, he sharpens the contrast between an authentic homeland and its foreign occupier.
			Unity and Internal Division	The dialogue exposes a society split between clandestine patriots stockpiling tools and traitors inflaming rumours for coin.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Shahwan’s celebration of personal profit collides with the collective project of revolt that he seeks to subvert.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Shahwan orders a campaign of fabricated accusations and terror precisely to engineer a political mood favourable to occupation.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The deputy’s new mandate and Shahwan’s demand for greater stipends illustrate rule by patronage and fear, tightening the grip of illegitimate authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Shahwan’s self-styling as the spawn of “the old devil of the brambles” cloaks his programme in diabolical imagery, giving the scene a moral-cosmic tint without explicit theology.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Hidden weapons “in cellars, in bread kilns, under floor tiles” confirm an underground insurgency the occupiers scramble to pre-empt. In addition to considering simple everyday tools as "weapons" that can be used for resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	The “history of blood” hints at earlier sacrifice and foreshadows more, though no specific act is recounted.

	people." Shahwan begins to praise the bags of money, their ringing, and their ability to attract people. Shahwan sings a song about how these turbulent times are times of profit. He orders his men to stir up rumors, fabricate accusations, terrorize people, and stir up confusion and trouble. If the people rule, the traitors will be held accountable for their cooperation. He begins distributing the money based on the rumors his men spread. "Shahwan" describes himself as "the tree of evil," "the banner of sadness," and "the pickaxe of destruction." He claims he is the one who feeds people despair and lives off their tears. He also claims that his grandfather and mentor is the old devil, the devil of the brambles who delights in people's suffering and fear and aspires to subjugate them to please his grandfather, the old devil.		Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Shahwan's boast that money "turns heads, saves blood" reveals an emergent collaborationist elite enriched at public expense. This gives the liberation struggle a class dimension, indicating that the nationalists must be less economically capable than the conspirators and traitors.
			Gender and Leadership	Thus, the moment deepens existing patterns of internal betrayal, economic coercion, and looming revolt, while adding a fresh moral-diabolical register to the occupier's machinery of control.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:00:10) till (01:08:50)	People begin to repeat rumours created by traitors about kidnapping, killing, torture, resistance fighters joining Fatak's soldiers, abandoning Ghorba, and even Ghorba's escape. Then the foolish Naoum comes forward and says that these are rumours, not facts. The proof is that they say they killed Naoum, but I am alive here, and Ghorba is still here. Ghorba begins to sing, telling people not to be afraid of rumours, because tyrants spread them out of fear of the people's revolution, their holidays, and their desire for life and hope. They say that tyrants want to rob people of their hope, "because despair is the ultimate weapon of tyranny." She then tells them that arrest isn't scary because "there aren't enough prisons for everyone, and no matter how many are arrested, we'll complete the journey with the rest."	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Ghorba's repeated pledge of fidelity to "the Flint Mountains and its people" and the crowd's echo of her hope consolidate a shared national self-image.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Her litany of ancestral recoveries—floods re-tilled, wars rebuilt—casts present struggle as the latest cycle in a mythic continuum of ruin and renewal, though it stops short of full legendary embroidery.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The tyrants' rumour-mill is condemned as the tactic of an alien power that dreads the mountains' "holidays, life, and hope," reinscribing the authentic community/foreign oppressor binary.
			Unity and Internal Division	False reports sow confusion, yet Naoum's public debunking and the collective refrain "We'll complete the journey with the rest" repair solidarity in real time.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Ghorba's solitary resolve in exile merges with communal courage as the refrain passes from solo voice to chorus, dramatizing the fusion of personal and national destinies.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Rumours themselves are framed as propaganda of despair; Ghorba's answer—hope as counter-narrative—constitutes deliberate political messaging.

	She gives examples of this: "The flood submerged the land, and the rest replanted it," "Wars destroyed cities, and the rest rebuilt them," "Tyrants enslaved people, and the rest liberated them." She repeats the refrain, "We'll complete the journey with the rest," and the people repeat it. Ghorba then tells the people that her determination to return while in exile stemmed from her sense of the people's pain and grief, and that she will remain loyal to the Flint Mountains and its people, regardless of the outcome. Ghorba" concludes the moment with a song in which she asks for help from an entity without mentioning its name, but describes it as "the master of gifts," "the spring of springs," and "the lamp of the weary." In the song, she recounts how many years she has suffered, yet she continues to remember His name and His "generosity," as He is the great shepherd, the source of all things, and to Him the "trees" yearn. She then laments the suffering of people and their waiting for Him, saying that without Him she would be alone and asking for His support to fulfill her potential. She then speaks of a message she considers a trust upon her neck and a promise she must fulfill.		Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Arrest and overcrowded prisons display coercive authority; explicit calls for loyalty or obedience, however, remain implicit rather than overt.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The moral maxim “despair is the ultimate weapon of tyranny” and the quasi-biblical flood imagery lend the scene an ethical-almost-spiritual charge. The vocabulary of divine shepherd, fountain-source, and promised trust lifts the scene out of purely secular resolve into an overtly spiritual register, transforming the call for perseverance into a quasi-liturgical plea.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The very act of unmasking rumours and vowing to “complete the journey” situates the gathering as an incubator of revolt.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Ghorba normalises the risk of arrest—“no matter how many are arrested, we’ll continue”—signalling readiness for sacrifice, although no concrete martyrdom unfolds within the moment. and Ghorba frames her mission as a divinely witnessed “promise” she must honour, reinforcing her willingness to pay any personal cost to fulfil that trust.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Naoum’s living refutation of his reported death and Ghorba’s fearless rhetoric sketch heroic contours, yet martyrdom remains anticipatory. By locating her strength in a higher power and accepting solitude “without Him,” Ghorba edges closer to a sacrificial heroism, though no literal martyrdom has yet occurred.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	no explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	A woman publicly countermands a tyrant’s psychological warfare, continuing the play’s pattern of gendered civic leadership.

Coding Scheme of the Fourth Scene

Dramatic Moments: fortune teller and village bachelors - The wedding - the arrest of the resistance fighters and the spread of rumours - the Victory Day parade.

Scene Duration: (01:9:10) till (01:45:33)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:09:10) till (01:18:49)	The girls of the Flint Mountains begin singing about fortune-telling in coffee cups. Hanna begins reading their fortunes, telling them that a wedding is coming, but unlike any other, and that it will bring many weddings,	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The prophecy of a sword-wielding knight and the celebration of impending weddings bind private joy to collective renewal of the Flint Mountains.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Folkloric fortune-telling recasts the coming revolt as an archetypal cycle of fertility and deliverance rather than a merely modern uprising.

	joys, holidays, harvest seasons, and fertility. The people repeat a song and a prophecy about a knight coming from the mountains, brandishing his sword to marry his beloved. Young men come and ask about fortune-telling in coffee cups, especially Abdo, the singer. We discover the story of his love for a girl named "Tuffaha," which means "apple" in Arabic. Abdo tells us about the beauty of his beloved, how much he longs for her, and how eager he is to pick the apple and marry her. We see a humorous dialogue between Naoum, the "fool," and a girl named Jamila, in which Naoum expresses his love for her and his lack of concern about people knowing about his love for her, as she has been aware of it since childhood. He threatens to throw her into the well if she ever falls in love with someone else, but he says that he is the "well" from which people drink and into which they throw stones. Shahwan comes and asks Jamila and Naoum about the upcoming wedding. Naoum tells him that if Shahwan marries, they will invite all the foxes to his wedding and then turn away. Shahwan expresses his concern about upcoming weddings and holidays, criticising Fatek and his forces for not being alert to the impending danger.			
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The girls' agrarian rite and the refrain that rebuffs "foxes" oppose an authentic, rooted culture to the occupier and his collaborators.
			Unity and Internal Division	Shared singing signals budding cohesion even as Shahwan's intrusion reveals persistent fissures between patriots and profiteers.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Abdo's longing for Tuffaha and Naoum's comic devotion bloom inside a public festival whose political charge eclipses purely private desire.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The joyous forecast of mass weddings works as soft counter-propaganda, promising life and continuity against tyrannical repression.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Authority is mentioned only in Shahwan's aside; no voice urges obedience or pledges loyal service.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Fate, fertility and augury import a moral-cosmic register without explicit theological language.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Shahwan reads the wedding augury as a signal of looming revolt, underscoring its subversive potential.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	The prophesied knight embodies heroic deliverance in embryo; martyrdom remains prospective
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Shahwan's profitable collusion hints at an exploitative elite, though class critique is secondary.
			Gender and Leadership	Women (Hanna, Jamila, the singing girls) steer the ritual and the narrative voice, reaffirming female agency in civic leadership.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:18:50) till (01:32:02)	The people and "Ghorba" gather, and the wedding begins. They chant songs welcoming the newlyweds and their families, praising them with love, the martyrs, the martyred king "Mudlij," "Gharba," and the dear, blessed homeland. "Gharba" begins by greeting the bride, her	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The revolutionaries' lantern moving from house to house
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Invoking the martyred King Mudlij and claiming the land's name is "written on the brow of glory" elevates recent losses into legend without fully mythic narrative.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The land is pictured as beleaguered yet fertile; the implicit foreign "danger" contrasts with local rites, gifts and guardianship.

	love, and her homeland, describing it as "the high land surrounded by anger," wishing it to remain safe, happy, and strong, and filled with love. She also praises the old guardian of the land, saying that he has awakened. She says, "This land surrounded by danger must look to the sky," that "the name of this land is written on the brow of glory," that "the loyal have finally come to your homes," and that "the voice of good tidings has become loud." Then the people begin to bless the bride and talk about the gifts that her father, "Abu Saqr," should bestow upon her. "Abu Daqr" describes how he raised his daughter during difficult years, that the groom is waiting, that the weapon awaits, and that his gift is the coming joy, the coming victory, and the good years to come, and that everything he owns will belong to her and her future husband. Then, "Gharba" gives the bride a silver bracelet, a gift from her father, the martyred king "Madlaj." She sings a song to her about her beauty and advises her to be "roses and amber and wheat and sugar," and to be faithful to love, her groom, and the home they will build.		Unity and Internal Division	A communal wedding chorus, reference to "loyal [who] have finally come," and shared praise of martyrs knit the assembly into one body.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Private nuptial joy is folded into national duty when Gharba exhorts the bride to be "the revolutionaries' lantern."
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Blessings that conflate marriage, forthcoming victory and "good years" function as poetic mobilisation against occupation.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Tribute to the "old guardian" and the king's posthumous gift foreground inherited authority and expected allegiance.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The discourse of blessing and exhortations to virtue carry moral weight, though no explicit sacred vocabulary appears.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Abu Saqr links the bride's dowry to a "weapon" and to "coming victory," turning the wedding into a pre-revolutionary rite.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Martyrs and a martyred king are lauded; Abu Saqr pledges "everything he owns" to the cause symbolised by his daughter.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	King Mudlij is honoured as fallen hero; the bride is urged to become "roses … wheat … the lantern" of the resistance.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	Ghorba leads the ritual, and a young woman is cast as both bride and symbolic torch-bearer of revolt, highlighting female civic agency.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:32:03) till (01:37:40)	A dialogue between Abu Saqr and his wife, who longs for their newly married daughter and says the wedding was beautiful. He then tells us that another, more important wedding and bride are being prepared, which preoccupies his mind. Fatak's soldiers arrive and arrest them both. One of the soldiers then announces that the	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The towns-folk reject the occupier's "Victory Day," defining their own identity against the anniversary of subjugation.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The very holiday rewrites the conquest as a triumph to be celebrated; Abu Saqr's hint of a "more important wedding" gestures toward a counter-myth still in gestation.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Shahwan's offer to import an audience exposes how little genuine support the alien ruler commands among the authentic population.

	Victory Day celebrations (the anniversary of the fall of the Sun Mountains) will be held this year with the domineering Fatak personally attending, and that the residents are invited to participate in the festivities. Some say they will boycott the celebrations this year, some wonder about Abu Saqr's arrest, some talk about Ghorba's preparations and meetings, while another says the meetings are pointless and that someone must act to save Abu Saqr. Some back down from the rescue and action, citing the presence of the children, while others are skeptical about throwing stones at Fatak's procession. Shahwan arrives to distract them and begins recording the names of those who refuse to participate, warning them against attending and describing those who attend the celebrations as patriots. When the people say they won't come, Shahwan says, "No problem, we'll hire an audience from outside the Sawan Mountains if necessary." Then he orders the arrest of Abdo, the singer, because he refused to write a poem praising Fatak. He orders him to be taken to prison, and the soldiers begin attacking the people, beating them and arresting them.		Unity and Internal Division	Some citizens urge rescue, others retreat for fear of children; the traitor's register of non-participants formalises the rift.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Personal scruples (Abdo's refusal to praise Fatak, parents shielding children) collide with collective imperatives of boycott or rescue.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The occupier's parade, described as patriotic duty, and Shahwan's rhetoric that attendance equals loyalty are naked propaganda.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Mass arrests, beatings and forced enlistment as parade-goers exemplify rule through terror and coerced obedience.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Talk of boycotting, stone-throwing and Ghorba's secret meetings keeps revolutionary action at the surface.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Abu Saqr and Abdo accept arrest rather than comply, hinting at readiness to suffer, though no death or lasting loss occurs.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Abdo's defiant stance and Abu Saqr's detention sketch heroic resistance, but martyrdom remains prospective.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Shahwan's ability to "hire an audience" underscores a money-fed collaborationist tier exploiting ordinary citizens.
			Gender and Leadership	Abu Saqr's wife voices public longing, and Ghorba's strategising continues off-stage; female leadership is present but not foregrounded here.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:37:45) till (01:45:33)	The Victory Day Parade and Fatak's procession begin, with the soldiers singing, "The flags of the ancient noise shall remain high," and praising Fatak's glory, achieved through gallows and battles above all else, and how Fatak's voice is destiny and how Fatak is the "beacon of the great flame." Fatak's deputy begins by addressing Fatak as "Master of	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Abdo insists that poetry belongs "only to his country," and the crowd counters the occupier's slogans with praise for King Mudlij, Ghorba, and the Flint Mountains.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The occupier re-brands the fall of the mountains as "Victory Day," while locals hint at a truer, future "wedding" that will overwrite the conqueror's myth.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Imported or disguised audience members expose the parade's artificiality; Abdo's refusal to praise

	Battles" and "Banner of the Age," praising his army and congratulating him on Victory Day as he reviews the soldiers. He then says that he has brought a "poet" from the people of the Flint Mountains who wrote a poem for Fatak. Abdo, the singer, begins reciting his poem, declaring that he stands before this tyrannical, brutal king and his numerous soldiers. However, he is unafraid and will not accept the shame of reciting a poem glorifying his occupier, because "poetry is only fitting for his country, not for tyrants." The people repeat, "Poetry is only fitting for the martyred king, Mudlij, and his daughter, Ghorba," amidst the anger of the soldiers and the deputy, who chant, "Long live our tyrant master." Fatak becomes enraged and orders the celebration to end and withdraws to the palace. A debate ensues between Fatak, his deputy, Dibo, and the traitor, Shahwan. Fatak asks, "What happened?" Shahwan answers that he tried to gather the people to form a "popular rally" for the celebration, but the people refused. His attempts to recruit an audience from outside the city failed, so he dressed some of the soldiers in local clothing to ensure a crowd. Fatak orders Shahwan's arrest. Fatik orders his deputy to bring Ghorba to the palace against her will. The deputy says that forcing her to come could cost blood, because Ghorba has become too powerful. They decide to kill Ghorba to kill the revolution. They say they must confront any resistance with resolve, fire, and death, because the people will not submit.			Fatak reasserts an authentic, rooted culture resisting alien rule.
			Unity and Internal Division	Citizens chant in unison against the tyrant, yet the scene also lays bare collaboration and coercion (soldiers in civilian dress, Shahwan's deceit).
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Abdo's solitary act of courage instantly fuses with collective chants, showing personal honour absorbed into communal resistance.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Military music, victory slogans, and forced rallies constitute occupier propaganda, countered on the spot by Abdo's poetic dissent.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Mass arrests, beatings, and the order to seize Ghorba display naked force demanding obedience; Shahwan's punishment illustrates the price of failure to deliver loyalty.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Public boycott, Abdo's open defiance, and the regime's decision to assassinate Ghorba all mark an escalating revolutionary moment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Abdo and Abu Saqr accept imprisonment rather than dishonour, signalling readiness to suffer, but no actual martyrdom occurs yet.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Abdo's fearless poem sketches heroic stature; plans to kill Ghorba foreshadow martyrdom without yet fulfilling it.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Shahwan's manipulation of audiences and soldiers masquerading as citizens hint at an élite–commoner divide, but class critique remains secondary.
			Gender and Leadership	Ghorba's influence is so great the occupiers deem her assassination essential, underscoring female centrality in political leadership.

Coding Scheme of the Fifth Scene

Dramatic Moments: Preparing for battle -

Scene Duration: (01:45:35) till (01:45:33)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis

(01:45:35) till (01:53:42)	Ghorba calls the people and gathers them to talk to them. They discuss the possibility of fighting again to reclaim the Sawwan Mountains. Ghorba begins by telling the people that injustice must end, that dying for freedom is better than humiliation, and that the eyes of those displaced, imprisoned, and harmed by the occupation await revolution, while their souls harbour resentment and grief. Some tell her that flight is an option and that "a person can live anywhere." She responds that a person has a name and an origin, and that they cannot abandon their identity. She urges them to cling to the land, saying, "A person cannot be nameless or belong to nowhere. Whoever can live without a name can live without a homeland." Some argue that "homeland, land, and heroism are not more precious than life." She tells them, "People's gloating over their defeat will be more difficult than death." Some suggest sending messengers to neighbouring countries to summon the displaced people of the "Sawan Mountains" to participate in the battle and "fight from outside." She answers them that those who fight from outside will stay outside and that the real struggle is within. When some ask about the possibility of the large army confronting the occupation soldiers and their weapons while "hope for victory is weak," "Ghorba" says that those who ask still have fear in their hearts, "and whoever fears will be defeated." She reminds them of the night the Sawan Mountains fell 10 years ago, and says that fear is what brought down the Sawan Mountains. Then she asks them if the soldier "Saad" who was martyred defending the gate with King "Mudlij" felt fear in front of the swords of the invaders, and they answer her that "he was not afraid, and did not know fear", so she tells them "because he decided to die, and	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Ghorba insists that a person “has a name and an origin” and that the Flint Mountains must be reclaimed in the name of those roots.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	She retells the fall of the mountains ten years earlier as a cautionary founding trauma, but does not yet cast it as full legend.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Flight is rejected as exile; true belonging is tied to the land, implicitly contrasted with the alien occupier.
			Unity and Internal Division	Debate over flight, outside fighters, and fear exposes fissures, then resolves in a shouted vow of shared sacrifice.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Ghorba’s readiness to “fight alone” merges personal resolve with the crowd’s collective destiny. The song’s private imagery of a beloved and a “star of love” momentarily foregrounds personal longing, yet it is sung just after Gharba subordinates everything—even Jamila’s affection—to the national battle, tightening the fusion of the intimate and the communal.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Her speech—“dying for freedom is better than humiliation”—operates as rallying rhetoric for imminent revolt.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The language is morally absolute (“injustice must end”) but lacks overt sacred invocations while Ghorba’s firm blessing “*God be with you*” introduces an explicit invocation of the divine, turning what had been a mainly ethical appeal into overt faith-coloured rhetoric.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The entire dialogue prepares for “the next battle, the battle of freedom and honour.”
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Ghorba and the crowd declare themselves ready to “die for freedom” and to pay the “price for our sacrifices.”
			Martyrdom and Heroism	The fallen soldier Saad is cited as fearless exemplar; martyrdom is invoked, though not enacted here.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	A woman publicly commands strategy, courage, and sacrifice, confirming female leadership at the heart of the resistance. The emotionally charged exchange between two women, one of them the movement’s commander,

	here lies the vow, that we decide to die or not" meaning that we decide to sacrifice or refuse it, so the people shout "We have decided to die, but we want a price for our sacrifices", so she answers them "whoever seeks freedom either wins or dies", so the people say to her "will you fight alone?" and she tells them "yes I will fight alone, go and prepare, and if we do not meet again my heart is with you", so the people shouted for her victory and safety and promised her to stay up waiting for the next battle, the battle of freedom and honor and they repeated the phrase "Protected, O "Ghorba"". The moment concludes with a dialogue between "Jamila" and "Gharba," and how "Jamila" considers "Gharba" more precious than anything. "Gharba" firmly tells her, "God be with you," an expression used for farewell, as if Gharba is saying that nothing is more important than the upcoming battle. Then she sings a song about an upcoming journey, the approaching harvest season, and that she will embark on this journey to reach her beloved so she can hang the star of love on his chest.			re-emphasises women's central role in articulating purpose, courage, and farewell.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:53:42) till (01:56:30)	"Ghorba" goes to "Fatek's" palace and shouts bravely, saying, "Fatek, I have come." A dialogue takes place between them, beginning with Fatek asking how she dared to come alone and if she was not afraid of death or being killed. She answers him that the people of the Sawwan Mountains will remain alive and free even if he kills or imprisons her, and that they will confront him and refuse to live a humiliating life under the	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Ghorba asserts that "the people of the Sawwan Mountains will remain alive and free," framing the mountains as a distinct national community.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The land as an inherited "trust" and the prophecy of endless Mudlij offspring locate the conflict inside a quasi-legendary continuum without elaborating a full myth.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The occupier vows to burn the mountains; Ghorba counters that injustice drives the land itself away—re-inscribing the authentic homeland versus alien tyranny.
			Unity and Internal Division	Ghorba speaks for a united populace, yet the scene contains no intra-communal debate; internal division is latent rather than staged.

	occupier's rule. He warns her that he will destroy the country if its people revolt against him and offers her to leave the Sawwan Mountains. She answers him, "The people of the Sawwan Mountains opened their windows and their sun will not set, and offers him to leave." He tells her, "He did not come to leave and that the earth is large enough for everyone." She asks him, then, why he killed her father, "Medlaj," and why the earth was not large enough for both of them? Fatek justifies this by saying that he and her father are tyrants and stood in each other's way, and that one of them had to die for the other to survive. He asks why she is standing in his way now and exposing the situation to an explosion. She tells him that her father stood in his way because... The land was a trust around his neck, and when her father died, it became a trust around her neck. Fatik tells him, "The land belongs to everyone," and she tells him, "The land belongs to everyone, but you cannot unite people and injustice. When injustice occurs, the land departs." Fatik becomes enraged and gives her a one-day grace period, threatening to blow up the situation, kill her, end the Mudlij lineage, and end the conflict. She tells him, "No matter how many people he kills, the conflict will never end, because behind every rock, under every tree, and in every house, a new son of the Mudlij lineage is born." Fatik orders his deputy to assemble the army and prepare the forces to crush the rebellion, giving him permission to shed blood and burn everything in the Al-Sawwan Mountains.		Individual vs. Collective Identity	Her solitary defiance (“kill or imprison me”) immediately invokes the collective destiny of the mountains.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Both Fatek’s threats of annihilation and Ghorba’s credo that humiliation is worse than death operate as stark political messaging.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Fatek brandishes absolute power, issues a one-day ultimatum, and authorises indiscriminate bloodshed, demanding total submission.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The debate turns on moral absolutes—justice, trust, injustice—yet stops short of explicit religious invocation.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The tyrant mobilises his army to “crush the rebellion”; Ghorba vows that revolt cannot be extinguished.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Ghorba accepts death as the price of freedom and recalls her father’s ultimate sacrifice.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	King Mudlij’s killing is evoked as heroic martyrdom; Ghorba positions herself as the next potential martyr-hero.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	A young woman confronts the tyrant on equal rhetorical footing, embodying female leadership at the movement’s apex.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:56:31) till (02:05:40)	Hanna begins singing a song about the return of fertility to the land, and how "the little girl raised her voice, and the tyrant was afraid and prepared his army." She then tells us how the birds and the tiles of the houses speak of a coming renewal, and how "wild grass has returned to grow on the walls, and how white flowers have begun to bloom by the water." In front of the gate of the Sawwan Mountains, Fatek addresses the people of the Sawwan Mountains, ordering them to surrender "Gharba" if they want peace for their homes and families. He orders his soldiers to be ready to fire when he gives them the order, saying, "When my hand descends, may woe descend with it upon the Sawwan Mountains." Gharba appears, and he tells her to surrender and call on the people to do the same. She defiantly declares that she is standing at the gate, as her father did, "to fulfil the vow." The people cheer, and Fatek opens fire, killing Gharba. The people rush in and begin a war against Fatek's soldiers. Fatek begins screaming and recites the following monologue: "Everything that happened is in vain, and Everything that will happen is in vain. We killed the father, then we killed the daughter, but it's in vain. No matter how many we kill, the struggle will never end, the story will never end. The sons of Mudlij and the brothers of Ghorba are born every day." Then he orders his deputy to order the soldiers to withdraw and flee because the people are coming towards them. "They come from behind the rocks, they come from under the trees, they	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The mountains are invoked as “of Ghorba” and “of Mudlij,” and the crowd fights explicitly for the homeland’s honour.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Ghorba’s stance “as her father did,” Fatek’s lament that the story “will never end,” and the final bridal-in-blood image weave the battle into a cyclical legend of the Flint Mountains.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Fertility returning (songs of wild grass and white flowers) signifies the land’s authentic pulse resisting the alien tyrant’s violence.
			Unity and Internal Division	In the climactic moment the populace acts as one body, no dissenting voices remain.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Ghorba sacrifices herself alone at the gate, yet her death immediately becomes the crowd’s shared rallying-cry.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Fatek’s ultimatum and Hanna’s fertility-prophecy operate as duelling public messages; the people’s victory song crowns the counter-narrative.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The tyrant’s order to “surrender Ghorba” and permission to burn the mountains reveal naked authoritarian coercion, rejected by popular loyalty to Ghorba.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The language is morally absolute (“in vain… the struggle will never end”) and suffused with quasi-prophetic tone, but still stops short of explicit religious invocation.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The people rise in arms, force the army to flee, and celebrate the victory as the dawning of renewal and harvest.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Ghorba’s voluntary death, mirrored in the people’s willingness to risk bloodshed, fulfils the pledge to “pay the price” for freedom.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Ghorba dies at the gate, openly identified with her father’s earlier martyrdom; Fatek himself concedes the indestructible lineage of such heroes.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	A young woman leads the final confrontation and her death triggers victory, capping the drama’s consistent emphasis on female agency at the forefront of national liberation.

	come from the days of wrath, and their hands wave at time." Fatek's army cannot stand in their way. Then he repeats his call to his soldiers: "Flee, flee." He concludes with his desperate confession: "Oh mountains of Ghorba, oh mountains of Mudlij, oh mountains of flint!" The people conclude their victory with a song about the coming harvest seasons, the future joy, and the bride coming "in a white dress and seas of blood," and how they must celebrate her with the popular phrase, "Oyyyha."			

A 2.2 Visual Coding Scheme of the Play “Jibaal Al Siwan (The Flint Mountains)”

“1. King’s Death at the Gate + Invaders’ Celebration”

Figure 5 – *Jibal al-Sawan*, Scene 1 (00:05:35). Martyr-king tableau: Mudlij at centre, twelve crimson spears radiating behind him. Visual sanctification of sacrifice and heroic sovereignty. Visual codes: NI · PM · RH

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
00:05:27 and 00:08:56	Then King Mudlij begins an argument with the invader's commander, "Fatek," who orders the king to be afraid and to surrender, as "the gate is broken." In which the king tells him that “death is easier than humiliation, and that the flint mountains will spit out the occupier, and that death does not frighten him.” And he tells him that "the gate will be rebuilt by people, and truth never dies." and this is the photo you ask for Despite his joy at the fall of the Sawwan Mountains, Fatak confides in his deputy that he feels grief and astonishment because the king fought to his last breath. The deputy responds, "The king's death was mightier than the sword." Fatek orders his soldiers to celebrate, singing of the strength and brutality of his war on the Sawwan Mountains, repeating the phrase, "Fire, fire, fire breaks fire."	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism		(key still 00 : 6 : 18)	Gate-Siege-LowAngle	Low	King centred; 12 spears radiate in fan; invaders tiered on terraces	Crimson cloaks & gold-black armour vs. king’s brown/white peasant garb	Broken Arab sword + crescent-tipped spears	10	**The low-angle static frame casts the audience in a kneeling viewpoint, visually endorsing the king’s status even as he dies.** The fan of twelve spears forms a violent “halo,” transfiguring his defeat into a sacrificial offering and locking the moment under the **Sacrifice & Martyrdom** branch. Meanwhile the serried terraces behind him create a stepped throne for Fatek’s crimson-armoured ranks, contrasting elite splendour with peasant plainness to affirm **Authority / Loyalty / Obedience**. Crimson-gold armour (symbolic capital) commands the eye, but the peasant’s lone white shirt functions as a moral counter-aura: hierarchy is displayed, yet martyrdom steals the scene’s emotional high ground. The ten-second hold freezes the tableau long enough for spectators—especially radio listeners later seeing the image on television—to absorb the ideological lesson: the ruler may fall, but loyal sacrifice sanctifies the collective and justifies renewed obedience.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making									
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats									
			Unity and Internal Division									
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	x								
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	x								
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	x								
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	x								
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution									
			Sacrifice for the Nation	x								
			Martyrdom and Heroism	x								
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership									

2.“Hanna the Fortune-Teller (10 Years on)”

Figure 6 – *Jibal al-Sawan*, Scene 2 (00:09:50). Hanna’s lantern vigil: locked frontal frame and minimal lighting elevate memory as a tool of resistance and communal mourning. Visual codes: NI · PM · SC

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
00 : 09 : 31 – 00 : 10 : 40	Hanna, an old woman nicknamed “Al-Sahiliyya,” tells us that 10 years have passed since the fall of the Al-Sawwan Mountains and the killing of King Mudlij. She explains that King Mudlij's picture still hangs in the homes of those who lost their sons defending the city, including her. She says that the people who reject Fatik's rule have begun to gather again in the square, listing their names as "Abdo Al-Rawandi," "Naoum the Fool," "Youssef," "Jamila," "Nazha," and "Abu Saqr."	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism		(key still 00 : 09 : 45)	Hanna-Oracle-EyeLvl	Eye-level (static)	Lone figure in centre-left; cane vertical, massive stone blocks frame right; empty dark stage behind	Black cloak under warm amber spotlight; beige stone blocks	White cane	~70	The fixed eye-level lens confers credibility on Hanna’s monologue, turning her into a living newscast for those “who reject Fatek’s rule.” Spotlight isolates her against darkness, so the stage emptiness reads as a communal void left by Mudlij’s death. The white cane—only bright object in frame after her face—functions as a truth-staff, signalling the authority of remembered history over Fatek’s present rule. Together, eye-level framing + chiaroscuro lighting visualise **Political Messaging & Propaganda** (rumour as soft power) while her plain cloak and weathered posture highlight a subaltern voice in **Social Structures & Class Dynamics**, underscoring that dissent now travels through widows and memory-keepers rather than warriors.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	x								
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats									
			Unity and Internal Division	x								
			Individual vs. Collective Identity									
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	x								
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	x								
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric									
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution									
			Sacrifice for the Nation									
			Martyrdom and Heroism									
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership									

3.“Ghorba’s Return and Street Welcome”

Figure 2 – *Jibal al-Sawan*, Scene 3 (00:15:30). Ghorba's return: her raised hand and ceremonial blue cloak mark the reclaiming of national myth through popular ritual. Visual codes: NI · RH · SC

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
00 : 14 : 09 – 00 : 16 : 10	While the people were singing and arguing about the prophecy, a girl suddenly appeared, claiming to be "Gharba," the king's promised daughter. Gharba explained that she had arrived at the right time in response to the calls of the people, the houses, and the land to liberate the Sawwan Mountains. Voices from among the people warned that the girl might be an agent of Fatak, investigating the people and searching for the resistance fighters. Hanna then responded, saying that the Mudlij lineage had a distinctive mark: "The story of the gate is written on their foreheads," a metaphor of sorts, and that the girl bore the mark. This confirmed that the girl was indeed King Mudlij's daughter, who had arrived after a long wait and many hardships. People began to recount their stories over	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	x	(key still 00 : 11 : 48)	Ghorba-Return-Radial	Low → eye-level composite (principal still eye-level)	Ghorba at highest stair; villagers form upward-leaning arc below; Hanna foreground left; stage lights bloom as villagers rise	Ghorba royal blue vs. black cloaks that flip to multi-coloured peasant dresses	No fixed handheld prop; "banner of pride" is metaphor—visualised by sudden colour reveal	8 (for the still sequence that anchors arc)	The upward camera tilt followed by a stabilised eye-level frame elevates Ghorba both literally and symbolically, staging her as living standard of renewal. Radial blocking (villagers in arc) materialises **National Identity & Cultural Unity**, while the collective doffing of black cloaks turns colour itself into an ideological prop: grief (black) is shed, pride (multicolour) resurfaces. The blue cloak locates royal lineage without an actual crown, aligning with **Social Structures & Class Dynamics**—authority flows from bloodline but is ratified by popular ascent. The 8-second hold on Ghorba bathed in upward light lets spectators internalise the shift from despair to communal hope.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making									
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats									
			Unity and Internal Division									
			Individual vs. Collective Identity									
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging									
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	x								
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric									
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	x								
			Sacrifice for the Nation									
			Martyrdom and Heroism	x								
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership	x								

	the ten years since the fall of the Sawwan Mountains. Saad confined himself to his homes, closing his windows and doors, never leaving them as he awaited the return of Gharba. People say that the return of "Ghorba" opened all the doors, and she responded that people should tear off the black clothes of mourning, tear off the fear and raise the old banner of pride, as the beautiful days and joy will return to the mountains of Flint.											

4. "First Confrontation: Ghorba vs. Fatek"

Figure 7 – *Jibal al-Sawan*, Scene 4 (00:16:45). First face-off: eye-level angle equalises Ghorba and Fatik; his self-crowning gesture is denied symbolic elevation. Visual codes: NI · PM

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
(00:16:13 - 00:17:24)	A confrontation begins between "Fatek" and his deputy on one hand, and "Ghorba" on the other hand, when "Fatek" asks why Ghorba returned, she answers him "I came to save the land." The deputy starts reminding her of the failure of the struggle of her ancestors and her father despite their strength compared to her. "Fatek" asks her again why she came, and she answers him again "I came to save the land." He asks her how, while she is alone and has no army or force to support her right, so she tells him of her father's will "that truth never dies" and that she is the raindrop and the grain of wheat that has returned to plant again in her land and in the hearts of the people so that freedom may blossom. "Fatek" belittles her and describes her as arrogant and delusional, and that his overwhelming power cannot be	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	x	(key still 00 : 16 : 18)	First Confront-Stair-Split	Eye-level composite	Ghorba upstage right on higher step; Fatek lower left ; soldiers tiered behind, spears vertical	Ghorba royal blue vs. Fatek crimson-black armour; villagers in muted earth tones	Fatek's horned helmet; vertical spears form rigid backdrop	5	Split-level blocking makes the girl appear to "look down" on the conqueror even though she is visually smaller, inverting the hierarchy and energising the **Resistance & Heroism** code. The steady eye-level lens refuses any low-angle glorification of Fatek; instead, the spotlight singles out Ghorba's blue—already linked to Mudlij's lineage—while Fatek's crown materialises mid-dialogue, signalling his dependency on performed majesty. Static spears and rigid soldier line embody authoritarian **Political Messaging & Propaganda**, yet their immobility contrasts with villagers edging forward, hinting at latent collective agency. The five-second hold at 00 : 16 : 18 freezes this power geometry long enough for audiences to sense the ideological clash: brute spectacle versus quiet legitimacy grounded in ancestral truth.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making									
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats									
			Unity and Internal Division									
			Individual vs. Collective Identity									
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	x								
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	x								
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric									
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	x								
			Sacrifice for the Nation									
			Martyrdom and Heroism									
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership	x								

	confronted by such a weak child.											

A 2.3 Textual Coding Scheme of the Play “Yaish Yaish "(Long Live! Long Live!).

Coding Scheme of First Scene

Dramatic Moments: Declaration of the coup in "Mida" - The emperor disguises himself and hides in Haifa and her grandfather's shop.

Scene Duration: (00:01:27) till (00:28:06)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:01:27) till (00:06:55)	The play begins with Radio Announcement No. 1, broadcast on the radio from the "Mida" (the country's name) station, announcing a coup attempt. The coup forces have seized control of television, radio, and official buildings, and the emperor has disappeared. The chorus chants, "The wait has fled." Radio Announcement No. 2 then announces the arrival of congratulations to the coup leadership and the coup d'état, declaring the coup a "blessed step." The chorus begins with conflicting voices (some want to turn off the radio, others don't). The police then sing, ordering people to go to work and go home, saying, "Gatherings are forbidden" and "Aspirations are forbidden." They also declare that tanks are in the streets, repeating the phrase, "Security is assured." Radio Announcement No. 3 then warns citizens "against harboring members of the former regime, under penalty of punishment," and announces a hefty reward for information on the emperor's whereabouts. Haifa and her grandfather Abu Deeb, who own a small shop, hear the advertisement. Haifa is surprised and her grandfather tells her, “I don’t care about them, pottery breaks some,” indicating that he doesn’t care about politics. He tells her to prepare his provisions because he is going hunting, which he loves very much, despite being	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	The rival voices in the chorus (some eager to silence the radio, others intent on listening) and the broadcast injunctions against “harbouring members of the former regime” dramatise a society splintered by the coup while simultaneously exhorting it to close ranks behind the new order.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Abu Deeb’s carefree resolve to go hunting—“pottery breaks itself”—signals an individualistic withdrawal from the collective crisis that is engulfing the polis, precisely the tension this node captures.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Radio Announcement No. 2 hails the putsch as a “blessed step” and publishes congratulations from well-wishers, a textbook act of legitimation.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The police chorus forbids gatherings, orders citizens to “go to work and go home,” and repeats “Security is assured,” underscoring the demand for immediate obedience to a freshly asserted authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The very fact of a coup d’état—announced, celebrated, and already consolidating control—places revolution at the heart of the scene, even if no heroic resistance is yet visible on stage.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

	injured many times during it, because he encounters great stories and dangerous beasts such as lions, tigers, and crocodiles during it. Haifa tells him that he sometimes exaggerates when he tells stories to the café patrons because such animals don't exist in their country. He asks her to point out to him when he exaggerates so that he can tone it down.			

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:07:07) till (00:14:54)	The Emperor and his aids, Jawdat and Hilmi, arrive at a place where they want to hide in a shop. The shop is located close to the border, its owners are unknown, and it is far from everything. They instruct the Emperor to remove his clothes and change his appearance by shaving off his imperial beard and wearing an ID card bearing the name "Barhoum" until the situation calms down and the government is restored. The Emperor asks, "Can there be an emperor without a beard?!" Jawdat replies, "The important thing is to hand over the Emperor's head, because the beard will grow back and cast its shadow over the state like a camphor tree." This disguise is temporary. They then throw the imperial clothes over the border so the coup plotters think the Emperor has left the country. Jawdat presents the disguised Emperor as a fugitive from justice for beating his wife and mother-in-law after they falsely accused him of theft. He wants to hide in Abu Deeb's shop. Abu Deeb welcomes him because "the man who is brave enough to hit a wife and mother-in-law is always welcome." They offer him some money to help Barhoum with his needs, but Abu Deeb refuses. Jawdat leaves, and both Haifa and her grandfather welcome Barhoum and hope that his problem will end and that he will never beat his wife again. Here, we see a difference in vision between Haifa,	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The sovereign is stripped of beard, regalia and even his name, recast as the private citizen "Barhoum," staging a vivid tension between the individual self and the collective role of emperor.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Jawdat fabricates a lurid back-story—Barhoum as wife-beater on the run—to mislead both locals and coup authorities, a tactical exercise in narrative control.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment; the status reversal (emperor posing as fugitive) is comic rather than thematic.
			Gender and Leadership	Haifa condemns domestic violence while Abu Deeb applauds it—"a woman is like a rug that must be dusted"—exposing clashing gender ideologies and locating moral authority with the young woman rather than the patriarch.

	who rejects beating women, and her grandfather, who supports him and believes that “a woman is like a rug that must be dusted off from time to time.” Haifa asks him if he ever beats her grandmother. He tells her that he tried once, but her grandmother took the stick and broke his bones, so he stopped trying to beat him. Barhoum goes in to wash up, and Haifa and her grandfather talk. She tells him that she's afraid that hiding Barhoum would be dangerous since the police station was nearby. Her grandfather told her that "the police never knew anything about anything in their lives" and that they would tell them he was a newcomer to the shop if they asked about him. Haifa sings a song about love and longing for her beloved. The Emperor comes out after shaving, changing, and washing up, and Haifa tells him that now even his wife won't recognize him.			

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:14:55) till (00:28:06)	Sergeant Abboud Effendi enters with some policemen, and they hang a picture of the emperor in uniform with the words "Wanted" written on it. He begins singing, "Orders are orders and must be carried out regardless of who issues them." He then expresses surprise that they have been tasked with searching for "an emperor who stole an entire country." He laments that poor people who commit petty crimes like himself will not be prosecuted if they accept a small bribe. He begins checking people's IDs, and upon reaching Barhoum, Haifa tells him that he is a new worker at the shop, helping them clean the dishes. The sergeant is surprised by the softness of his	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	Abboud Effendi concedes that “some support the coup and some support the reward,” while Sheikh Karim’s mercenary pivot from emperor to junta caricatures a polis fractured along opportunistic lines.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Haifa’s wry avowal that she belongs only to the “shop party,” and Abboud’s dream of cashing in the reward, counterpose private pragmatism to the clamour of organised mass politics.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The “Wanted” poster, the bounty scheme, and Sheikh Karim’s paid-for chanting (“Long live, long live”) are textbook instruments for manufacturing consent.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Abboud’s refrain that “orders are orders” while he inspects identity papers stages the ethic of

	hands and advises him to quit the job, which is unsuitable for him, and go in search of the emperor. Perhaps he will find him and inform the police. They will then split the reward and all leave the job. The sergeant then begins checking the IDs of the policemen with him. Then he asks Haifa for her ID, and she tells him that she's a woman, not a man. He insists on seeing the ID. Then the sergeant pulls out his own ID, lamenting that he isn't the emperor, "because if he were the emperor, he would have surrendered himself, received the reward, and been able to educate his children and provide them with a decent life." Haifa asks the sergeant about politics and radio news, and he tells her that he doesn't believe the radio or the media because they always distort the truth. Barhoum asks the sergeant if the people support the coup, and he tells him that opinions are divided: "Some support the coup and some support the reward." Barhoum asks if there is a party that supports the emperor, and he replies, "They increased the reward so that it became larger than the emperor's supporters, and people have become spies for the coup, searching for the emperor's head for free." Haifa says that there are also consolation prizes for informing on the emperor's aides, and the sergeant replies, "Yes, four representatives and a minister." An armed delegation of people arrives to celebrate the new era, headed by Sheikh Karim. The delegation sings and chants the refrain, "Long live, long live." The sergeant stops them to search them, and the sheikh tells him, "We only carry light weapons," so he allows them to pass. The sheikh becomes suspicious of Barhoum and asks him if they have any prior acquaintances, because he seems familiar or perhaps he has seen him on television. Barhoum denies this. The sheikh hands him his business card, which contains his job description. Barhoum asks Haifa about the sheikh and who he is. She tells him that his job is to support governments and that he secures demonstrations, pro-			blind obedience on which the new regime stakes its legitimacy.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment. Although the sheikh carries clerical honorifics, he deploys no scriptural or moral justification for the coup.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Abboud's complaint that "an emperor has stolen a whole country, while petty thieves are jailed unless they bribe" exposes corruption that stratifies the social order; Sheikh Karim's pay-for-pageantry racket underscores an emergent profiteering class.
			Gender and Leadership	The sergeant's insistence on seeing Haifa's ID, and her tart rejoinder that she is "a woman, not a man," foreground how official power polices female presence even in mundane civic space; Haifa's critical voice consistently supplies the scene's moral compass.

	government marches, celebratory delegations, and popular gatherings upon request. He pays a fee to participate and perhaps wants Barhoum to put him on one of the delegations. She then tells him that pro-government marches are profitable for the sheikh, while protest demonstrations are not. She also tells him that Sheikh Karim was a supporter of the emperor in the past and is now a supporter of the coup, a sign of his hypocrisy. Barhoum is surprised, and Haifa replies, "What's wrong with you? This is the way things are. When the radio says that this is the ruler, everyone supports him." When Barhoum asks her if she supports the emperor and which party she belongs to, Haifa answers that she belongs to the shop party and doesn't care who the ruler is, as they are all corrupt. The emperor expresses his admiration for her honesty.			

Coding Scheme of the Second Scene

Dramatic Moments: Cafe, gambling, and political division

Scene Duration: (00:28:06) till (00:34:26)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:28:06) till (00:34:26)	People in the café sing a song about similarities. The news is similar, and there's nothing new, just the same false promises, superficial news, and talk of foreign conspiracies. Then Hoda sings a song about newspapers and headlines, about love and the lover's poems, which are more honest than newspaper headlines. "Shibli" (a man with a mustache that's both up and down) enters, carrying a newspaper and singing about gambling on horses. We learn that he's a gambling addict. He recites the names of the horses he and Hoda bet on, saying that all the horses are from the same stable and that he knows them by their mustaches. He then sings a political	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The radio resorts to “foreign conspiracies” to explain political drift, weaponising the insider/outsider binary.
			Unity and Internal Division	On-air reforms split the crowd (“This is unjust” ⇆ “Be silent”), then erupt in rival slogans against “imperial coup regimes.”
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Shibli’s mercenary motto—“I’m with up and down” and readiness to sell out for 100 000 liras—collides with the crowd’s emergent protest chorus.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Official bulletins about purges, prisoner releases and the huge bounty for the emperor frame the coup as orderly progress.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The broadcast silences dissent (“Be quiet or we stop the news”) and the reward scheme monetises loyalty.

	comment, saying that horses with up mustaches are with the emperor, those with down mustaches are with the coup, and those with mustaches don't belong to a party. Hoda asks him what his mustaches say, and he replies, "I'm with up and down." The people sing about how much each horse costs to bet on, and "Shibli" tells them that he bribed the groom, giving him information about the winning horse so he could bet on it. Everyone follows the current race, repeating the horse rankings. Suddenly, the radio starts broadcasting a news briefing. There's news about the coup plotters' activities to resolve pending border issues, and about their referral of some managers and employees to trial. Some people say, "This is unjust," and others respond by saying, "Be silent." Then, news comes in about the authorities releasing some political prisoners due to a lack of evidence. Some say, "This is a deviation from the revolution." The radio tells them to be silent, or else it won't finish the broadcast. People tell it not to finish it, and some start shouting, "The coup has deviated from its original meaning." Others respond, "It's the very definition of the coup that has deviated from the coup." Some respond, "It has come to encompass imperial coup tendencies." Others say, "These are imperial coup tactics." People hold up a banner and chant, "Down with the imperial coup regimes!" Everyone begins to scream. We see Shibli standing with Hoda, who's holding the newspaper. He asks her about the lottery results. She tells him the winning ticket number is 555, and he tells her that his ticket doesn't contain even a single "5." She blames him for being addicted to betting, gambling and the lottery and that he has to work to improve his limited income. He replies, "Limited income means limited hope." He tells her about his dreams, and she tells him that they are unrealistic and		Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Spontaneous chants—“Down with the imperial coup regimes!”—mark the first overt street-level resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Shibli’s envy of low-paid officials who own “many buildings” exposes systemic corruption and class privilege.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment

	that he has to plan for the future. However, he says that he wishes to become "a man above accountability" like the employees whose salaries are low and yet they own many buildings and abundant money, indicating institutional corruption and bribery. Then he starts reading the newspaper and reads about the reward for capturing the emperor. He is amazed by the high number, "100" thousand liras, and says, "I am a jealous patriot, I am a fighter, for 100 thousand liras, I am the toiling masses," expressing his willingness to take sides for money. Like his mustache, he does not have a single direction or absolute commitment, but rather acts according to his own interest. Then he sets out to search for the emperor and hand him over.			

Coding Scheme of the Third Scene

Dramatic Moments: Cafe, gambling, and political division

Scene Duration: (00:34:26) till (01:04:17)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:34:26) till (00:51:45)	Haifa sings to Barhoum about a little boy named Shadi, her childhood friend, whom she lost in the war that raged 20 years ago. She sings how she misses this lost friend who disappeared into the snow and the war, still just a child. Barhoum tells her that maybe he'll come back, and she wonders if he's grown up yet, and how she's jealous of him because he's remained a child while she lost her childhood. Barhoum accuses her of being lost because of her neutrality and avoidance of taking a stance on the coup. She replies that "the river of hatred takes everyone, even if they had no position or involvement in the conflict." Her friend Shadi is the greatest proof, as he was sacrificed in a conflict to which he had no part. Barhoum says, "The fate of men is expensive," indicating the necessity of sacrifice for glory. She asks him, "What	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Abu Deeb's flamboyant "war exploits" convert hardships at the border into self-mythologising legend, subtly rewriting recent strife as comic epic.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment
			Unity and Internal Division	The villagers' song ("this wailing never ends") chronicles a society splintered by perpetual battle and a fugitive ruler.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The emperor renounces crown and name to become "Barhoum," while Haifa defends private neutrality against a consuming "river of hatred."
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Shibli brandishes the official **"Wanted"** portrait of the bearded Emperor and literally "tests" faces against a **fake beard**. His slap-stick verification ritual is only intelligible because the coup's

	is more precious than a human being that a human life is worth more?" He tells her that he doesn't know and that this shop has many questions he would never have asked himself before. A delegation of villagers passes by the shop's courtyard, singing about a battle that took place the previous day and how they heard the sound of bullets and how many died, even "the moon was hit and fell into the sea, while people continued to fight." They sing about how this wailing and terror never ends, affecting everything, and how the emperor fled, wandering aimlessly. Grandfather Abu Deeb enters and sings a story about his heroic deeds, which he exaggerates to the point of lying, but in which he speaks something of the truth about the nature of war, how borders close during war, and how vegetables and goods wither while waiting at the borders, causing people to starve. He also sings about how borders close in people's faces, forcing them to sneak back to their lands and homes. Haifa says that the emperor is the most miserable of people now because he is a fugitive, with no open borders or home to return to. The people go to sleep, and Haifa sits with her grandfather, and they talk about the bounty on the emperor's head and the danger to those who help him. Barhoum asks her if she would help the emperor if he sought refuge with her. She answers yes because he is a fugitive, not because she loves him or supports him politically. He asks her what would you say if the coup plotters caught him in your shop? Haifa says she would answer them sarcastically, “Well, next time you lose the throne, we won’t hide you,” referring to the axiom of helping those in need regardless of their origins. He tells her, “If the emperor returns, the first place he will search is your shop.” She tells him that she will keep her shop a refuge for fugitives no matter what. Then she tells him that he hides more than he reveals. They then			propaganda has saturated the public sphere with images and bounties. This is a fresh, concrete instance of political messaging at work.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The passing villagers recount yesterday’s firefight and the emperor’s flight, foregrounding live insurgency.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Shadi’s childish death and the villagers’ fresh casualties embody unwilling sacrifice for larger conflicts.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Abu Deeb’s tall tales and the villagers’ elegy for the dead cast fallen fighters as heroic figures.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Closed borders rot produce while people starve; the empress absconds with jewels—both indict economic injustice in wartime.
			Gender and Leadership	Haifa steers the moral debate, challenges patriarchal violence, and outlines reforms the emperor must adopt—female agency shaping political vision.

	discuss the emperor's return. Haifa tells him that time cannot be turned back, and that it is impossible for the emperor to return because the people only look forward, regardless of whether the emperor is good or bad. She begins to mock the emperor's appearance, demanding of his clothes, jewelry, and beard. She expresses her preference for the clothes of the coup leaders because they are simpler and because they are young. Barhoum asks her, "If you were in the emperor's place, what would you do?" Haifa tells him that the emperor must modernize his appearance and mentality, and pursue modernization, development, openness, and freedoms. "He must stop sitting on the throne like artifacts in museums while the entire world moves forward." When Barhoum defends tradition, she responds that traditions are outdated and disconnected from the people's reality. If the emperor returns with traditions and backwardness, the people will repeat the same thing and turn against him. He is convinced of her opinion and the need to change the approach to governance. Jawdat, the emperor's aide, arrives, and Haifa leaves to allow them to speak freely. Jawdat tells Barhoum that the empress has fled with the wealth and jewels, and that despair has spread among his supporters. The emperor expresses relief at being rid of her, but refuses to travel when his aide offers him tickets. He replies that they must travel to catch up with their money, and gives him a check for 100,000 liras instead of the prize. He says that he will adopt his new identity as Barhoum, the son of the village, because he has been born again. Shabli comes with a picture of the emperor with a beard, and in his other hand, a fake beard to confirm whether the people are the emperor or not. He confirms Jawdat's identity by placing the fake beard on his face and comparing it. He is disappointed, then begins talking about how everyone has			

	abandoned the emperor and is glad they aren't him. He then talks about his bad luck. Haifa comes and asks Barhoum if he's lonely. He tells her that his friends have left and their friendship has ended because the vase broke. Haifa sings a song about separation, lovers, and friends.			

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:51:45) till (01:04:17)	People learn of the arrival of "Malhab," the chief smuggler, and his deputy, "Mufleh," who always come to stock up on supplies, alcohol, and ammunition, and to party. Haifa and her grandfather welcome them, calling him "the leader." They prepare a hookah for him and prepare the evening. Deputy Mufleh tells them that work has been hectic lately, and that the difficulties have increased due to the tense situation. Everyone talks about the dangers of the smugglers' lives, and there seems to be a friendly atmosphere among everyone. Malhab notices that Barhoum owns a gold watch and is surprised to ask him about it. Barhoum tells him he can take it, but Malhab refuses, saying he's not a swindler, a bully, or a thief. Barhoum is surprised that a smuggler would refuse a bribe, but Malhab explains that there's a difference between a smuggler who works because circumstances have forced him to do so and has no other choice in this corrupt country, and a thief who steals or a bandit who robs. Barhoum tells him that there is no difference in harming people, so the two of them have a verbal argument, until Haifa comes and tells them to calm down, as they are both wanted by the justice, and offers them wine to have fun together. They sit and continue talking, and we see how "Malhab" explains to Barhoum that	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment
			Unity and Internal Division	Malhab contrasts “little” outlaws with “big” official criminals, exposing fissures between ruled and rulers.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Barhoum’s insistence that “a mistake is a mistake” clashes with the smuggler’s pragmatic ethic, staging the struggle between personal conscience and a community that normalises illegality.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Talk of bounties, fugitives and “justice” positions the state as a distant punitive power to be evaded or bargained with rather than obeyed.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Malhab now grounds his legitimacy in *prayer*—“people pray for my safety, therefore I cannot be corrupt.” The appeal to devotional intercession supplies a moral-religious warrant for his illicit livelihood.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Malhab frames smuggling as a survivalist response to structural oppression; his offer to spirit the emperor across the border converts outlaw logistics into political subversion.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Songs glorify the “dangerous life and adventure” of men who live outside the law, romanticising risk as masculine derring-do.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Malhab’s tirade against élites who “choose corruption” while children starve indicts a tiered order in which poverty compels crime.

	there are degrees of corruption, as government officials, the wealthy, and those in power are the real corrupt ones and commit crimes much bigger and more dangerous than classic smuggling. Barhoum expresses his opposition and says, "A mistake is a mistake, no matter what it is." "Malhab" tells him that at least he admits his mistake and calls himself a smuggler, while the big corrupt people give themselves honorific names to hide their crimes. He says that "Malhab" was forced into this illegal work because of the people's poverty and the children's hunger. As for the corrupt leaders, they chose corruption and crime. He tells him about the unfortunate and harsh reality of the people. Barhoum says, "The government must meet the people's demands." "Malhab" responds, "The children cannot wait until there is a government that fulfills its obligations." Barhoum asks if Malhab is happy with his life as a fugitive from the law. He replies that he should get used to the situation. He and the emperor are both wanted, but the difference is that the emperor has a bounty on his head. Barhoum asks, "How can he hand over the emperor if he finds him when he himself is wanted?" Malhab replies, "I won't hand him over. I'll offer him half the bounty to smuggle him out." Malhab tells Barhoum that he's impressed by his strong character and that he can join his group if his problem with his wife isn't resolved. He also says, "There's always room in the deserted mountains for fugitives from the wide roads." Salem, one of Malhab's men, enters and tells him that tomorrow's shipment is ready to be smuggled on time. Everyone begins singing and greeting each other. They sing, singing about the hookah, the virgin girls, the alcohol, the friendship, and the evenings spent by strangers brought together by chance. They sing about dangerous life and adventure.		Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment Haifa mediates the quarrel but the scene’s power negotiation remains male-centred.

Coding Scheme of the Fourth Scene

Dramatic Moments: Monitoring and Reporting Office - Official Visit and Journalist Coverage - Finding the Emperor's Robe.

Scene Duration: (01:06:10) till (01:36:40)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:06:10) till (01:17:33)	We see reports at the investigation center about sightings of the emperor. We discover that intelligence is monitoring all communications, and there are orders to arrest people and anyone suspected of growing imperial mustaches, and to deter those sympathizing with the emperor. We then hear a report about facilitating the return of a border official. We move to the border village, where Sergeant Abdo says, "Everyone is feeling cold, except for this official who feels warm." The sergeant calls his assistant, Saleh, and the men to prepare the place for the official's arrival. We see signs of corruption and police control over people's fireplaces. At the same time, we see that the condition of these police is poor, and they are as poor as the people they control. Haifa appears and begins singing a song about the harshness of winter and about a girl waiting for the return of her lover, who never returns after he promised to return. However, she loved him in all seasons, even though he never returned in any of them. She also notes how winter erased all the letters of their letters, but she realizes that the lovers' meeting will take place at a moment outside of all seasons. Then, Abu Deeb and Hoda sing about the harshness of winter and the difficulty of life, hunting, and securing food in this weather. However, he hopes for the arrival of quail. We then see a conversation between Umm Abdo and Abu Deeb. Umm Abdo asks about Barhoum's identity, and they tell him that he's new to the shop. Umm Abdo asks Abu Deeb to bring wool dresses in the future because the snow will come early and there's no firewood or clothing to ward off the cold. They tell stories to their hungry children so they can sleep, about how people fear winter because it sweeps away	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Haifa’s “son-of-the-land” metric for governance confronts the collective fiction of technocratic expertise embodied by the visiting dignitary.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	A choreographed press scrum extols “transparent truth,” and the official’s platitudes about imminent success rehearse regime talking-points.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Deferential journalists lob soft questions; Shabli’s beard-comparison ritual literalises the hunt for visible tokens of loyalty to the state.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Haifa contrasts ivory-tower officials with villagers who “understand people’s suffering,”

	everything and floods their homes, and how this tragedy repeats itself every year. Abu Deeb reveals his inability to keep people warm because he himself needs someone to keep him warm. Umm Abdo leaves to search for firewood. The sergeant and Haifa discuss Barhoum, and the sergeant tells her that he suspects Barhoum may be a member of the Inspection Committee and is informing on them, as he walks around at night, monitors people, and commits many misdeeds. Haifa tells him that these days, it's impossible to know who is a security or intelligence officer. Chaos reigns supreme, everyone is being watched and monitored, and there are those in power who monitor everyone. She tells him about the spread of eavesdropping devices, and he asks her to lower her voice. They exchange songs about the tight security grip these days.			exposing a gulf between governing elites and precarious locals.
			Gender and Leadership	Haifa is commodified as a photo-prop yet reclaims agency through song and trenchant critique, unsettling a male-administered public sphere.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:17:35) till (01:28:37)	A journalist from Al-Rashash magazine arrives to conduct a scoop. He wants to photograph Haifa because she's beautiful, and he'll include her picture in his report about the official. Then a journalist from the radio station arrives and asks the sergeant how he feels about the official's arrival. He answers that the sergeant feels happy and thanks himself. He then goes to ask Haifa how she feels about the official's arrival and asks her about her favorite song. Haifa sings a song about love, the pain of love, and the longings it brings. We see many journalists enter, wanting to cover the official's arrival. They sing praises to the press and extol its strength and ability to convey the transparent truth, which is ridiculous. The official's escorts arrive before the official, dressed in smart attire, saying the meeting was a great success and discussing trivial details of his trip (who got in the car, who got out of it, what he	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Haifa’s grassroots scorn (“my grandfather, a son of the land, would solve more problems”) confronts the collective myth of technocratic expertise embodied by the official.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	A choreographed press scrum lauds “transparent truth,” while the official recycles platitudes about “cordial negotiations” and an imminent imperial arrest—classic state messaging.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Deferential reporters lob soft questions; the official’s entourage dictates the narrative, and

	ate, what he slept on, etc.). The official then arrives and tells him that the trip was a success, that the goal of the trip was to resolve outstanding issues, and that the negotiations proceeded in an atmosphere of cordiality and intimacy, for the sake of friendship, rapprochement, freedom, and the common good. When they ask him when they will arrest the emperor, he replies that they will soon, and that everything is progressing well. Barhoum asks Haifa about the official's statements, and she ridicules his repetitive and superficial statements, asserting that all officials never solve any problems. She says that if her grandfather were to become an official, he would solve problems despite his repeated lies, because he is a son of the land, the environment, and nature, and understands people's suffering, unlike the officials who learn about life from books and their ivory towers. Shabli enters the shop, wanting to search for the emperor. He approaches Barhoum, places a fake beard on his face, and compares it to the emperor's image. He is surprised by the resemblance and asks Haifa about him, but Haifa tells him that this is Barhoum, the shopkeeper, not the emperor. Barhoum says that the emperor is gone and will never return. Barhoum says that's better. He was a harmful person who benefited no one, whether by his presence or absence. Haifa throws Shabli out of the shop, blaming his bad luck for everything.			Shibli's beard-inspection ritual literalises the hunt for outward signs of loyalty.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Haifa indicts officials who "learn life from books and ivory towers," exposing a gulf between ruling elites and the lived precarity of shopkeepers and villagers.
			Gender and Leadership	Haifa is commodified as a cover-girl yet reclaims agency through song and sharp political critique, signalling how female presence unsettles a male-dominated public sphere.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:28:46) till (01:36:40)	Abu Deeb enters, carrying the emperor's robe over his rifle. People around him ask what he's holding. He tells them he's going on a hunting trip for migratory birds. People ask him what he's going to do with it, and he tells them he's going to wear it	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment

	because it's cold outside. Haifa tells him she's afraid he'll be hurt because he's wearing the emperor's robe. The villagers begin exchanging the robe, wanting to make clothes out of it, but each fears the wrath of the new authorities. Haifa suggests they leave him alone because the intelligence service might arrest them because of him. Everyone begins to think of a solution to the problem. Some suggest throwing him wherever they find him, others throwing him into the sea, and others handing him over to the police station. Haifa, however, tells them there's a chance they'll be arrested in any case. Everyone blames their luck, considering the robe a calamity that has befallen the border village. Umm Abdo enters and sees the cloak and says that she will take it, Haifa warns her, saying that she will hit them with a stick if they come to take her and tells Barhoum to help her put on the cloak, Abu Deeb expresses his admiration for her and how the cloak shows her wisdom of the years. Everyone sings to her and says that it suits her and that they will crown her the wise queen of kings. Umm Abdo is happy because the cloak will protect her from the cold and the heat.		Unity and Internal Division	Villagers splinter into factions—throw it in the sea, hand it to the police, keep it for warmth—exposing anxiety-ridden discord beneath communal life.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The imperial garment, token of collective power, is ceded to Umm Abdo for purely personal shelter; individual need trumps civic symbolism.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Fear of "intelligence" arrest dictates every choice: even charity is policed by loyalty tests.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Poverty is laid bare: a royal robe becomes mere insulation against winter, and its possession threatens punishment—illustrating how power's detritus collides with material deprivation.
			Gender and Leadership	When the community crowns Umm Abdo "wise queen," the scene momentarily transfers symbolic authority to a female elder, foregrounding gendered leadership in crisis.

Coding Scheme of the Fifth Scene

Dramatic Moments: The Outlaws' Coup - the Arrest of "Haifa" and the Villagers

Scene Duration: (01:36:43) till (01:51:33)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:36:43) till (01:46:08)	Malhab, Mufleh and the armed smugglers enter with Abu Mutab, the	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment

	leader of all the smugglers, and introduce him to Barhoum. They tell Barhoum that the current coup group is fighting amongst themselves and spreading chaos in the country. Therefore, the smugglers and their leader have decided to stage a coup against this coup to impose order and security, and they want Barhoum's help. Barhoum tells them that he is "for democracy." Malhab tells him that he is also for democracy, and because they are all wanted by justice, and the majority of people are wanted by justice at this time, they have become the majority, and therefore, they must take over the government. He says that he will gather all the outlaws to become the government. They appoint Barhoum as the head of the new coup council because he is the only one among them who can read and write. They do not care if their coup succeeds or fails because they are wanted by justice and have nothing to lose. They say that they will make the moustaches of the new era like the moustache of Sheikh Abu Mutab, straight, neither up nor down. Barhoum tries to speak with "Mulhab" alone and warns him that his men might turn against him if the coup succeeds due to his power and influence. "Mulhab" tells him that he trusts his men and will undertake this adventure whether Barhoum comes with them or not. Barhoum tells him that he is ready and prepared to participate and asks what is required of him. "Mulhab" tells him that he must write Statement No. 1, which they must broadcast on the radio. We then see that "Mufleh" has hired an entire demonstration from Sheikh "Karim" to support the new coup, and their slogan is "Long Live, Long Live." The demonstration, led by "Karim," begins with a song about the heroes		Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment
			Unity and Internal Division	A splinter “coup against the coup” and rival moustache fashions dramatise a polity fracturing into ever-smaller factions.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Barhoum’s private hunger for “glory” and Malhab’s self-styled messianism collide with Haifa’s plea for the anonymous, tax-burdened populace.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Drafting “Statement No. 1,” hiring Sheikh Karim’s chant brigade, and the slogan “Long live, long live” rehearse the standard media kit of a takeover.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Outlaws crown themselves a council, proclaim a new order, and expect obedience once they seize radio and TV.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The plotters frame their putsch as a revolt that will “impose order and security.”
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Sheikh Karim’s paid crowd hails the coupists as “heroes who will liberate the people.”
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Malhab justifies seizure of state power as redress for hunger and poverty—an explicit class claim.
			Gender and Leadership	Haifa alone voices the ethical cost of perpetual coups, exercising critical authority in a male plotters’ circle.

	who will liberate the people and strive for victory. Mulhab then orders the coup to begin and the demonstrators to spread throughout the country. Barhoum prepares Statement No. 1 and gives it to "Mulhab." "Mulhab" then prepares the men who will occupy the radio and television stations. A dialogue begins between Haifa and Barhoum about rule, coup and power. Haifa warns him of the danger of what he is doing and that many people will pay the price for their adventure. He tells her, "Glory is the destiny of men", and that she told him that life moves on and the new ruler must keep up with it. Haifa blames herself for giving him such an idea that will bring pain to the people. The dialogue reveals that both Malhab and Barhoum desire to rule, despite their different reasons. Barhoum wants glory, while Malhab intends to change the bad reality of the poor people. But Haifa wants them to change their decision and cancel the coup because, whatever their reasons, they will forget the poor and the people and will be intoxicated by power and spoils. She tells Malhab that the snow will curse him, so Barhoum asks her, "Why do you prosecute people who want to change their reality by gaining power, even though she sits in the shop and never leaves it and refuses to participate in the conflicts?" She tells him, "It's the people, it's the houses, it's the ones whose rulers rule in their name and whose opinion is not taken into account. Every time a new ruler comes, their taxes increase, and the oil in their lamps decreases." Barhoum promises her that he will fulfil all the promises they agreed upon (justice, freedom, the people) and that he will reward all the poor villagers			

	who protected him and brought him to power. Haifa tells him, "Many will fight for power, but one person will gain it and the rest will perish," and she bids him farewell.			

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:46:24) till (01:51:33)	The radio announces the first communiqué of the Barhoum forces' coup. The first clause declares that the forces of Barhoum, Abu Mutab, and Malhab have seized power in the name of God and the people. The second clause doubles the arrest warrant for the emperor, with a note prohibiting shopkeepers from hiding fugitives. The people are surprised that the silent and tame Barhoum has carried out a coup, and they wonder how he left without saying goodbye. Abu Deeb begins recounting his false adventures about preparing for the coup, only for Haifa to rebuke him. People ask him why every coup begins with reliance on God and the people. Abu Deeb replies, "Because God and the people are able to endure harm for a long time." Abu Deeb seems excited that the coup will bring justice because those who carried it out are his acquaintances and friends. The sergeant and the police enter and begin searching Abu Deeb and Haifa's shop. He tells them that Barhoum himself ordered the shop to be searched for fugitives and that nothing will change. Haifa tells him that the wind is blowing and everything will change despite Barhoum's will. The sergeant arrests her, her grandfather, and all the villagers. When his assistant, Saleh, rushes to take the people to the police station, Saleh tells him that the station is full and there is no room for new	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment
			Unity and Internal Division	A fresh split—“silent Barhoum” turns autocrat, villagers panic, police raid—lays bare centrifugal conflict.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Barhoum’s personal ascent collides with communal shock and Haifa’s collective lament (“shepherds in one valley, sheep in another”).
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The radio broadcasts “Clause 1… Clause 2,” doubles the bounty, and forbids harbouring fugitives—state messaging in its purest form.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The sergeant arrests first, invents charges later; the shop search is ordered by Barhoum himself, confirming a draconian obedience culture.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The coup claims power “in the name of **God** and the people,” enlisting divine warrant for temporal authority.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	A coup against an earlier coup is an explicit revolutionary act; Haifa’s song projects eventual popular emancipation.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment

	prisoners. He tells him to detain them in the square. When he asks him what they will be arrested on, the sergeant replies, "Arrest them first and we will determine the charges later." Haifa begins singing her song about the disconnect between the rulers and the people, the rulers' clinging to power and their greater concern for preserving their thrones than their concern for the people. Despite this, the people will find their way to freedom and light despite the darkness of authoritarian oppression. She repeats her phrase, "The shepherds are in one valley, and the sheep are in another valley, so do not cry out, O crier."	Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The police jail villagers en masse while jails overflow, illustrating how repression and poverty intersect on the social ladder's bottom rung.
			Gender and Leadership	Haifa rebukes Abu Deeb, challenges the sergeant, and vocalises the people's plight—female moral leadership amid patriarchal coercion.

A 2.4 Visual Coding Scheme of the Play “Yaish Yaish "(Long Live! Long Live!).

1-“The first meeting between Barhoum and Malhab in the bar”.

Figure 3 – Yaish Yaish, Scene 3 (01:29:20). Malḥab stands stage-right holding a wine bottle, addressing the audience with a monologue on smuggling and political disillusionment. Behind him, seated to the left, are Haifa, her grandfather, and Barhoum. Their lateral alignment visualises a fleeting moment of civic reflection and tense solidarity. Visual codes: PM · SC

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
00 : 00 : 00 – 00 : 04 : 39	Malhab notices that Barhoum owns a gold watch and is surprised to ask him about it. Barhoum tells him he can take it, but Malhab refuses, saying he's not a swindler, a bully, or a thief. Barhoum is surprised that a smuggler would refuse a bribe, but Malhab explains that there's a difference between a smuggler who works because circumstances have forced him to do so and has no other choice in this corrupt country, and a thief who steals or a bandit who robs. Barhoum tells him that there is no difference in harming people, so the two of them have a verbal argument, until Haifa comes and tells them to calm down, as they are both wanted by the justice, and offers them wine to have fun together. They sit and continue talking, and we see how "Malhab" explains to Barhoum that there are degrees of corruption, as government officials, the wealthy, and those in power are the real corrupt ones	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism		(key still 00 : 02 : 05)	Bar-Debate-Wide	Alternating close-ups + oblique wides	Malhab stage-right, standing; Barhoum, Abu Deeb, Haifa seated stage-left; gang and locals dispersed; rifles hung above; hookahs front edge	B/W stock: Malhab dark leather & boots (deep grey); Barhoum mid-grey shirt, light trousers; Haifa white dress (brightest tone); rifles & cowboy hats catch highlights	Flash of gold watch offered then refused	4-second hold on Malhab CU	Low-key follow-spot isolates Malhab, turning him into what Bordwell calls a “focal import” node (Film Art, 132–33). The counter-close-up on Barhoum establishes an ethical duel, while every return to the oblique wide re-subordinates both men beneath rifles and rafters—visual shorthand for a coercive order (**Political Messaging & Propaganda**). Tonal contrast casts Haifa’s white as moral barometer; Malhab’s dark leather signals outlaw grit, and the lone flash of the gold watch embodies Bourdieu’s **Symbolic Capital**: respectability dangles but is refused. Hookahs and liquor bottles foreground vice, linking poverty-driven illegality to **Social Structures & Class Dynamics**. The 4-second static on Malhab as he says “circumstances forced me” lets the audience weigh subaltern ethics against state hypocrisy—Gramsci’s situated consent rendered in bar-room monochrome.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making									
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats									
			Unity and Internal Division									
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	x								
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging									
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	x								
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric									
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution									
			Sacrifice for the Nation									
			Martyrdom and Heroism									
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership	X + Symbolic Capital								

	and commit crimes much bigger and more dangerous than classic smuggling. Barhoum expresses his opposition and says, “A mistake is a mistake, no matter what it is.” "Malhab" tells him that at least he admits his mistake and calls himself a smuggler, while the big corrupt people give themselves honorific names to hide their crimes. He says that "Malhab" was forced into this illegal work because of the people's poverty and the children's hunger. As for the corrupt leaders, they chose corruption and crime. He tells him about the unfortunate and harsh reality of the people. Barhoum says, “The government must meet the people’s demands.” "Malhab" responds, "The children cannot wait until there is a government that fulfills its obligations." Barhoum asks if Malhab is happy with his life as a fugitive from the law. He replies that he should get used to the situation. He and the emperor are both wanted, but the difference is that the emperor has a bounty on his head.											

	Barhoum asks, “How can he hand over the emperor if he finds him when he himself is wanted?” Malhab replies, "I won't hand him over. I'll offer him half the bounty to smuggle him out." Malhab tells Barhoum that he's impressed by his strong character and that he can join his group if his problem with his wife isn't resolved. He also says, "There's always room in the deserted mountains for fugitives from the wide roads." Salem, one of Malhab's men, enters and tells him that tomorrow's shipment is ready to be smuggled in time. Everyone begins singing and greeting each other. They sing, singing about hookah, virgin girls, alcohol, friendship, and evenings spent by strangers brought together.											

A 2.5 Textual Coding Scheme of the Play “Petra”

Coding Scheme of First Scene

Dramatic Moments: The King's Departure - A dialogue between Petra and the princess's nanny - A dialogue between the princess's governess, the teacher, and the clown - A dialogue between the governess and the clown.

Scene Duration: (00:00:00) till (00:18:24)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:02:06) till (00:06:07)	The king is the only person standing, and everyone in attendance is kneeling to bid him farewell, except for the soldiers who raise the king’s flags as he delivers a speech to them about the history of Petra, its heroism, and its greatness. He also declares that Petra is a class-free city with a just society, and a balanced system of government that guarantees human freedom and dignity and is unparalleled. Then he declares that Rome is an external enemy that came to take Petra's women captive and plunder her wealth after Petra refused to submit. He is out to reject slavery and to defend all subjugated and oppressed peoples.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The king’s panegyric on Petra’s “heroism and greatness” explicitly elevates the city as a collective national emblem.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	By reciting a glorious past to legitimise the present, the speech re-casts history as nationalist myth.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome is branded a rapacious outsider, sharpening the native/alien boundary.
			Unity and Internal Division	Claiming Petra is “class-free” and morally singular signals an ideal of internal cohesion against that outside foe.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Proclaiming an unparalleled system that “guarantees human freedom and dignity” functions as overt ideological promotion.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The kneeling court and flag-bearing soldiers enact visual submission to sovereign authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The king frames resistance to slavery as a moral duty, though without explicit sacred language.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Vowing to defend “all subjugated and oppressed peoples” casts Petra’s struggle as a righteous uprising.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The proud assertion of a “class-free city” directly addresses questions of class structure.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:07:03) till (00:08:28)	The queen enters with songs of veneration by the people describing her greatness and holds the king's scepter until the king returns.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The choral praise of the queen’s “greatness” publicly affirms the regime’s chosen heir, functioning as celebratory political messaging that legitimises her temporary rule.

			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	he act of bearing the king's sceptre while subjects sing veneration songs is a visual pledge of loyalty and an assertion of sovereign authority during the monarch's absence.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The ceremony foregrounds a strict hierarchy: a queen regent wielding the royal insignia over a reverent populace.
			Gender and Leadership	A woman assumes custodianship of the kingdom's supreme symbol of power, marking a clear instance of female leadership within the political order.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:12:11) till (00:13:41)	The nanny, Hala, says that she declares the princess's greatness and her tolerance for her father's absence. So, the queen responds to her with a speech about the greatness of the duties of kings and the necessity of them staying detached from emotion, as the responsibility of the nation falls on their shoulders.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The queen's insistence that rulers must silence private emotion because "the responsibility of the nation falls on their shoulders" subordinates the personal to the collective good.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	By eulogising regal self-denial as a civic virtue, the queen implicitly promotes a model of enlightened monarchy and legitimises the existing order.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Hala's public praise of the princess and the queen's didactic reply dramatise expected deference to dynastic authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The speech rests on moral maxims about duty and self-discipline, functioning as secular-moral rhetoric that undergirds political authority.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Emotional detachment is framed as a necessary personal sacrifice undertaken for the nation's welfare.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The exchange underscores a stratified order: nanny, princess, and queen all occupy fixed ranks whose legitimacy is taken for granted.
			Gender and Leadership	A female sovereign articulates the principles of governance, foregrounding women in the highest tier of political responsibility.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:15:03) till (00:16:33)	The world-educated teacher Ayyash appears helpless and defeated in front	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	By ridiculing the "world-educated" teacher and extolling Saleh's Petra-hardened know-how, the passage implicitly

	of Saleh Al-Bahlawan, who has mastered life skills in Petra. The teacher who repeats the names of Greek philosophers and Roman artists is also depicted as a foolish person, something that will be repeated in the play, indicating the sterility of global culture and the effectiveness of local ideals in the face of different circumstances, including love and security.			asserts the superiority of indigenous culture and, by extension, of the local collective identity.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The sterility of imported (Greek–Roman) learning versus the "effectiveness of local ideals" squarely enacts the authenticity/foreignness dichotomy.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The comic reversal—an elite cosmopolitan teacher shown as inept while a locally schooled Petra inhabitant excels—spotlights tensions between imported intellectual capital and vernacular practical authority.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
	This scene features three songs: two patriotic and military in nature, related to public affairs and the issue of war, and one emotional song between two lovers, which serves as a performative and entertaining break for the audience.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The two martial-patriotic choruses reaffirm collective pride and situate Petra's coming war within a shared national horizon.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	The choral pairing calls citizens to unite under the wartime banner, replacing factional discord with communal resolve.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The intimate lovers' duet, inserted between mass anthems, foregrounds private emotion against the backdrop of national mobilisation, dramatising the tension between personal desire and collective duty.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The openly patriotic, military-themed numbers function as ideological rallying-cries, publicly advancing the wartime agenda.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	By underscoring the imminence of battle, the martial songs valorise armed resistance as a civic imperative.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Coding Scheme of the Second Scene

Dramatic Moments: A monologue by the leader of the merchant caravan - A dialogue between Minister Ribal and the merchants - The Queen's welcome speech to the merchants - A conversation between the Queen and the Minister - A dialogue between the Queen and the Minister and the two Roman spies - A dialogue between the Queen and the Egyptian merchant - A conversation between the Minister and the Queen.

Scene Duration: (00:18:30) till (00:33:43)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:18:48) till (00:20:11)	The leader of the caravan sings praises about Petra and its cultural significance, discusses the atrocities of the Romans, and recounts how Petra became the last stronghold of freedom and civilisation in the world. He also glorifies the justice and prosperity of the king and queen. He expresses that Anak has a common identity among all the peoples of the region, represented by Petra and its regime.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Petra is hailed as "the last stronghold of freedom and civilisation," an unambiguous exaltation of national singularity.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	The narrative re-casts Petra's past into an exemplary myth that legitimises its present role.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Roman "atrocities" sharpen the authentic/alien binary, presenting Petra as the culturally pure counter-pole.
			Unity and Internal Division	The claim that *Anak* constitutes a shared identity "among all the peoples of the region" stresses supra-tribal cohesion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Eulogies to Petra's justice and prosperity function as overt ideological promotion of its regime.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The leader's glorification of the king and queen models public allegiance to sovereign authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The discourse of "freedom" and "civilisation" grounds the appeal in universal moral terms, though without explicit sacred language.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Casting Petra as bulwark against Roman oppression foregrounds collective resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	Brief praise of both king *and* queen signals joint male–female rulership, yet leadership roles rather than gender politics are foregrounded.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:20:41) till (00:26:57)	The people glorify their queen and her entry, describing her as a beloved and just friend of the people. The Queen addresses her guests about Petra's greatness and justice, as well as the historical kinship between Petra and the rest of the kingdoms. The minister tells the queen that those merchants came from everywhere, even areas under	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Repeated epithets—"shield of the desert," "refuge of the oppressed," "protector of Oriental authenticity"—canonise Petra as a unique national emblem.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	he queen invokes an ancient "kinship between Petra and the rest of the kingdoms," recasting history to legitimise present-day solidarity.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome is the rapacious outsider; Petra safeguards "Oriental authenticity" against that imperial menace.
			Unity and Internal Division	Merchants from lands even under Roman control converge on Petra, dramatizing supra-regional unity that transcends borders.

	Roman rule, to deposit their wealth in Petra. The queen expresses that she will accept their request and protect their treasures because Petra is “the sad and brave sun of the East” and “the kingdom of those promised joy.” The people and merchants chanted praises of Petra, calling her “the shield of the desert,” “the refuge of the oppressed,” and the protector of Oriental authenticity. The Roman spy Laius approaches the queen as a merchant from the city of Tire and asks her why she accepted the merchants' request. She tells him that Petra is engaged in a civilizational war with the greedy Roman Empire and its tyrannical king. When the Roman spy inquires about the difficulty of receiving all the people’s wealth, the minister rebukes him and says, “In front of kings, you must learn to trust.” The Queen declares that Petra's battle with Rome is a civilizational battle to protect the riches and antiquities of the East from Roman greed, saying that "Petra's treasury has become liberation, it has become battle."		Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The queen’s oration and the people’s chants publicly advertise the regime’s justice, prosperity, and civilizational mission.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Public glorification of the queen and the minister’s rebuke (“In front of kings, you must learn to trust”) display hierarchical deference and expected fidelity.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The struggle is framed in moral terms—freedom versus greed—though without overtly sacred language.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The queen brands the clash with Rome a “civilizational battle,” positioning Petra as vanguard of liberation.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	Depositing the region’s wealth “in front of kings” naturalises monarchical authority over commercial elites and common folk alike.
			Gender and Leadership	A female sovereign orchestrates finance and foreign policy, foregrounding women at the apex of political power.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:27:39) till (00:29:30)	The dialogue between the queen and the Egyptian merchant begins with him praising her and the greatness of Petra, and he hands her a royal crown that has been inherited by his family. When she asks him if he has ever tried wearing a crown, he answers her by saying, “His head is not suitable for a crown.” Crowns have their owners. The scholarship awards him a recommendation card for his loyalty and humility.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The Egyptian merchant’s panegyric to Petra and its queen underscores the city-state’s pre-eminence as a regional emblem.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	A foreign visitor who entrusts an ancestral crown to Petra reinforces supra-regional cohesion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	By refusing to don the crown (“crowns have their owners”), the merchant subordinates personal aspiration to legitimate collective sovereignty.

		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The ceremonious gifting and the queen's public reward dramatise the moral authority of the throne.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The merchant's humility and the scholarship's commendation model ideal fealty to monarchical power.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Apart from extolling humility as a civic virtue, the exchange lacks explicit sacred framing; hence, no explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The scene naturalises a rigid hierarchy: crowns—and thus rulership—are the prerogative of the sovereign, not the merchant class.
			Gender and Leadership	A female monarch commands the ritual and dispenses patronage, foregrounding women at the apex of political authority.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:29:40) till (00:32:26)	In a conversation between the minister and the queen, he tells her that many of Petra's young men died in the war and that he feels very sad, so she tells him that this is the nature of war, and Petra will avenge her dead. The minister is convinced of Petra's greatness and the inevitability of her victory over Rome	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The minister's conviction that Petra "will surely defeat Rome" re-asserts the city as a heroic national emblem.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome is again cast as the external menace whose aggression must be avenged, sharpening the authentic/alien divide.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The minister's private grief is immediately subsumed by the queen's reminder that war deaths are the price of national destiny, subordinating personal feeling to collective duty.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The queen's assurance of inevitable victory functions as a morale-building ideological statement.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The minister's deference and ready acceptance of the queen's rationale display expected loyalty to sovereign authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Vowing to "avenge the dead" frames the coming campaign as righteous resistance to Roman oppression.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	The loss of "many of Petra's young men" is acknowledged as an accepted national sacrifice.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The exchange underscores hierarchical order: the minister reports; the queen defines policy.

			Gender and Leadership	A female sovereign articulates military resolve, again foregrounding women at the apex of political power.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
		National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Six explicitly patriotic songs affirm collective pride and remind the audience of Petra's shared national destiny.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	The choral focus on mobilising for war promotes internal cohesion around a common cause.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Martial anthems serve as overt ideological mobilisation for the wartime agenda.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The songs' military tone frames the coming conflict as righteous resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Coding Scheme of the Third Scene

Dramatic Moments: A dialogue between the two spies - A dialogue between the two spies and the teacher - The queen bidding farewell to the caravans departing from Petra - A conversation between the spies and the head of the caravan - The spies receiving a message from the Roman leadership - A dialogue between the teacher - The acrobat and the nanny with the princess - The kidnapping of the princess by the spies.

Scene Duration: (00:33:43) till (00:58:24)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:33:45) till (00:36:05)	In a dialogue between the two spies, they express their astonishment and anger at the queen's challenge to Rome and reveal their mission to carry out sabotage operations in Petra (poisoning water tanks, attacking caravan routes, and destroying the monuments of the people in Petra's grief in revenge for Rome). He then makes a terrifying statement about the destruction of civilisation being better than the defeat of Rome.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The Roman spies personify the external aggressor; their plan to poison wells, raid caravans and obliterate monuments positions Rome as the antithesis of an "authentic" Petra.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The spies' credo that "the destruction of civilisation is better than Rome's defeat" is an extreme ideological slogan intended to justify terror.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Their willingness to commit sabotage displays unflinching obedience to Roman authority and its imperial objectives.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Framing the conflict in absolute moral terms ("better to annihilate civilisation…") constitutes

				secular-moral rhetoric, though without sacred diction.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment (the dialogue depicts imperial aggression rather than popular resistance).
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:36:10) till (00:38:46)	In a dialogue between the educated teacher and the two spies, the teacher reveals dangerous information about the invulnerability of Petra's vault and the water tanks dug into the rocks, and about his being the princess's personal tutor, despite his suspicion that the two men who claim to be from the city of "Tyre" appear to be Romans. Then he makes a strange statement about "the danger of knowledge and its robbing of joy." The teacher says that every citizen of Petra is a security guard, tasked with protecting Petra from intrigues and spies.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	By insisting that "every citizen of Petra is a security guard," the teacher folds private vigilance into a single, collective civic identity.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	His immediate suspicion that the two self-styled Tyrians are covert Romans sharpens the authentic/alien boundary.
			Unity and Internal Division	The claim that all Petrans share the duty of defence underscores internal cohesion against external intrigue.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The teacher's zealous loyalty to the crown, coupled with his refusal to yield strategic secrets, exemplifies the expected obedience of subjects.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Alerting spies that every Petran is a sentry frames civil vigilance as quotidian resistance to imperial aggression.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:41:33) till (00:44:34)	The merchants and the people glorify the arrival of the queen, her simplicity, and her closeness to the people when she arrives. The Queen tells the people that the course of the war has become in their favour, then sings about the historical relationship between Petra and the Levantine kingdoms, Lebanon and its	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The queen's song binds Petra's destiny to the wider Levant and the "undying" Beirut, renewing a shared regional identity.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	By invoking an idealised ancient kinship with neighbouring kingdoms, the speech myth-ologises history to legitimise present solidarity.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	The merchants' and citizens' acclamation of a "simple" queen who mingles with them, together with her appeal to pan-Levantine bonds, foregrounds communal cohesion.

	capital, Beirut, which “does not die.”		Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Announcing that the war now tilts in Petra’s favour is a deliberate morale-building political message.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Public glorification of the monarch manifests collective fealty and endorses the throne’s legitimacy.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Framing the conflict as an ascendant campaign positions Petra as the vanguard of regional resistance to Roman domination.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The scene rehearses hierarchy (queen over merchants and commoners) yet the emphasis on her “closeness” softens class boundaries.
			Gender and Leadership	A female sovereign delivers strategic news and civic inspiration, exemplifying female wartime leadership.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:48:20) till (00:49:35)	In a second dialogue between the two spies, they state that it is impossible to penetrate Petra's social and governmental fabric. Therefore, they will not be able to achieve their goals through sabotage. The spy leader, Patricus, declares that "the people of Petra are like rocks" and cannot be bought like other people, such as the Macedonians, because they believe in victory.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Declaring that “the people of Petra are like rocks” extols a steadfast national character recognised even by enemies.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The spies’ inability to “buy” Petrans underscores an authenticity that resists Rome’s corrupting influence.
			Unity and Internal Division	Their admission that Petra’s “social and governmental fabric” is impenetrable foregrounds an exceptional internal cohesion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The remark that Petrans “cannot be bought” highlights an unwavering popular loyalty to their state.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis

(00:49:44) till (00:50:45)	The messenger from the leadership in Rome instructs the two spies to carry out an act of sabotage that will force Petra's army to withdraw as quickly as possible, as the Roman army is in trouble and is losing to Petra's forces. Patricus declares that the people of Petra, united and in solidarity, defeated the Roman legend and its mighty armies.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Patricus concedes that a unified Petra has "defeated the Roman legend," celebrating Petra's superior national character.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome, the alien aggressor, now turns to sabotage to blunt Petra's authentic strength.
			Unity and Internal Division	The phrase "the people of Petra … united and in solidarity" foregrounds exceptional internal cohesion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The Roman messenger's orders and the spies' compliance dramatise strict obedience to imperial command.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Petra's popular unity and battlefield success epitomise righteous resistance to imperial domination.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The hierarchical Roman chain of command (leadership → messenger → spies) is briefly displayed, though social class tension is not foregrounded.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:54:15) till (00:54:45)	Because the nanny, the clown, and the teacher are confident that the Roman threat has passed, they accept the little princess's request to play hide and seek. They relax their defences despite their suspicion of the presence of Roman spies, so they go into hiding, and the princess is kidnapped.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The swift abduction, engineered by Roman infiltrators, re-inscribes Rome as the predatory outsider menacing Petra's authentic civic order.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The caretakers' choice to indulge the princess's wish for play, relaxing their watch, dramatises the pull of private affection against the demands of collective security.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Their lapse in vigilance violates the expected norm of unflinching loyalty to royal safety, silently underscoring the monarchy's disciplinary claims.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	The kidnapping exposes the personal cost borne by the royal household amid a wider war, foreshadowing the sacrifices demanded by national struggle.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.

		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The scene hinges on the established hierarchy—nanny, clown and teacher in service to a royal child—whose sudden collapse through her abduction threatens social order.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:56:00) till (00:58:20)	In a lyrical monologue, the Queen declares that she knows for sure that Rome was the one who kidnapped her daughter, and says that Rome does not care about the laws of war and targets innocent children. Then she describes Rome as "the insatiable beast of civilisation" and asserts that "Petra will not kneel," implying that Petra represents freedom and the guardian of peace. In contrast, Rome represents war and an uncontrolled military machine.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Declaring that "Petra will not kneel" elevates the city as the very emblem of freedom and peace in opposition to Rome's tyranny.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome is branded "the insatiable beast of civilisation," an alien power flouting the laws of war, against which authentic Petra must stand guard.
			Unity and Internal Division	The resolute "Petra" is spoken of as a single, unbreakable civic body confronting the kidnapper.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The monologue is overt wartime rhetoric, rallying subjects to persevere against Rome.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Condemnation of child-kidnapping as a breach of the "laws of war" invokes universal moral norms to legitimise Petra's cause.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The pledge that Petra will never submit casts the struggle as righteous resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	A female sovereign articulates the ideological centrepiece of the war, exemplifying female leadership at the apex of power.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
	This scene features six songs, two of which are patriotic and military in nature, related to public affairs and the issue of war, and four songs about love and travel.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The two martial-patriotic songs publicly affirm Petra's collective pride and wartime self-definition.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	By rallying citizens around the war effort, the patriotic numbers promote internal cohesion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The four lyrical pieces on love and travel foreground private emotion and personal mobility against the backdrop of communal mobilisation, staging an implicit tension between the intimate and the national.
			Propaganda and Political Messaging	The war songs function as overt ideological exhortations that legitimise and sustain the military campaign.

		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Military motifs in the patriotic songs cast the conflict as righteous resistance to foreign aggression.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Coding Scheme of Fourth Scene

Dramatic Moments: A dialogue between the teacher and the Egyptian merchant, the minister and the Queen - A conversation between the governess and the minister - The king's messenger arrives to announce the victory - A dialogue between the spy leader Patricius and the Queen.

Scene Duration: (00:58:26) till (01:22:04)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:59:45) till (01:03:10)	The minister addresses the people, heralding the victory of Petra's army, and declaring that now the people can return to feeling safe after the end of the danger and achieve victory over the enemies of the homeland.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Announcing that “the enemies of the homeland” are vanquished crowns Petra’s collective self-image with definitive national triumph.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	The phrase “enemies of the homeland” invokes the external foe whose defeat secures authentic Petra.
			Unity and Internal Division	The minister’s assurance that the populace may “return to feeling safe” presumes a newly consolidated civic unity.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The victory proclamation is overtly rhetorical, designed to boost morale and legitimise the war effort.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	A high official speaks on behalf of the state, and the people’s safety is framed as a royal-governmental gift, reaffirming hierarchical authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Celebrating the army’s success validates Petra’s armed resistance as both just and effective.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The minister-to-people address briefly rehearses the vertical chain of command but does not foreground class tension.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:03:42) till (01:06:28)	After the Egyptian merchant declares the evil and wickedness of Rome and the generosity of the people of Petra and their popular government, he tells	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The merchant’s praise of Petra’s “generous people” and their “popular government” elevates the city as a moral exemplar for the wider region.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.

	the queen that he suspects the presence of Roman spies in the “inn of strangers” discussing the transportation of a kidnapped girl. The minister declares that the reason for the spies' inability to extract the kidnapped princess from Petra is the security grip and strict censorship imposed by the kingdom.		Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome is cast as “evil and wicked,” the alien force opposed to Petra’s authentic virtue.
			Unity and Internal Division	The minister’s boast of an un-breachable “security grip” depicts Petra as a socially unified body immune to subversion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Publicly contrasting Rome’s wickedness with Petra’s generosity functions as overt ideological promotion.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The minister’s emphasis on strict censorship models the expectation of obedience to state security protocols.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Foiling the spies and guarding the princess is framed as vigilant resistance to imperial aggression.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	The queen’s central role in receiving intelligence and directing policy underscores female leadership at the apex of power.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:12:35) till (01:14:30)	In a dialogue between the governess and the minister, the minister shouts about the wickedness and low morals of the Romans for kidnapping the little princess. When the king's messenger arrives, the minister withholds from him the news of the princess's kidnapping because the country's interest requires it.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	No explicit alignment.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome is castigated as morally “wicked,” reaffirming its status as the alien menace against which Petra’s authenticity is defined.
			Unity and Internal Division	By suppressing alarming news “for the country’s interest,” the minister privileges civic cohesion over full disclosure.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	He silences personal candour to serve the collective good, subordinating individual truth-telling to national security.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	No explicit alignment.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Controlling information before a royal envoy demonstrates hierarchical authority and an ethic of loyalty to state priorities over protocol.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The outcry at Rome’s “low morals” frames the conflict in stark ethical terms.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The exchange displays a layered hierarchy: governess, minister, king’s messenger, and the absent sovereign.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:15:07) till (01:19:33)	In a dialogue between the spy Patricus and the queen, he bargains with her for the life of her child on the condition that King Petra end the war and withdraw from the lands he has seized from the Romans. The queen answers him, “These lands are ours and every person must get his land back.” She affirms that the victory that came with the blood of Petra's brave soldiers is more precious than her daughter's life, and that she and the king have no right to waste this victory for paternal desire. The Queen insists on her position and presents a prophecy about the ruin of Rome, the brutal military empire that plunders peoples, and about the curse of defeated peoples that will pursue and destroy their soldiers and palaces. The spy declares that her courage and loyalty to her homeland have defeated him and erased the history of Rome's victories, and that the enmity between Rome and Petra is eternal. She demands that he kill her, a soldier loyal to his homeland who has known nothing in his life except war. Patricus is broken before the queen and declares the defeat of his values and ideals. He says, “Goodbye, Rome, our crazy empire that sends its army leaders to assassinate children. Let the stars go out and let me sleep forever.”	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The queen’s riposte that “these lands are ours” and that Petra will never surrender crowns the city-state as sovereign national subject.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Her prophecy of Rome’s impending ruin mythologises the conflict, inscribing present events within a teleology of imperial rise and inevitable collapse.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	Rome is caricatured as “the brutal military empire,” an alien predator set against Petra, guardian of freedom.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	By valuing a hard-won victory “more than her daughter’s life,” the queen subordinates private maternity to collective destiny.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Her uncompromising rhetoric publicly consecrates the war’s legitimacy and rejects any compromise that would dilute national sovereignty.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The episode dramatizes supreme royal authority and total patriotic loyalty: even the enemy spy concedes that her steadfastness eclipses Rome’s past glories.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	Invoking the “curse of defeated peoples” and condemning child-kidnapping as a civilisational crime frames the conflict in absolute moral terms.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The queen’s refusal to capitulate sustains Petra’s image as vanguard of anti-imperial resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	She explicitly elevates national sacrifice above maternal instinct, modelling the ultimate cost of freedom.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Her willingness to die, and Patricus’s admission of defeat, cast her stance as heroic martyr-like resolve.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	A woman exercises unflinching sovereign power and strategic foresight, foregrounding female leadership at the apex of the political order.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(00:02:06) till (00:06:07)	This scene includes five songs, two of a patriotic nature, and three of an emotional nature related to loss and loss.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The two patriotic songs reaffirm Petra’s collective pride and wartime self-definition.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	Public anthems urge communal cohesion after hardship.

			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The three laments of loss foreground private grief beside national celebration, staging that tension.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The patriotic numbers function as morale-building ideological exhortations.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The martial songs continue to frame the struggle as righteous resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	Lyrical laments about loss evoke the human cost of victory.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Coding Scheme of the Fifth Scene

Dramatic Moments: The Return of the King - The King's Speech of Victory and Good News of the Alliance - The King's News of the Death of His Daughter in Redemption for Petra's Victory - Celebrating Victory, the Homeland, the Great People, and the Wise Leadership.

Scene Duration: (01:22:26) till (01:30:31)

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:22:26) till (01:24:04)	Everyone insists on welcoming the victorious king with joy, despite their sadness over the death of the princess. The songs revolve around the homeland and the people, the glory of war, and the greatness of the king and queen.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The welcome songs extol "the homeland and the people," reaffirming Petra as a proud national community.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	Collective joy in victory overrides private grief, dramatising civic cohesion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	The tension between mourning the princess and celebrating the king highlights the subordination of personal sorrow to national triumph.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Patriotic anthems praising the "glory of war" function as overt ideological celebration of the campaign.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	Public acclamation of the king and queen models deference to sovereign authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Victory songs affirm Petra's successful resistance to foreign aggression.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	The community's willingness to rejoice despite the princess's death acknowledges the high cost of victory.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	Celebrating wartime glory venerates heroic sacrifice.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The ceremonial reception underscores the royal-subject hierarchy.
			Gender and Leadership	Joint praise of king and queen foregrounds male-and-female co-sovereignty at the apex of power.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:24:22) till (01:26:12)	The king is compared to “the cedar tree in Lebanon”, towering over the mountains, and it is emphasised that the king sacrificed everything for the sake of the people and the country.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	The simile “a cedar tree in Lebanon” elevates the king as a regional emblem of steadfast national grandeur.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	No explicit alignment.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	Portraying the monarch as one who “sacrificed everything for the people and the country” subordinates personal interest to the collective good.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	Laudatory rhetoric about the king’s total devotion functions as overt legitimation of the regime.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	The towering-cedar image invites popular reverence and loyalty to sovereign authority.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The praise frames royal self-sacrifice as a moral exemplar, though without sacred language.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	No explicit alignment.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	The text explicitly extols the king’s willingness to surrender “everything” for Petra.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	The cedar metaphor and emphasis on total devotion cast the king as a heroic figure.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	The image of a monarch towering “over the mountains” naturalises vertical hierarchy between ruler and subjects.
			Gender and Leadership	The passage highlights male sovereign leadership but does not explore gender politics further.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
(01:26:12) till (01:27:51)	With her voice coming from heaven, Fayrouz affirms ideas about the greatness of the homeland and the united people and insists on the historical right and the nature of the moral and civilizational confrontation with the enemy with one of her most beautiful songs in which the play concludes, “They say that my country is small.”	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Fayrouz’s celestial voice celebrates the homeland’s grandeur and asserts an irreducible national essence.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	Evoking the people’s “historical right” mythologises the past to legitimise present claims.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	A “moral and civilisational confrontation with the enemy” casts Petra as the authentic custodian of culture resisting an alien
			Unity and Internal Division	The lyric stresses a people fused in purpose, erasing internal fissures.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The anthem “They say that my country is small” functions as a rousing ideological rejoinder, turning perceived diminishment into patriotic defiance.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	The heavenly voice and insistence on a moral struggle cloak the political message in ethical, quasi-sacral terms.

		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	Portraying the homeland as locked in an existential contest frames steadfastness itself as heroic resistance.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis
	The scene is mostly singing dialogue and songs about patriotism and includes five completely patriotic songs.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	Five unambiguously patriotic songs reinforce a shared national self-image and pride.
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	No explicit alignment.
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	No explicit alignment.
			Unity and Internal Division	Group song invites citizens to stand together, foregrounding communal cohesion.
			Individual vs. Collective Identity	No explicit alignment.
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	The patriotic repertoire functions as overt ideological mobilisation that legitimises the regime and its recent victory.
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	No explicit alignment.
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric	No explicit alignment.
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	The martial tone of the patriotic pieces implicitly valorises continued resistance to foreign aggression.
			Sacrifice for the Nation	No explicit alignment.
			Martyrdom and Heroism	No explicit alignment.
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	No explicit alignment.
			Gender and Leadership	No explicit alignment.

A 2.6 Visual Coding Scheme of the Play “Petra”

1-“Farewell to the King”

Figure 8 – *Petra*, Scene 1 (00:02:12). Farewell to the King: sword and sceptre change hands within a single axis of power, projecting ceremonial continuity and dynastic succession. Visual codes: NI · PM · SC · RH

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
00 : 01 : 44 – 00 : 08 : 30	The king is the only person standing, and everyone in attendance is kneeling to bid him farewell, except for the soldiers who raise the king's flags as he delivers a speech to them about the history of Petra, its heroism, and its greatness. He also declares that Petra is a class-free city with a just society and a balanced system of government that guarantees human freedom and dignity and is unparalleled. Then he declares that Rome is an external enemy that came to take Petra's women captive and plunder her wealth after Petra refused to submit. He is out to reject slavery and defend all subjugated and oppressed peoples. The queen enters with songs of veneration by the people, describing her greatness, and holds the king's scepter until the king returns.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	x	(key still 00 : 02 : 15)	OF-Wide-Still	Predominantly wide, eye-level or slight high; three frontal CUs on king	King centred; soldiers & mounted guards form rear diagonal; citizen semicircle SR/SL; queen's entry closes V-shaped flank into vertical pair	King: white tunic trimmed gold, red robe, gold wreath & breastplate; Queen: red-gold gown, Bedouin crown; Soldiers: grey armour; backdrop red castle walls; flags crimson	King's sword & shield, royal scepter	Scene average ≈ 9 s per shot; longest static hold 12 s on queen's solo	A single civic fresco: monarch fixed centre-stage, flanked by kneeling citizens, spearmen, and vizier; queen later joins to complete a red-gold axis. Egalitarian rhetoric is spoken from literal elevation, naturalising hierarchy even as it proclaims its absence. Passing of sword (to soldier) and scepter (to queen) converts props into symbols of military and dynastic continuity, while wide frontal staging turns the audience into direct recipients of propaganda. Symmetric, brightly lit wide shot (no spotlights) embodies the *frontality* Bordwell calls a "focal-import node," letting king monopolise attention while declaring classlessness, illustrating propaganda by mise-en-scène. Colour hierarchy (white+gold over greys) and kneeling extras betray latent stratification (**Social Structures & Class Dynamics**). The
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	x								
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	x								
			Unity and Internal Division	x								
			Individual vs. Collective Identity									
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	x								
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	x								
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric									
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	x								
			Sacrifice for the Nation	x								
			Martyrdom and Heroism									
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership	x								

												queen's warmer reds add gendered legitimisation (**Spectacle & Ritual**) and her solo—framed by deferential V of bodies—shifts affect from civic pride to emotional mobilisation. Together, lighting, blocking, and prop choreography translate spoken egalitarianism into a visually encoded state myth that opposes Roman subjugation (**Anti-Imperial Resistance**) yet reinscribes internal hierarchy.

2- “Arrival Caravan-Tableau"

Figure 9 – *Petra*, Scene 2 (00:20:06). Arrival of the caravan: Phoenician blue and Babylonian burgundy offer tribute. Framed commerce becomes covenant. Visual codes: NI · PM · SC

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
00 : 18 : 54 – 00 : 28 : 12	The leader of the caravan sings praises about Petra and its cultural significance, discusses the atrocities of the Romans, and recounts how Petra became the last stronghold of freedom and civilisation in the world. He also glorifies the justice and prosperity of the king and queen. He expresses that Anak has a common identity among all the peoples of the region, represented by Petra and its regime. The people glorify their queen and her entry, describing her as a beloved and just friend of the people. The Queen addresses her guests about Petra's greatness and justice, as well as the historical kinship between Petra and the rest of the kingdoms.	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	x	(key still 00 : 20 : 06)	Caravan-QueenEntry-Wide	Predominantly wide, eye-level (slight high for three brief queen CUs)	Queen centred on riser; caravan diagonal SR→SL; soldiers bracket the sandstone set; vizier half-step below rostrum	Queen: crimson & gold gown, Bedouin crown; leader: white cloak, red kaffiyeh; delegates form chromatic stripe (blue, linen white, gilt, burgundy); backdrop sandstone ochre	Royal scepter (held aloft) & treasure chests	Avg. ≈ 8 s holds; longest 11 s queen CU	One panoramic civic fresco: leader (white/red Bedouin) front-left, followed by ethnically coded delegates—Phoenician blues, Egyptian linen, Ugaritic gold, Babylonian burgundy—advancing on a diagonal that converges on the queen's red-gold axis. Her first hand-raise snaps every body to attention; lowering it makes the multi-kingdom crowd sit, demonstrating choreographed consent. Treasure chests change hands in a mimic dance, converting commerce into trust ritual while soldiers (upstage flank) freeze into stone-gate guardians, hinting at latent coercion. Vizier's rebuke ("learn to trust") polices dissent, fusing soft power with hard power in a single beat. Wide frontality turns the queen into a "focal-import node,"
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making									
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	x								
			Unity and Internal Division	x								
			Individual vs. Collective Identity									
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	x								
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience	x								
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric									
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	x								
			Sacrifice for the Nation									
			Martyrdom and Heroism									
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership	x								

	The minister tells the queen that those merchants came from everywhere, even areas under Roman rule, to deposit their wealth in Petra. The queen expresses that she will accept their request and protect their treasures because Petra is “the sad and brave sun of the East” and “the kingdom of those promised joy.” The people and merchants chanted praises of Petra, calling her “the shield of the desert,” “the refuge of the oppressed,” and the protector of Oriental authenticity. The Roman spy Laius approaches the queen as a merchant from the city of Tire and asks her why she accepted the merchants' request. She tells him that Petra is engaged in a civilizational war with the greedy Roman Empire and its tyrannical king. When the Roman spy inquires about the difficulty of receiving all the people’s wealth,											her red-gold palette magnetising attention while preaching pluralist justice. The costumed rainbow visualises **Cultural Pluralism**, yet vertical elevation and gesture-based obedience expose underlying stratification (**Social Structures**). Treasure exchange foregrounds Petra’s role as protector of Eastern heritage, aligning with **Anti-Imperial Resistance** and converting economic capital into symbolic capital. Lighting stays high-key and evenly splashed, sustaining the propagandistic aura that crowns Petra as “shield of the desert.”

	the minister rebukes him and says, “In front of kings, you must learn to trust.” The Queen declares that Petra's battle with Rome is a civilizational battle to protect the riches and antiquities of the East from Roman greed, saying that "Petra's treasury has become liberation, it has become battle."											

3- “Princess Abduction”

Figure 10 – *Petra*, Scene 3 (00:55:18). Torch-lit oath: the queen’s resolve after the abduction of her daughter reclaims loss as communal strength. Visual codes: RH · PM

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
00 : 54 : 45 – 00 : 59 : 00	Because the nanny, the clown, and the teacher are confident that the Roman threat has passed, they accept the little princess's request to play hide and seek. They relax their defenses despite their suspicion of the presence of Roman spies. Their dialogue is about hide-and-seek, nothing special. So they go into hiding, and the princess is kidnapped. In a lyrical monologue, the Queen declares that she knows for sure that Rome was the one who kidnapped her daughter, and says that Rome	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism		(key still 00 : 55 : 18)	Kidnap-Wide-Still	Mobile wide-angle sweeps (high ↔ eye-level); two tight CUs (princess counting, queen singing)	Kidnap beat: princess centre-foreground; spies triangulate; others off-stage; later tableau: nanny/teacher/acrobat slump downstage left, queen stands centre-right	Princess: light pink hijab-cape, bare arms; Queen: yellow gown; Teacher: brown + white scarf; Governess: rose-pink; Acrobat: white trousers; spies in muted desert tones	Scroll in teacher's hand → dropped; cloth gag over princess's mouth	Rapid 3-5 s inter-cuts during flicker; 9 s hold on queen CU	Play collapses into terror: dimming lights strobe, isolating princess in palette of light pink as "innocent." Disguised Roman spies (Bedouin/Phoenician garb) breach frame, gag her, and exit upstage right; the sudden blackout weaponises mise-en-scène to imply Roman lawlessness. Governess, teacher, acrobat rush back into high-key wash, compositional void foregrounds guilt. Queen's entrance in sun-yellow resets colour hierarchy, her solo CU framing her as the moral fulcrum who re-codes personal loss into collective anti-imperial vow. Low-key flicker creates stark highlight/shadow contrasts that steer our eye to the kidnapping action and heighten suspense—exactly how Film Art describes lighting's power to "guide our attention" and "conceal a detail or build up suspense" . The sudden plunge from playful high-key to strobing low-key visualises Rome's moral darkness (Violence & Trauma). Queen's bright
			Historical Manipulation and Myth-Making	x								
			Cultural Authenticity and Foreign Threats	x								
			Unity and Internal Division									
			Individual vs. Collective Identity									
		Political Messaging and Propaganda	Propaganda and Political Messaging	x								
			Authority, Loyalty, and Obedience									
			Religious and Moral Rhetoric									
		Resistance and Heroism	Resistance and Revolution	X Violence & Trauma								
			Sacrifice for the Nation									
			Martyrdom and Heroism									
		Social Structures and Class Dynamics	Social Hierarchies and Class Struggles	x								
			Gender and Leadership	x								

	does not care about the laws of war and targets innocent children. She then describes Rome as “the insatiable beast of civilization” and asserts that “Petra will not kneel,” implying that Petra represents freedom and the guardian of peace. In contrast, Rome represents war and an uncontrolled military machine.											yellow, emerging under restored even light, re-anchors gaze through colour contrast, a textbook use of a limited palette to draw attention . Her monologue reframes private grief as civic rhetoric, converting maternal authority into nationalist propaganda (Anti-Imperial Resistance, Gender & Dynastic Power).

4- “Face-off with Patricus”

5-” The Return of the Victorious King”

Figure 11 – *Petra*, Scene 5 (01:27:56). King’s return: cedar glow, kneeling crowd, and anthem finale seal Petra’s myth of blood-for-sovereignty. Visual codes: NI · PM · RH · SC

Figure 4 – *Petra*, Scene 4 (01:19:35). Queen and Patricus in static face-off. The frontal tableau and converging shadows reinforce Petra’s ideological centre: authority may bend under siege, but never shifts off-axis. Visual codes: NI · PM · RH · SC

Full scean Time	Description	Main Category	Subcategory	Alignment Analysis	Time-code (shot)	**Still / Scene ID**	Angle	**Blocking Geometry**	**Dominant Hue / Costume**	**Emblematic Prop**	**Shot Length (s)**	**Visual Memo ↔ QCA**
01 : 15 : 10 – 01 : 22 : 44	In a dialogue between the spy Patricus and the queen, he bargains with her for the	National Identity and Cultural Unity	National Identity and Arab Nationalism	x	(key still 01 : 19 : 35)	Patricus-Collapse-WS	Alternating queen CUs (slight		Queen: pure white			Static queen, elevated on riser, stares frontally at

	life of her child on the condition that King Petra end the war and withdraw from the lands he has seized from the Romans. The queen answers him, "These lands are ours, and every person must get his land back." She affirms that the victory that came with the blood of Petra's brave soldiers is more precious than her daughter's life, and that she and the king have no right to waste this victory for paternal desire. The Queen insists on her position and presents a prophecy about the ruin of Rome, the brutal military empire that plunders peoples, and about the curse of defeated peoples that will pursue and destroy their soldiers and palaces. The spy declares that her courage and loyalty to her						low-angle) with half-lengths & two-shots; initial panning wide	Queen centred on upper step; Patricus orbits at floor level; eyeline gap underscores	robes, silver-white crown; Patricus: scarlet veil → roman yellow-white shield; backdrop dusk-blue set	Roman shield brandished, then cast aside; queen's upraised index finger	Avg ≈ 7 s; longest 13 s queen CU	audience while Patricus circles below—mobile vs. immobile staging that literalises power gap. Her white robes/crown radiate purity; his red veil (stripped to reveal yellow-white Roman shield) marks deceit. Only when her child is threatened does she pivot her gaze and raise a single index-finger—minimal gesture, maximal threat. Spy's eventual collapse to knees, then prone, converts moving antagonist into inert prop, visualising Rome's moral defeat. Frontal close-ups of the queen lock viewer attention on her face—the "most overriding thing in the frame," as Bordwell calls frontality David Bordwell, Kristin…. Patricus' lower-framed half-lengths stress subordination; the lens height shift echoes Film Art's note that angle and distance can "create a real encounter with the actor" David Bordwell, Kristin…. The circular blocking around a fixed axis enacts Gender & Dynastic Power, while red-to-white colour reversal (veil → shield → queen)

	homeland have defeated him and erased the history of Rome's victories, and that the enmity between Rome and Petra is eternal. He demands that she kill him, a soldier loyal to his homeland who has known nothing in his life except war. Patricus is broken before the queen and declares the defeat of his values and ideals. He says, "Goodbye, Rome, our crazy empire that sends its army leaders to assassinate children. Let the stars go out and let me sleep forever."											stages the ideological stripping of Roman authority (Political Messaging & Anti-Imperial Resistance). His prostrate figure becomes a tableau of imperial collapse; queen's triumphant CU, scored by trumpets, fuses maternal grief with nationalist resolve—propaganda by mise-en-scène.

Appendix B – Interview Corpus

B 1. Participant Profiles

ID (pseudonym)	Gender	Age in 2024	Profession	Birth-place / Region	Current city & country	Year left Syria	Self-political positioning/ Religion/ Ethnicity	First Rahbani exposure (year / medium)	Favourite play / scene	Key analytic tag*
P1 “Umm Salim”	F	68	Retired (former teacher)	Suwayda – Jabal Druze	Brussels, Belgium	2015	Druze / Against the regime and religious opposition/Arab	1979 – live-TV family night	*Petra* – Shakila’s raised index finger	nostalgic pride
P2 “Khaled”	M	57	Electrical engineer	Latakia – Coast	Madrid, Spain	2013	Muslim Sunni /Soft Baath sympathiser But he rejects corruption/ Circassianb	,1984 – Damascus-Fair loudspeakers	*Sawan* – Mudlij at the gate	sacrifice = discipline
P3 “Rana”	F	39	housewife	Damascus	Philadelphia, USA	1999	Christian/ neutral Secular nationalist/ Arab	1998 – school-choir cassette	*Yaish*– grocer joke	ironic affection
P4 “Ayman”	M	48	journalist	Aleppo	Berlin, Germany	2014	Atheist/Left-liberal/2011 opposition activist/Kurd	1986 – family VHS	*Yaish*– “Long Live!” refrain	anthem fatigue
P5 “Leila”	F	34	physician	Homs	Lyon, France	2012	Non-religious Alawist\ opposition feminist/ Arab	1998 – Syrian-TV rerun	*Sawan* – Ghurba’s death	blood-as-tax
P6 “Abu Seif”	M	32	Blacksmith	Idlib countryside	Amsterdam, NL	2016	Muslim Sunni \Supports HTS/ Arab	2002 – official Syrian radio broadcast	*Sawan* – martyr chant	selective appropriation

B 2. Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Exploring the Influence of the Rahbani Brothers’ Theatre on Syrian National Identity and Political Control

Introduction (±2 min)

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this conversation. We will discuss your memories and views of the Rahbani Brothers’ theatrical works, especially how you feel they have shaped—or been used to shape—Syrian identity and politics. The interview is semi-structured: I have prepared topics, but you are free to steer the discussion or add anything you think is essential.
Reflexive note: I grew up in […] and have studied these plays for several years; please feel free to disagree with my perspectives at any point. All answers will be anonymised. I may jot notes, but I will not make an audio recording for security reasons. Ready to begin?

Opening segment – Personal background & familiarity

Could you start by telling me a little about yourself—your age, where in Syria you grew up or lived, and any key moments that have shaped your sense of culture and identity?
Follow-up: In what ways has living outside Syria changed that sense, if at all?
Goal: establish personal context.

Familiarity with Rahbani works
2a. Which Rahbani plays, films, or recordings have you seen or heard?
2b. Which one left the strongest impression—positive *or* negative—and why?
Goal: Map exposure and identify salient texts or scenes.

Middle segment – Key themes & coding clusters

Section 1 – General perceptions of Rahbani theatre

In your view, what main themes or messages run through Rahbani's plays?
Follow-up: Which of those themes affected you most on an emotional level, and why?
Probe: Do urban and rural audiences—or different generations—read those themes differently?
Goal: harvest material for codes: national identity, Arab nationalism, cultural authenticity.

How would you describe the Rahbanis' contribution to Syrian cultural life?
Follow-up: Can you recall an occasion when a play *shaped* or *reflected* everyday norms?
Probe: Did their work, in your eyes, promote Syrian cultural pride or broader Arab unity?
Goal: link plays to cultural authenticity/threat narratives.

Section 2 – Government influence & political context

Have you ever sensed the *state* was present inside a Rahbani play? When and how?
Follow-up: Were any particular productions especially close to Baathist slogans or policies?
Probe: Did those messages feel subtle or openly loyalist?
Goal: locate propaganda alignment.

How do the plays' images of national unity or resistance fit—or clash—with the Syrian government's agenda?
Follow-up: Do you see the Rahbanis offering an idealised unity, a critique, or both?
Probe: Did their portrayals influence public attitudes toward government or opposition?
Goal: Investigate resistance and revolutionary coding.

Section 3 – Audience reception & social impact

Thinking of friends or relatives you watched with, how did different social circles—age, class, political leanings—respond to the plays?
Follow-up: Which groups seemed to identify most with themes of unity, resistance, or cultural pride, and why?
Probe: Did the plays ever deepen social divisions, or did they foster cross-class unity?
Goal: class, hierarchy, collective identity.

From your own experience, did the plays reinforce traditional norms or challenge them?
Follow-up: How did they shape ideas about leadership or social status?
Goal: authority, hierarchy, possible critique.

Section 4 – Personal reflections & contemporary relevance

Looking back, how have Rahbani's works shaped your understanding of Syrian identity and history?
Follow-up: Did the plays present history accurately or theatrically? How does that colour your view of Syria today?
Probe: Any myths or historical figures you now see differently because of these plays?
Goal: myth-making, national narrative.

Do you think Rahbani theatre remains relevant in present-day Syria?
Comparative hook: If a Rahbani revival were to tour Idlib or Berlin tomorrow, who would buy tickets, and what would they take away?
Follow-up: Which elements—martyrdom, heroism, cultural identity—still resonate?
Goal: gauge contemporary uptake.

Open-ended exploration

Is there anything about Rahbani theatre, its cultural impact, or its political uses that we haven't touched on but you consider essential?
Follow-up: Any personal stories you'd like to add?
Goal: capture unforeseen insights.

Conclusion (±1 min)

Thank you for sharing your experiences and reflections. Your insights are vital to understanding how theatre intersects with identity and power in Syria. If further thoughts arise, you're welcome to contact me. I'll send you a summary of findings once the study is complete.

B 3. Consent Form for "A Quest to Catch a Goddess: The Rahbani Brothers and Syrian Narratives of Nationhood"

You will receive a copy of this form.

Please tick one box for each statement	Yes	No
I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet dated 11/10/2024; all my questions have been answered.	☐	☐
I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand I may refuse to answer any question and may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	☐	☐
I understand that taking part involves one interview (no audio recording). The interviewer will take written notes and prepare a summary, which will be shared with me for approval before it is used.	☐	☐
I understand that possible risks include the inadvertent disclosure of my participation or views, which could endanger me or my relatives inside or outside Syria.	☐	☐
I understand that the information I provide will be used for a Master's thesis, academic journal articles, conference presentations, and teaching materials.	☐	☐
I understand that my full name will not be shared with anyone outside the research team.	☐	☐
I agree that anonymised data (e.g., the approved interview summary with all direct identifiers removed) may be archived in the secure Leiden University Dataverse for future research and learning.	☐	☐
I agree that anonymised excerpts from my interview may be quoted in research outputs.	☐	☐
OPTIONAL: I give the researchers permission to keep my contact details and to contact me about future research projects.	☐	☐

Signatures

Name of participant	
Signature	Date ____ / ____ / _____
Name of legal representative (if applicable)	
Signature	Date ____ / ____ / _____

Researcher's name : Hazim Bou Saad	Signature: _____

B 4. Selected Interview Excerpts and Thematic Summaries

P1 “Umm Salim”

Umm Salim first saw *Petra* in a 1979 Syrian TV rebroadcast, three generations crowded before the set, “as if the whole mountain sang with us.” Although that screening belonged to peak Baathist culture programming, her household opposed the regime—a brother was jailed in the 1980s for Communist Action Party activity, and her two sons later joined the 2011 uprising—so she has always received Rahbani theatre as people’s art rather than state propaganda.

Petra remains her touchstone. Queen Shakila’s raised index-finger pledge still epitomises “real motherhood—strong enough to bleed, gentle enough to forgive,” and she praises the Rahbanis for centring heroines in a male-dominated world: “Fairuz balances the world by putting women at the centre.” Mythic liberties—portraying the Nabataean king as a rebel instead of a Roman client, casting a Samaritan adviser as a foreign intriguer—do not trouble her; legend is “how stories reach the heart.” The line “hafzu ala hadhihi al-madina” (“guard this city”) and the plays’ steadfastness (*sumud*) rhetoric crystallise a Druze-inflected Arab identity that, for her, transcends sect and party.

Linking Fairuz to Baathist ideology makes her bristle: “the music belongs to us, not to any party.” Mass-bowing scenes, which younger viewers read as submission, register for her as civic solidarity—“people save each other, not leaders.” In exile, she now wields *Petra*’s female-led defiance against Hayʾat Tahrir al-Sham, arguing that “religious hard-liners fear a woman who points a finger.” Thus, the same spectacle that once flowed easily through Baathist broadcast circuits has become, in her hands, a secular tool for resisting new forms of authoritarianism and jihadist patriarchy.

P2 “Khaled”

Khaled remembers the Rahbanis bursting into his life during the 1984 Damascus International Fair, when *Jibal al-Sawan* was piped through tinny loudspeakers across the fairground. At seventeen, he was already an enthusiastic Baath-youth volunteer; Mudlij’s stand “mightier than the sword” seemed to confirm what school civics had preached—that a single act of self-sacrifice disciplines an entire nation. The scene still anchors his worldview: “If the gate falls, everything behind it falls.”

Over time, however, the plays taught caution as well as loyalty. In *Yaish Yaish,* he fixated on Shibli the gambler’s quip—“I’m with up and down”—and on the smuggler Malḥab’s claim that officials “steal bigger.” Those bar-room lines, he says, were his first lesson in structural corruption: “They warned me not to confuse patriotism with the people who run it.” A decade later, when state television aired *Petra*, he admired the spectacle but felt wary of its triumphal procession—“too neat, too choreographed.”

Exile has refined that ambivalence. From Madrid, he streams Rahbani clips to Spanish friends, translating Shibli’s jokes as proof that Arab theatre “has its own anticlerical Monty Python.” The chorus bows he once found stirring now reads as choreography anyone in power can commandeer; yet the admonition “the mountains must live” still moves him. Faced with jihadist rhetoric online, he finds renewed value in the Rahbanis’ secular heroism: “They prove you can love homeland without quoting scripture.”

Khaled thus embodies the “sacrifice = discipline” strand of the diaspora: the Rahbanis remain a civic reservoir, but only when their grand pageantry is read in conjunction with the subversive barbs buried within the script.

P3 “Rana”

Rana’s initiation into the Rahbani world came when her Damascus secondary-school choir had to master the soaring finale of *Yaish Yaish.* At twilve, she loved the syncopated hand-claps but was puzzled by the on-stage news flashes spliced into the melody on the cassette: “Why would an anthem need breaking news?” That slight dissonance stayed with her.

Fast-forward to 2001: a VCD screening of the entire musical in a Philadelphia dorm allowed her to match sound to image. The scene that struck her most was not the famous grocer's joke, but the live radio bulletin that interrupted dancing to announce “a blessed corrective movement.” As the tinny voice fades, Barhum’s aides unfurl stacks of red-white-black flags from the back of a battered pick-up—props Rana now regards as “wholesale patriotism on sale.” The visual coding sheet notes how the camera tracks the flags in a single lateral pan before snapping to a close-up of cash changing hands; she cites that montage as proof that loyalty can be bought in bulk.

A second moment she revisits is the slapstick moustache parade: would-be revolutionaries pass a false moustache along the line to match each new slogan. What fascinates her is the instant audience roar followed by a half-beat of silence—“like people realised the joke cut too close.” The textual codebook logs it under “satire ⇢ authority punctured,” a label Rana finds apt because it shows mockery piercing rhetoric without a single explicit political statement.

Rana is a secular nationalist; she dislikes Baathist showmanship but treasures the Rahbani score as emotional shorthand for home. The choir cassette goes on her playlist when she edits activist podcasts: “The tune reminds me why censorship failed—songs leak.” For her, the plays’ value lies in their formal elasticity: the same anthem that once rehearsed obedience now backlights dissent simply by being replayed in a new key.

P4 “Ayman”

Ayman’s first brush with the Rahbanis was a crackling VHS of Yaish Yaish spun during an Aleppo winter curfew. At eight, he marched round the sofa to the play’s iron-voiced radio communiqué—“security is assured, gatherings forbidden”—until endless school drills of “Long Live! Long Live!” drained the words of meaning and bred what he later calls anthem fatigue.

That fatigue ripened into critique through two scenes he still dissects in workshops today. Sergeant ʿAbbud’s checkpoint sweep (“orders are orders”) revealed how paperwork can criminalise ordinary life, while the minister’s choreographed press tour—reporters chanting “transparent truth” as villagers queue for blankets—captured the gulf between televised promises and leaking rooftops in pre-2011 Aleppo. During the uprising, he lifted Rahbani quips for placards—“Shepherds in one valley, flock in another”—and recognised that repetition, not argument, is propaganda’s sharpest tool.

The plays remain, for him, a diagnostic kit: melodies that trace how authority colonises acoustics, jokes that expose the seam in any grand narrative. Yet he insists “the Rahbanis are not Baʿathists; they’re flexible, skilful, usually honest and popular.” Their polish lets power borrow them, but the stories outrun each borrower. His dawn ritual proves the point—Fairuz on the speakers, strong coffee in hand—“to keep the day human before the headlines start.” The same art that taught him to question orchestrated unity now anchors his sense of steadiness, proof that music can survive—and even outlive—the regimes that try to claim it.

P5 “Leila”

Leila was nine when a summer power cut ended just in time for Syrian radio's replay of Jibal al-Sawan. The notion that branded itself on her mind was Ghurba standing alone on the escarpment, shawl whipped sideways while the men below chant victory lines she will never hear. Even as a child, she asked, "Who pays, and who collects?"—a question that matured into her analytic mantra, blood as tax, and launched a lifelong dialogue with Rahbani theatre and Fairuz's voice.

Re-watching Petra on YouTube during the 2011 protests, Leila skipped the coronation pomp and froze on two moments the visual-coding sheet flags, but critics rarely discuss. First, the kidnapping tableau: the princess is dragged off-stage while Queen Shakila erupts into a lament that paints Rome as a ravenous beast devouring her child. For Leila, the song transposes imperial conquest into an unmistakably male appetite that consumes female bodies to prove dominion. Second, the torch-lit corridor tracking shot that follows Shakila toward the envoy—the camera dollying back, stretching each step—"measures," she says, "the distance between coerced duty and chosen defiance." A slow tilt over merchants' blank ledgers once the pact is sealed completes the lesson: patriotic rituals are underwritten by women's courage and household coffers. At the same time, the epic's costs are kept offstage. Listening to Fairuz belt "Petra Will Not Kneel," Leila feels what she calls a "feminist rush—proof a woman's cry can crack an empire's façade."

Leila rejects both Baathist and jihadist attempts to appropriate the Rahbani legacy. She screens Ghurba's farewell and Shakila's lament in gender-studies seminars to show how national projects extract women's bodies while men debate strategy. Yet she still hums the mountain refrain on her Lyon commute: a bittersweet anthem, she says, "because the melody is ours even when the invoice lands in someone else's blood."

P6 "Abu Seif"

A pre-dawn slot on Idhāʿat Dimashq in 2002 gave Abu Seif his sole childhood taste of Rahbani art: the mountain chorus "Blood is the gate of victory; open it, martyrs!" looped over martial drumbeats. He filed the line away as an austere nasheed, never linking it to theatre, which he now classes as haram. "Arabism without tawhid is another idol," he says; Fairuz merely "softened hearts that should have hardened for jihad."

Curiosity later drove him to stream parts of Sawan. He switched off after a few scenes, but not before hearing the pre-battle sermon warning that foreign tax-collectors "come first for the grain, then for the faith." To him, the speech foretells Western intervention—"proof the Rahbanis knew the Crusader script long before America arrived." The resonance stops there: melodies, dancing, and female solos reinforce his view that Assad's Baath co-opted art to dull Islamic resolve.

Since 2019, he has applauded Hayʾat Tahrir al-Sham's rule in Idlib and praises its leader Abu Muhammad al-Julani as "a hero God supports." When told Fairuz once recorded an ode to Umayyad Damascus, he downloaded an instrumental-free cut—"the rightful dynasty returns after decades of traitors." He keeps that single track on his phone while rejecting the broader Rahbani catalogue as Baath-tainted.

A paradox lingers: in Amsterdam's liberal ambience, he still catches himself murmuring Rahbani lyrics, including the Sawan chorus, and laughs it off as "old habit—maybe the foreign air loosens the tongue." Even as he denounces secular theatre, fragments of its music surface unbidden, showing how deeply the repertoire penetrated Syrian soundscapes before ideological lines were drawn.

B 5. Coding Memo – Audience-Interview Corpus

Dataset → six semi-structured interviews with Syrian diaspora participants.

Coding builds on the four master categories used in the textual QCA: National Identity and Cultural Unity (NI); Political Messaging and Propaganda (PM); Resistance and Heroism (RH); and Social Structures and Class Dynamics (SC).

B 5.1. Purpose

Trace how audience testimony refines or contests the QCA grid.

Log emergent sub-codes, negative cases, and generational splits that frame Chapter 4.

Provide a reflexive audit trail of analytic choices.

B 5.2. Code Additions & Illustrative Evidence

Master category	New sub-code	Working definition	Indicative excerpt (participant)
NI – National Identity & Cultural Unity	NI-EH Elastic Heritage	Rahbani material redeployed by different generations or ideologies without losing emotional charge.	"The music belongs to us, not to any party; I use it now against the Islamists." – Umm Salim
	NI-MP Mythic Pragmatism	Listeners accept—or even celebrate—historical inaccuracy when it delivers affective payoff.	"Poetry makes facts breathe; who cares if King Malik really served Rome?" – Khaled
PM – Political Messaging & Propaganda	PM-PF Propaganda Fatigue	Over-repetition drains slogans of meaning and seeds later scepticism or dissent.	"Endless 'Long Live!' drills were the noise that pushed me into activism." – Ayman
	PM-SR Selective Rejection	Islamist listeners denounce secular art as haram yet salvage fragments that bolster their worldview.	"Arabism without tawhid is another idol… but that mountain chorus is pure nasheed." – Abu Seif
RH – Resistance & Heroism	RH-FFD Female-Fronted Defiance	Women protagonists or singers interpreted as loci of anti-patriarchal or anti-colonial resistance.	"Fairuz shouting 'Petra Will Not Kneel' gives me a feminist rush." – Leila
SC – Social Structures & Class Dynamics	SC-GE Gendered Extraction	National myths celebrated on stage are underwritten by women's unpaid labour or sacrifice.	"The loom scene shows who bankrolls male glory—women weaving the shroud." – Leila
	SC-CS Corruption Satire	Comic interludes expose structural graft or class cynicism, teaching civic doubt.	"Shibli's 'steal bigger' line was my first economics lesson." – Khaled

B 5.3 Cross-Participant Patterns

Symbolic capital travels. Every informant retains at least one Rahbani hook yet rekeys it to contemporary politics—from Druze civic pride (Umm Salim) to jihadist validation (Abu Seif).

Gender cuts ideology. Three participants celebrate female-led scenes; even Abu Seif salvages Fairuz's Umayyad ode once it aligns with a caliphate narrative.

Repetition ⇒ critique. School drills, checkpoint loudspeakers and YouTube loops converted initial awe into fatigue, then dissent (Ayman, Rana).

Humour as a gateway to doubt. Satirical barbs—the grocer joke, moustache parade, gambler quips—are cited as the moment listeners first questioned authority.

B 5.4. Participant-by-Sub-Code Interview Coding Matrix

Participant ID	**NI-EH: Elastic Heritage)**	**NI-MP: (Mythic Pragmatism)**	**PM-PF: (Propaganda Fatigue)**	**PM-SR: (Selective Rejection)**	**RH-FFD: (Female-Front Defiance)**	**SC-GE: (Gendered Extraction)**	**SC-CS: (Corruption Satire)**	**Illustrative excerpt (1-line)**
P1 "Umm Salim"	X				X			"The music belongs to *us*, not any party."
P2 "Khaled"		X					X	"Shibli's 'steal bigger' line was my first econ class."
P3 "Rana"			X				X	"Breaking-news banners proved patriotism was for sale."
P4 "Ayman"			X					"Endless *Long Live!* drills were the noise of activism."
P5 "Leila"					X	X		"A woman's cry can crack an empire's façade."
P6 "Abu Seif"	X			X				"Arabism without tawhid is an idol… but that chorus is nasheed."
Total voices activating code	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	

B 5.5. Tensions & Negative Cases

Issue	Evidence	Implication
Baath link contested	Five reject regime ownership; Abu Seif deems all state-backed art tainted.	Confirms volatility of symbolic capital.
Nostalgia vs. disenchantment	Elders retain warmth; younger cohort foreground exploitation & satire.	Chapter 4 sequenced by generation.
Mythic licence rarely challenged	Only Leila problematises factual distortion.	Supports textual finding on romanticised history.

B 5.6. Implications for analysis to consider

Master codes remain; new sub-codes guide §§ 4.1–4.4.

The narrative will follow agenerational gradient (nostalgia → ambivalence → redeployment).

Humour scenes serve as a hinge linking textual satire to audience scepticism.

Female agency (RH-FFD & SC-GE) merits foregrounding.

Islamist outlier (PM-SR) illustrates cultural elasticity and illiberal appropriation.

B 6. Integrated Theme Density: Stage Text / Stage Visual analysis results and Audience-Voices (counts only)

Below is a single “partnership” table that lines up the density of my scene-level textual + visual coding with the audience-interview codes

Master code (theoretical lens)	Text hits Sawan + Yaish+ Petra	Visual hits Sawan + Yaish+ Petra	Stage total	Interview refs (coded mentions)	Interview voices (participants, n = 6)	Snapshot commen
NI – National Identity & Cultural Unity	200	17	217	3	3	Stage saturated with supra-sectarian unity; only half the listeners still employ that “elastic heritage,” the rest remix or ironise it.
PM – Political Messaging & Propaganda	121	17	138	3	3	Broadcast ritual is heavy; three interviewees label it “anthem/propaganda fatigue” or selective rejection.
RH – Resistance & Heroism	100	12	112	2	2	Martyr-parent trope dense on stage; one listener re-reads it through feminist defiance, another through jihadist idiom.
SC – Social Class & Gender Dynamics	66	15	81	3	3	Least frequent on stage, yet mid-generation viewers foreground corruption satire and gendered labour.