"Making your home in another bird's nest": Conflict Zones and Conflicting Ideologies in David Greig's Plays

"Başka bir kuşun yuvasına ev kurmak": David Greig'in Oyunlarında Çatışma Bölgeleri ve Çatışan İdeolojiler

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Abstract
Many important events such as the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the Gulf War, 9/11, the global hunt for "tyrants" in the Middle-East and the increasing war on terrorism took place at the turn of the twentieth century, that has, in turn, changed our perception of the world. Alongside technological advancements and globalization, the world is now changing faster than ever before, unions are dissolving, boarders are changing, boundaries are expanding and providing greater mobility and interaction as well as more opportunities to "trespass" into each other's spaces by force, or out of mere necessity. Many of David Greig's plays set in conflict zones, focus on significant or breaking points in history, in which characters with different cultural, religious, social backgrounds experience a "clash" of ideologies. In this respect, this paper aims to discuss topics such as conflict, identity politics, war, military intervention, violence, segregation in Greig's plays, with special emphasis on *Europe* (1994), *Ramallah* (2004), *The American Pilot* (2005)*, Damascus* (2007)*,* and *Dunsinane* (2010), which are set roughly in Europe, the Middle East, and the Scottish Highlands.
Keywords: David Greig, *Europe*, *Ramallah*, *The American Pilot*, *Damascus*.

Öz
Yüzyıl dönümünde, Sovyetler Birliği ve Yugoslavya'nın dağılması, Körfez Savaşı, 9/11, terörizme karşı açılan savaş ve Ortadoğu'da yapılan müdahaleler gibi önemli olaylar dünyayı algılama şeklimizi değiştirmiştir. Teknolojik gelişmeler ve küreselleşme ile birlikte veya sonucu olarak, var olan birlikler dağılmakta, sınır tanımları değişmekte ve bu durum, hem hareketliliği ve etkileşimi hem de zor kullanarak veya ihtiyaçtan dolayı uzam ihlalini doğurmaktadır. David Greig'in dünya tarihindeki önemli tarihi olaylara veya "kırılma" noktalarına odaklanan bazı oyunlarının çatışma bölgelerinde geçtiği görülmektedir. Söz konusu oyunlar, farklı dini, ideolojik, kültürel geçmişleri olan ve farklı "idelojileri" temsil eden karakterleri bir araya getirerek çatışma, savaş, şiddet, kimlik politikaları, ayrımcılık vb. konuları ele almaktadır. Bu çalışmada Greig'in oyunlarıyla ilgili söz konusu konular bağlamında genel bir değerlendirme sunduktan sonra, Avrupa, Doğu/Ortadoğu ve Kuzey İskoçya'da çatışma bölgelerinde geçen *Europe* (Avrupa, 1994), *Ramallah* (Ramallah, 2004), *The American Pilot* (Amerikalı Pilot, 2005), *Damascus* (Şam, 2007) ve *Dunsinane* (Dunsinane, 2010) ele alınacaktır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: David Greig, Europe, Ramallah, The American Pilot, Damascus.

CUJHSS, June 2020; 14/1: 34-50.
 ISSN 1309-6761 Printed in Ankara
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Many important events such as the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the Gulf War, 9/11, the global hunt for "tyrants" in the Middle-East and the increasing war on terror took place at the turn of the twentieth century, that has, in turn, changed our perception of the world. Together with, or as a result of technological advancements and globalization, the world is now changing faster than ever before[1], unions are dissolving, boarders are changing, boundaries are expanding and providing greater mobility and interaction as well as more opportunities for contact and means to "trespass" into each other's spaces by force, or out of necessity. This has led to the questioning and re-evaluation of concepts such as national identity, belonging, and what is to be termed as the "other".

Many of David Greig's plays that focus on significant or breaking points in history represent a world on the verge of modernity, re-defined geographical borders, uncertain territories, changing economic trends, all of which are, more or less, linked to globalisation. In this respect, some of his plays such as *The Speculator* (1999) deals with the Scottish banker John Law and the global network of financial transactions, *The Cosmonaut's Last Message to the Woman he once loved in the Former Soviet Union* (1999) with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, *Victoria* (2000) with modernization in Scotland, *Lesson of Dr. Korczak's Example* (2001) with the Holocaust, *Dunsinane* (2010) with the Anglo-Scottish union, *Outlying Islands* (2002) with the World Wars and environmental politics. Furthermore, the increasing opportunities for contact made possible by globalization, also lead to a kind of "clash" between different cultures and identities. Such encounters take place between characters belonging to different national, ethnic, religious and social groups in conflict zones such as the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Palestine, or the Scottish Highlands. No matter where Greig's plays are set, his plays generally question the concept of home, war, conflict, violence, abuse, migration, segregation, racism, and identity. In *Outlying Islands*,[2] set in the summer of 1939 just before World War II, two Cambridge ornithologists are sent by the Ministry of Defence to make an inventory of all the "natural contents" on an island in the North Atlantic. It is later discovered that the ministry is planning to use the island for anthrax testing. In the play, Robert expresses man's capacity for violence by comparing them to birds:

> Robert: It's one of the most interesting questions of all.
> War.
> Is it natural?
> Two men fight, two birds fight, that's natural enough.

[1] See Jan Aart Scholte. *Globalization: a critical introduction*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

[2] For details about the Turkish production of *Outlying Islands*. See Sıla Şenlen Güvenç. "Ne Kadar Uzaksa Ada, O Kadar Kuvvetlidir Çekim Gücü: Ölü Aktörler-David Greig'in "Uzak Adalar"ı. *Tiyatro Tiyatro Dergisi*. 269 (March 2015). 18-20.

> But do you ever see a thousand or a million birds flock together to attack a million others?
> Birds kill, but you never see them massacre.
> War and God.
> Perhaps they are peculiarly human inventions. (Greig 2010a, 159)

Images of war, conflict and violence are always present, even in a play about Casanova. In Suspect Culture's[3] *Casanova* (2001), following the travels of an artist and sexual adventurer curating his final exhibition composed of items belonging to his former "international" lovers, war appears in relation to Beirut. According to the story Mrs. Tennant relates about Casanova's sexual experience with a Lebanese Waitress, a "war zone" is also "an erogenous zone":

> He [Casanova] was in Beirut, one day he was drinking at the Commodore Hotel with some war correspondents. Suddenly a car bomb exploded outside four floors. The newspapermen ran down to get the story. He saw the waitress standing by the shattered window looking down. They were taking bodies from the car. The bar was empty. He stood behind the waitress, put his hand on her hip. She didn't resist his touch. He lifted her skirt. She continued to stare at the blood on the tarmac. Without turning her head she moved her body. Just slightly, into him. The smell of petrol. He never saw the woman's face. He knew that a war zone is also an erogenous zone. (Greig 2001, 30)

Casanova also recalls seducing the cabinet maker's wife at an art gallery during her visit to Europe in order to see "the sites of massacres and church burnings" (Greig 2001, 67). In *Yellow Moon: The Ballad of Leila and Lee,* Leila Suleiman is a Muslim migrant from Damascus, whose family came to Scotland in the 1990s as "refugees from some sort of war":

> Leila Suleiman doesn't say much. […]
> Most people just assume she's quite because she's a Muslim.
> The way she dresses is Muslim, isn't it?
> Maybe Muslim girls aren't allowed to speak. (Greig 2006, 5)

The character Jack in the short play *Fragile* – written in response to the public spending cuts announced by the coalition government in October 2010 – wishes to protest the cuts in the Mental Healthcare Services by setting himself on fire like Mohamed Bouazizi – whose suicide triggered the Tunisian Revolution (Greig 2011, 60). Although topics relating to conflict appear in a majority of Greig's plays, they are addressed in more detail in plays set in conflict zones. In this respect, the aim of this paper is to examine five of Greig's plays, namely, *Europe*, *Ramallah*, *The American Pilot Damascus* and *Dunsinane*, which are roughly set in conflict zones in Europe, the Middle East, and the Scottish Highlands. It will be argued that, these plays bringing a set of

[3] Suspect Culture is an experimental theatre company based in Glasgow, which was founded by Graham Eatough and David Greig. See Graham Eatough and Dan Rebellato. *The Suspect Culture Book*. Oberon Books, 2013.

characters from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds in politically fragile territories or conflict zones, are used to comment upon subjects such as the idea of "Europe" and ethnic cleansing, the Middle-East, post 9/11 war on terror, the politics of invasion, military intervention in the Middle East by the West, identity politics, and democracy. Thus, the main focus will not be on cultural exchange, but rather on the clash between characters and their ideologies.

Conflict zones appear as early as *Europe*, David Greig's first published play, in which the idea of Old-New Europe and identity is discussed through a railway station that is no longer in use. It is situated in a border town in a middle-European state, possibly in the former Yugoslavia, that has become so "insignificant" that express trains do not even bother to stop there. The express train, which serves as a metaphor for globalization, questions what "Europe" is, in relation to the changing borders and breakup of unions as well as to Scotland's wish to be part of Europe.

The inspiration for *Europe* came on a train journey between Edinburgh and Dundee[4] and from "the story of forty Bosnian refugees trapped on a bus in a Slovenian border town in 1992, whom the British government, despite guaranteed upkeep from a charity, refused entry on the grounds they were 'economic migrants'" (Cramer 2011, 173). The play draws on the inner-ethnic wars of the former Yugoslavia to question what "being European" means at the turn of the century, and the difficulty in formulating their identity in an atmosphere of political and territorial change. The central "identity" that is examined in the play is that of Europe or whom the term "European" refers to. This point is emphasized through two extracts at the very beginning of the play. In *The Other Heading* (1992) Derrida questions what "Europe" is: "Something unique is afoot in Europe, in what is still called 'Europe' even if we longer know very well what or who goes by this name" (in Greig 2013, 3). Again, in W. H. Auden's poem "Refugee Blues" (1939) a Jewish refugee living in New York addresses his lover about not being welcomed there: "But where shall we go to today my dear?/But where shall we go to today?" (in Greig 2013, 3). These extracts seem to be drawing a parallel between the genocide of the Jews and the Bosnians.

[4] In fact, Greig's inspiration for writing the play came to him on a train journey in Scotland: The play's very first inspiration came in Scotland. I was on a train between Edinburgh and Dundee. This trainline passes through a number of former coal and industrial towns in Fife like Cowdenbeath and Cardenden. These towns were brutally treated in the miner's strike of the 1980's and never recovered. They are also among the only former communist voting areas in Scotland. In particular the express train passes through a town called Burntisland without stopping. It goes so fast you can't read the station name. I suddenly wondered about this sense of living somewhere that the express trains don't stop. The thundering through of a fast, important train. The idea that you might be in a place that was left behind. Simply put, the play should be called Scotland. It's really as much about Scotland's desire to be part of Europe as it is about anywhere else! (in Şenlen Güvenç, 1 September, 2018)

The "status" of the border town in *Europe*, as well as some of the characters, is not static. Their geographical position has changed throughout history, from being on one side of the border to the other (Greig 2013, 5-6), which is also reflected on its architecture: "*The station's architecture bears witness to the past century's methods of government. Hapsburg, Nazi, and Stalinist forms have created a hybrid which has neither the romantic dusting of history nor the gloss of modernity*" (Greig 2013, 7). Two refugees Sava and Katia – father and daughter – who have "been blown around from place to place for a long time" (Greig 2013, 19) come to the station in order to seek refuge from the war. According to İnan, the references in the play portray the state of the former Yugoslavia during the Second World War:

> One is clearly reminded of the state of former Yugoslavia during World War II when German, Italian, Hungarian forces attacked the country and the independent state of Croatia was established as a Nazi satellite state, ruled by fascist militia. The Croatian Ustase murdered 500,000 people, and 250,000 people were expelled. Sava and Katia represent the people who were left homeless and forced to leave their hometowns at that time. Former Yugoslavia has been a place of unrest with various ethnic violence and an economic crisis in 1989, which resulted in the laying off of 600,000 people (represented by Berlin, Horse and Billy in the play). Social programmes had collapsed, creating an atmosphere of social despair and hopelessness within the population. (İnan 2010, 69)

As pointed above, in connection to World War II, they represent the people who were forced to leave their hometown due to the Croatian Ustase. In the context of current history, they appear to be Muslim Europeans who have fled from the Bosnian War. Although it is not clear through their names or stage directions, these two characters are Muslims. As Greig has stated, however, it is their sudden loss of European identity rather than religious status that is highlighted in the play:

> Two things… one I wanted "Everyman" names. But also, in my mind, Katia and Sava are from somewhere in Bosnia. They are, until very recently, secular European. Muslim only in the most surface sense. The way that I am a Christian. In essence they were Yugoslav, European, secular left wing… until the war forced them into a box. (in Şenlen Güvenç, 1 September 2018)

These "economic migrants" are given different receptions by the locals ranging from empathy to hatred. The stationmaster Fret, who believes in the idea of Old Europe, does not want refugees in "his" station because it is not a "hostel or a "gypsy encampment" (Greig 2013, 15). When Fret approaches Katia and Sava in this respect, Sava explains that they are there not out of choice but necessity:

> Sava: I'm sorry if things are bad for you just now but things are bad where we come from as well. We've been blown around from place to place for a long time and this is where we've come to rest. For now. The

> fault is neither yours nor ours but belongs to the random chaotic winds of current events. (Greig 2013, 19)

There are two views presented about Europe, one as civilized, and the other – a site for bloodsheds, massacres etc. Sava advocates his belief in Old civilized Europe:

> Katia, we're not in some savage country on the other side of the world. Look around you, look at the architecture. Listen to the sounds from the street. You can smell the forest. We're a long way from home but we're still in Europe. We'll be looked after. Our situation will be understood. (Greig 2013, 29)

On the other hand, Katia, who has been assaulted in the war holds a much darker view of Europe:

> Europe. Snipers on the rooftops, mortars in the suburbs and you said: "This is Europe...we must stay in Europe." When the hospitals were left with nothing but alcohol and dirty bandages. I warned you and you still said "this is Europe. Honesty will prevail, sense will win, this war is an aberration...a tear in the fabric. In time it'll be sewn up again and things will look as good as new". (Greig 2013, 30)

Furthermore, it is clear that for Katia – whose country is currently non-existent – national identity is problematic. This is clearly portrayed in her dialogue with Adele:

> Adele: Where do you come from?
> Katia: Does it matter?
> Adele: I'm only asking.
> Katia: I'm not sure.
> Adele: Not sure?
> Katia: Like I said. I'm not sure.
> Adele: But. You must know. Everyone knows where they come from.
> Katia: The place I came from isn't there anymore. It disappeared.
> Adele: A place can't just disappear.
> Katia: Its name was taken off the maps and signposts. I couldn't find it anywhere (Greig 2013, 41)

Katia, who lacks a "home" feels Adele is lucky to have one while Adele, who has been stuck in a small town all her life "by accident," wants to escape and explore Europe with Katia. In Adele's words, they are both exiles: "you've lost your home and I've never had one. So we're both exiles" (Greig 2013, 67).

The play enforces how conflict can provoke fascism, like a pack of wolves that make raids on the town at night. Although Sava and Fret's mutual interest in trains and old civilized Europe brings them together to protest the closure of the station, a group of furnacemen laid off due to technological advancements blame foreigners for their condition (especially Berlin and Horse). They believe

that the Left have given all the jobs to "the Somalis and the Ethiopians," to the "Jews and the gyppos. The blacks and the browns," the "polluters of the nation" (Greig 2013, 59-60). Horse writes "foreigners out!" at the bus stop while Berlin, frustrated about losing his job, goes to do "a bit of tidying up" on behalf of the "community" (Greig 2013, 69). He gives Fret a petition to prevent their station from being turned into a hostel for the homeless and gypsy prostitutes, and give Sava a beating. Later they burn the station, causing the death of Fret and Sava. At the end of the play, Adele and Katia (after getting papers from Morocco, an entrepreneur or "smuggler" representing global trade, in exchange for sex) leave town on an express train calling out the names of European cities, while Berlin recalls how news about the fire led to the "recognition" of their town across Europe: "they said the name of our town, politicians and sociologists all across the continent said its name." The last line of the play uttered by Berlin, brings the play back to the beginning: "They know that, in our own way, we're also Europe" (Greig 2013, 89-90).

The next three plays, *Ramallah, The American Pilot* and *Damascus* are set in conflict zones in the East or Middle-East. Greig's short play *Ramallah*, focuses on Palestine. Daniel who has returned from Ramallah sits with his wife, drinking wine and feta cheese that he has brought back from Ramallah. During their short dialogue, he mentions going to a children's theatre company located on the front line:

> Daniel: One day we went to visit a children's theatre company. They had built their own theatre, converted it from a garage or something. They put on shows for children there. But unfortunately they built their theatre opposite a settlement so now it's on the front line. Every night there's shooting back and forth. I saw it. The place is covered in bullet holes. And then one night it was hit by a tank shell. There was a show going on at the time. They told us how they had to evacuate the children in small groups with the tank firing away. You'd think it was a bit much – firing a tank shell at a children's theatre – you'd think they wouldn't do that. But I saw the place where the shell knocked through the wall.
> *something of a pause*
> Anyway they performed a show, especially for us, in the rubble of their theatre. (Greig 2010c, 109)

He watches the show while his "palms" sweat, wanting to get "the fuck out" to avoid dying. When his wife questions him about why he put himself at such a risk by attending the show, Daniel reacts:

> Daniel: Jesus. These people are getting the shit kicked out of them every fucking day. And they have to carry on. I'm a tourist. I can go home. Right now Helen. Right at this very moment they are afraid. Their kids are afraid. The least I can do is piss myself for half an hour on their behalf. Get a flavour of things. (Greig 2010c, 110)

The play ends with Daniel talking about the end of his journey, returning home while thinking about how lucky they are:

> Daniel: I realised – you realise – one realises…
> How lucky one is – I realised how lucky I am –
> We are.
> We are. (Greig 2010c, 111)

The short play, above anything else, emphasized how far removed the West is from the conflict and suffering experienced in conflict zones of the Middle-East. While Daniel has the luxury of experiencing the East and returning to the safety of his home and family with things he picked up from Palestine, the conflict continues for people living there.

Similar to *Ramallah*, *The American Pilot* also focuses on a conflict zone in the East or the Middle-East. The play is set in a "country that has been mired in civil war and conflict for many years" (Greig 2010a, 345), possibly Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq etc.[5] According to Wallace, Greig's play has been triggered by the ongoing politics especially after September 2011 and the War on Terror:

> After September 2001, world politics swerved towards a heightened awareness of terrorism and the threats posed to the West by the East specifically in the shape of Islamic fundamentalism. Operation Enduring Freedom, begun in October 2001, saw the invasion of Afghanistan by an alliance of Western states with the aim of crushing the terrorist group al-Qaeda, and overthrowing the Taliban regime that protected them. it was the beginning of a complex and ongoing set of conflicts now habitually labelled the War on Terror. (Wallace 2013, 139)

Furthermore, in an interview with Peter Billingham, Greig indicated that The American Pilot "is in a response to the Iraq war which had not yet begun, but was patently on the horizon (Wallace 2013, 140).

The American Pilot traces the events that take place following the discovery of an American pilot by a farmer. Over three days, the people of the village such as the Farmer, the Translator, the Captain, the Trader, Evie, and Sarah discuss what to do with the pilot who represents America, imperialism, and military intervention. The farmer and his wife Sarah want to get rid of him, his daughter Evie believes he is there to save them, the Trader wants to profit from the situation by letting the Americans know where he is, while for the Translator

[5] In Mark Fisher's interview with David Greig, he states the following about *The American Pilot*: "People can read The American Pilot how they like of course but for me it's not Europe but Asia. I've always checked it against the Panjshir Valley in Afghanistan. Having said that, quite a lot of people think it's set in the Balkans. It's not clear. Fisher, Mark. "Interview: Mark Fisher & David Greig: Suspect Cultures & Home Truths". Ed. Anja Müller and Clare Wallace. *Cosmotopia: Transnational Identities in David Greig's Theatre*. Litteraria Pragensia Books, 2011. 4-32. 21.

and the Captain, who have lost their loved ones due to an American missile, he is merely the image of American imperialism that support the dictatorship that they are fighting against. In the process, the American pilot, Jason Reinhardt, constantly reminds them about their terrible fate if he is killed: "America wants to help you. America wants your freedom. [...] If they kill me – bombs come here. If they don't kill me – money comes." (Greig 2010a, 395); "If you harm me. The United States will hunt you down and kill you" (Greig 2010a, 365); "If you harm me you will be hunted down and brought to justice" (Greig 2010a, 375).

It is first the Trader who comes to have a look at the pilot, and then the Captain – the authority in that district – and the Translator (Matthew) follow. According to the Captain, everything might have been different if they had met under different circumstances:

> In another world we could have been friends. But he and I were not in another world. We were not, for example, walking together in the streets of Oslo looking for a bar. The American pilot had fallen from the sky into my district. He was my prisoner. I had to decide what to do. (Greig 2010a, 363)

The Translator's father was executed by the regime (supported by America) due to his involvement in politics during the revolution and his bride Belle (who is also the Captain's daughter) has been killed due to an American missile. He is an educated man, who has also lived in America on a scholarship:

> I loved America. America is the most perfect society on earth. You can't deny it. how do you explain it? Almost every day there was a moment when I sat on a bench and wept. Maybe I would have been happier in Moscow. I was a communist then. (Greig 2010a, 393)

Matthew warns the Captain that the Americans will find the pilot. The Captain, however, has enough experience to foresee his terrible end captured by American satellite:

> One day, Matthew, I'm going to be captured by my enemies. A rabble of government conscripts will beat me. I will be trusted up like a chicken, spat at, urinated upon and mutilated. I'll be taken to some field of rubble and weeds. I'll be made to kneel in the dust. I will have the briefest of moments to reconcile myself to God and consider the pointlessness of everything I've fought for. The last sensation I will experience will be the taste of my own broken teeth. That is what will happen to me one day, Matthew. [...] And nothing we can do will make any difference to our fate. (Greig 2010a, 376)

The Translator, angered by the loss of Belle, suggests selling the pilot's head for more than a million dollars to fund their cause, but the Captain rejects the idea on the grounds that he is a "soldier" and not a "terrorist". For the West, however, there are all "terrorists," as indicated by the Translator:

> Captain: Those people are terrorists.

> Translator: We're all terrorists now.
> Captain: I'm a soldier.
> Translator: You no longer have the power to decide what you are. (Greig 2010a, 378)

Although they initially decide to kill the pilot and put the footage on the media to "enumerate" America's guilt's (Greig 2010a, 403), Evie convinces the Captain to change his mind:

> America is on our side.
> He told me this.
> America is watching us.
> America sees us, Captain, just as surely as if we were on television.
> All the attacks
> All the awfulness.
> America has seen it.
> All the hunger.
> All the fighting and stealing.
> America has seen it.
> All the hunger.
> All the fighting and stealing.
> America has seen it.
> He told me this.
> We had no hope left.
> We were full of dust and sorrow.
> We were lost but America sent him to tell us, we don't have to be alone any more.
> We can save ourselves.
> We can be found.
> We can be American. (Greig 2010a, 406)

She claims that America is watching and testing them. While the Translator is against the idea, the Captain feels that footage of a rescued pilot with a girl will be effective in making headlines and delivering their message. So, instead of killing him, they decide on a television message in which Evie will tell the world what they are fighting for.

When the Translator goes to untie him in order to get him ready for the video, the American Pilot asks for a "SAT phone or something". The Translator, angered by the turn of events as well as the devastating effect that the American intervention and the death of their president had on his country, replies:

> Do you see me? Look with eyes. I am wearing bad clothes. I am a civilised human being. In nineteen eighty there was poetry in this country, and jasmine trees and I am training to be a teacher. I am teaching Marxism-Leninism to the children. I am in a village telling

> people build an irrigation system. You kill my president. You don't want any more Marxism-Leninism. I want my country. I want walk in my own shoes. You want sell me cigarettes. You want me to bring you a telephone. […] You bring telephone to me. (Greig 2010a, 411)

On the other hand, the Trader who has "loyalty […] to no country" (Greig 2010a, 411-12), however, notifies the Americans through his contact in Dubai for money, and helicopters come and wipe out the whole village:

> *The Pilot is raised up on the winch. Taking Evie with him.*
> Farmer: Stop. Please. Stop.
> *He runs towards the Soldiers.*
> Soldier 3: Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck.
> *Soldier 3 sprays gunfire at the Farmer and the Trader and kills them both.*
> *The Captain, the Translator and the Captain's men storm into the shed.*
> Captain: Evie!
> *They fire at the Americans. The Americans fire back.*
> *The last American throws down a grenade.*
> *The Captain and the Translator are both killed in the explosion.*
> *The American Soldiers leave.*
> *The Mother calls for Evie.*
> *The Mother sees the bodies.*
> *The bombing continues.*
> *The gunfire continues.*
> *The End.* (Greig 2010a, 418)

While the pilot is raised up on the winch with Evie, her mother is the only person remaining among the dead while the bombing continues.

This country that has been "mired in civil war and conflict for many years" (Greig 2010a, 1), brings together civilians living in this conflict zone, those fighting the dictatorship and an American Pilot, who represents American imperialism supporting the dictatorship. While the Pilot establishes a friendly relationship with the farmer's family, he constantly threatens those fighting the dictatorship through variations of "If you hurt/kill me, you will be killed/hunted down by the United States". On the other hand, the Translator dislikes him for what he represents, and even confesses that it made him feel better to stab his leg. In the end, in accordance with the American Pilot's expectations, the whole village is wiped out by the Americans. Thus, the play reinforces the point made by the Translator earlier about not having a say about their identity: "We're all terrorists now".

Similar to *The American Pilot, Damascus* also challenges western notions about the Middle East. Unlike *The American Pilot*, however, the stage directions clearly indicate that the play takes place in Syria. The play is set at "moment in history which is characterised by a political and ideological tension between the Western and Arab world" (Heinen, in Müller & Wallace 2011, 180). According to Greig, it is a "by-product of the artistic exchange" Greig had with

"young theatre makers in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Palestine, since 2000" (Greig 2007, 3). In an interview with Charlotte Higgins, Greig has stated that the play set in 2006, should not be seen as "a comment on the specifics of the present day," but nevertheless, "it hopes to challenge received western notions about the Arabic world." (*The Guardian*, 16 Feb 2009)

Paul, a Scotsman selling English language textbooks comes to Damascus to meet Muna and Wasim, Syrian educators in a local college, to discuss the textbook *Middleton Road*. This leads to an intercultural encounter between the English and the Arabic world, in which linguistic, cultural and political differences emerge (Şenlen Güvenç, 29 March 2016). The dominant atmosphere in the play is that of conflict. Almost all of the scenes in *Damascus* contain the stage direction "The television shows news images of the current situation" (Greig 2007, 7) in the lobby of the hotel. On arrival, Paul, frustrated to be in Damascus on Valentine's Day, complains to his boss on the phone:

> Why do I have to come to a war zone?
> It is a war zone.
> It's not ridiculous.
> Iraq and Gaza – the Gaza thing, and Iran and… (Greig 2007, 10)

Furthermore, the possibility of the closure of the airport due to the fighting in Beirut is emphasized and it is closed due to a bomb later on.

The characters Muna, Wasim and Paul negotiate their differences through the textbook with the title of *Middleton Road.* Muna wants certain alterations to make it suitable for their cultural and political understanding, and acceptable to the board. An example of this is an illustration of a girl wearing a full niqab. Paul perceives it is an issue of faith while Muna defines it as an issue of patriarchy:

> when I grew up in Beirut my mother dressed as she pleased. She wore the latest Paris fashions. The women in Cairo, in all the big cities in Egypt, in Palestine, in Iraq could dress as they pleased. In the seventies women were finally making a progress, and now all those places they are being threatened. In Iran, in Egypt even, there can be problems for being uncovered. Iraq – which used to be very free for women – now they are being killed for even being teachers or so on. (Greig 2007, 43)

Paul claims that their government is a "dictatorship" that is "censoring free expression" while Muna explains that her "government is at war". She further outlines the context in which they are living in: "Our country is surrounded by war in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon...Israel occupies our land. America calls us evil. We have many minorities here and we all live in peace and stability." (Greig 2007, 48). Paul says that he might be able to make certain changes, but that "democracy" is central. This leads to a discussion about "democracy":

> Paul: I could accommodate some of the changes you're asking for, but democracy is central to –

> Muna: Blessed democracy. Holy democracy:
> *Beat*
> Paul: What's wrong with democracy?
> Muna: your democracy is my problem.
> Paul: How do you make that out?
> Muna: Your democracy invaded Iraq. (Greig 2007, 49)

Muna finds it ridiculous that after all they have done, the West still feels entitled to talk about democracy, and professors from the UK come to lecture them on human rights:

> This year in Damascus, your embassy hosted a conference on human rights. [...]Professors from the UK came here to Damascus to talk to us about human rights! Ridiculous [...] After Balfour – after Sykes-Picot – after Mossadeq – after Suez – and always always support for Israel – after Guantanamo – after Iraq ... After all this *you* are coming here to lecture *us* about human rights.
> Everything is your fault. (Greig 2007, 49-50)

Through her reaction, Muna is pointing to the hypocrisy in the West that creates a false-image of standing for "liberty" and "democracy". This is a point that has also been emphasized earlier in Greig's *Europe*.

Paul and Wasim do not seem to hit it off, particularly due to Wasim's biased approach towards him. Paul cannot understand him because he speaks French and Arabic. On first encounter, Wasim tells him that his grandfather "killed an English soldier in Jerusalem during the British Mandate and asks him whether his grandfather killed any Arabs in Iraq, to which Paul replies that it was "un grand erreuré [a great error]" (Greig 2007, 21). During poetry night, Wasim makes a toast "I propose the Englishman finally fucks off and leaves us alone." (Greig 2007, 61) and later has a dispute with Paul:

> Wasim: You know nothing about the country I live in. You know nothing about how it has been formed. […]
> There is no such thing as freedom of speech. What you are defending is simply your English power to describe the status quo in whatever way you like. […]
> Nothing has brought more blood to this regime than Anglo-Saxon idealism. You make your accommodations with your regime and I will make my accommodations with mine. (Greig 2007, 66)

By the end of the play, Paul has changed his perception of Damascus. While calling it a "war zone" on first arrival, he later calls his wife, after getting drunk with Zakaria and two American girls the night before, and tells her that they should bring the kids, "It's not a war zone./It's not the way it's usually described." (Greig 2007, 112) Nevertheless, the textbook is not presented in the meeting and will not be taught at Syrian universities and everything including the relationship between Muna and Paul remain unsettled. Thus, the play conveys the complexity of the situation in the Middle East as well as

portraying their reaction to the false self-image created by the West as "protectors of democracy".

Military intervention with respect to Afghanistan and Iraq is also taken up in Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010) set in the Scottish Highlands. Whether the play is set in Europe or Scotland, Greig uses "doubling"[6] in his plays. The play which is a sequel to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* focuses on the English intervention in Scotland before the unification of Britain, taking Dunsinane and eliminating the "tyrant" (Macbeth). On a national level, it comments on the Anglo-Scottish union while on an international level[7], the play alludes to contemporary zones of conflict in the Middle East, and criticizes any kind of military intervention, especially by Britain and the United States to the Middle-East on false claims such as fighting a war against terror, and overthrowing dictators, or tyrants (Şenlen Güvenç, 2014). In fact, originally the play was about the Iraq and Afghanistan:

> The play's origins weren't in Scotland but around 3,500 miles away in the Middle East. "It was all about Iraq, and then Afghanistan. I saw a production of *Macbeth* around the time Saddam's statue had been pulled down in 2003, and I thought the interesting thing was not the toppling but what happens afterwards."
> Malcolm as Hamad Karzai? Siward as Blair? Greig grins. "The most obvious thing about Tony Blair was that he thought he was doing the right thing. Evil so often comes from the desire to do good." (Greig in Dickson, 24 January 2015)

In the play, the English army commanded by Siward arrive to Scotland, take Dunsinane castle and the "tyrant [Macbeth]" is killed (he is never named in the play). On his arrival, Siward believes that the Scots will welcome Malcolm – their new king – for getting rid of the tyrant: "We'll set a new king in Dunsinane and then summer will come and then a harvest and by next Spring it'll be as if there never was a fight here" (Greig 2010b, 24). However, he soon finds out that he has been misled by Malcolm: Gruach (Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play), the queen, is still alive and supported by the Morays, her son (Lulach) who is also the heir to the throne is alive and has escaped, and the chiefs are not particularly inclined to pledge their allegiance to Malcolm:

> You told me the tyrant had lost the support of the chiefs and he had no son and his queen had died of madness and so there would be no resistance to you […] and general acceptance of your rule and the

[6] Rebellato has also indicated that no-matter where they are set, – Europe, the Balkans, or the Middle East, one feels that Greig's plays are almost always juxtaposed with Scotland, a nation in itself and also an adjunct to various larger national and supranational entities such as England, Europe, the West, the North. (in Greig 2009, 2013, x).

[7] See Sıla Şenlen Güvenç. "[You Can't Kill Me]:Scottish Identity and Anglo-Scottish Union in David Greig's *Dunsinane*". *Scottish Literary Review* vol. 6, no. 2, 2014, pp. 93-113.

> chance to establish a new and peaceful order. That's what you said." (Greig 2010b, 27-28)

Malcolm's address to the clan chiefs later on portrays that he is very much like a tyrant himself:

> You're all thieves. Thieves and the sons of thieves. Mothered by whores. […] If you make me king I promise you one thing only – total honesty. In that spirit I offer you the following. I will govern entirely in the interests of me…I will periodically and arbitrarily commit acts of violence against some or other of you – in order that I can maintain a more general order in the country. I will not dispose my mind to the improvement of the country or to the conditions of its ordinary people. I will not improve trade. I will maintain an army only in order to submit you to my will. As far as foreign powers are concerned I will submit to any humiliation in order to keep the friendship of England. (Greig 2010b, 80)

Siward, who describes his role in Scotland as building "a new kingdom-not to settle old grudges" (Greig 2010b, 33) asks Gruach to renounce her son's claim, but she insists that her son is King and warns him not to interfere in some "other man's land":

> If I were you I would not be here. If I were you I would be at home guarding my own land. Not fighting on behalf of some other man's land. A man too weak and corrupt to hold his own land himself. (Greig 2010b, 34)

In this respect, Gruach constantly defines the English army as intruders, a cuckoo bird "making its home in another bird's nest" (Greig 2010b, 48) and interfering in matters that does not concern them, which is applicable to both Scotland and the Middle-East.

A focal point in the play is that Scotland is a separate nation – with its own distinct geography, people, language, and administration – which England (Westminster) can never fully understand or control. This is especially reflected through the dialogues and relationship between Siward and Gruach [representing England and Scotland]. While Siward describes her as "captivating," she defines herself as "captive" (Greig 2010b, 69). On another occasion, Siward protests "Who is the conqueror here?" when Gruach deliberately teaches Siward a wrong word in Gaelic (No for Yes) and her women laugh at him, to which she replies:

> Gruagh: Oh you're the conqueror.
> Siward: Am I?
> Gruach: You invaded my country.
> With your powerful army.
> You took it.
> Laid waste my land.
> Burned.
> Raped.

> And now I'm your prisoner.
> To do with as you will. (Greig 2010b, 77)

Although Siward and Gruach become intimate, he suggests a marriage between Malcolm and the former queen to unite the two great houses in Scotland, Albas and the Morays. Although Gruach initially appears to accept, she escapes and this proposed marriage does not take place. Furthermore, her son Lulach is killed by Siward to eliminate any kind of hope for the throne. The failed romantic liaison (union) between Siward (England) and Gruach (Scotland) is employed to comment on the Anglo-Scottish Union. The play ends in winter, with Gruach holding Lulach's baby. She makes it very clear that the conflict between England and Scotland will never end: "For as long as I reign I'll torment you and when I die I'll leave instructions in my will to every Scottish Queen that comes after me to tell her King to take up arms and torment England again and again until the end of time" (Greig 2010b, 136). Thus, the play about the Anglo-Scottish union, also comments upon the "rhetoric of intervention," and more specifically, the British and American intervention in the Middle-East on the grounds of hunting "tyrants".

In conclusion, David Greig's plays set in conflict zones such as the Middle-East, the Balkans, and Scottish Highlands deal with breaking points in history as well as the aftermath of conflict. Some of the political and cultural conflict between East and West, especially post 9/11 war on terror, and the politics of invasion is traced in plays such as *Ramallah*, *The American Pilot*, *Damascus,* and *Dunsinane* while *Europe* questions the different notions of Old-New Europe and the rising fascism in Europe, especially against refugees. In this respect, *Dunsinane* traces the politics and rhetoric of invasion/military intervention in the name of fighting terror or hunting tyrants. In both *Damascus* and *The American Pilot*, the characters believe that the military intervention by the West has led to the destruction of "modern" life in their country. This view is expressed as the destruction of poetry and the teaching of Marxism-Leninism by the Translator in the *American Pilot* and as miniskirts and fashion by Muna in *Damascus*. Moreover, the characters living in the Middle East reflect their frustration at being identified by the West as tyrants, terrorists or defined as evil without fully understanding their situation. The Captain and the Translator's negative views about America (We are all terrorists) prove to be true when the whole village is destroyed by helicopters, even though they plan to set the pilot free. Also Mona voices the hypocrisy of the West in relation to their understanding of democracy in *Damascus*, a point that is also taken up in the play *Europe* with respect to Europe. Furthermore, *Ramallah* emphasizes how far removed the West is from the conflict and suffering experienced in conflict zones of the Middle-East. Thus, it is evident that David Greig's *Ramallah*, *The American Pilot*, *Damascus,* and *Dunsinane* and *Europe,* bring together characters representing different views and ideologies in conflict zones in order to question notions of the East and West (or Europe) and

discuss related topics such as war, military intervention, conflict, displacement, belonging, democracy, human rights, etc.

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