



University of Tehran press

Research in Contemporary World Literature

http://jor.ut.ac.ir, Email: pajuhesh@ut.ac.ir

p-ISSN : 2588-4131 e-ISSN: 2588 -7092

Liberal Humanism and Zionism: A Reading of *Via Dolorosa* and *Wall* by David Hare

Omid Amani ¹ 0000-0003-3433-0289 Hossein Pirnajmuddin ² 0000-0001-8349-2626

1. Department of Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Malayer University, Malayer, Iran. E-mail: omidamani93@gmail.com

2. Department, of English Faculty of Foreign Languages,, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. E-mail: pirnajmuddin@fgn.ui.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:

Research Article

Article history:

Received: 12 September 2023

Received in revised form: 18 December 2024

Accepted: 23 December 2024

Published online: Spring2025

Keywords:

Via Dolorosa, *Wall*, David Hare, Liberal Humanism, Zionism, Palestine.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The present article attempts to focus on how David Hare, a British liberal playwright, offers the historical and political realities of Palestine and Israel conflicts in two of his plays, *Via Dolorosa* (1998) and *Wall* (2009). These plays, despite their liberal gesture, ultimately align with Zionist narrative that justify Israeli occupation and the marginalization of Palestinians. Initially, it briefly sets forth the historical and cultural context of Zionism and its influence on Western thought and literature, predominantly after World War II. This period witnessed the burgeoning production of artistic and literary works that incorporate the Jewish experience, the Holocaust, and the creation of Israel in 1948. Notwithstanding his claims of objectivity and commitment to human rights, Hare's plays serve to whitewash Israeli occupation. Drawing on the ideas of thinkers such as Edward Said and Ilan Pappé, the authors critique Hare's liberal humanist approach. They argue that Hare's portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is imbued with contradictions and biases. While appearing as documentaries or unbiased narratives, the plays propagate Zionist ideologies by portraying Israel as a victim of historical and ongoing threats, while downplaying the suffering and dispossession of Palestinians. In *Via Dolorosa*, Hare presents his personal reflections after visiting Israel and Palestine, meeting with key figures from both sides. Although the play seems to strive for balance, it gravitates towards a Zionist perspective. While Hare explores the psychological burdens and moral dilemmas of Israelis, the narrative downplays the Palestinian plight, portraying them either as passive victims or violent extremists. Similarly, ten years later, in *Wall*, Hare turns to the construction of the Israeli separation barrier, which he presents as a necessary evil, framing it as a defensive measure against terrorism. Although the play appears to critique the wall, Hare's treatment of the subject ultimately justifies the barrier's existence. The play emphasizes Israeli security concerns and the reduction of terrorist attacks, while the severe impact of the wall on Palestinian lives is treated as an unfortunate but secondary issue. Hare's portrayal of the wall as a necessary reality overlooks the deeper colonial implications of the structure, which functions as a tool of land appropriation and segregation. The authors conclude that Hare's two works are illustrative of a broader trend in Western liberal thought, where humanism is co-opted to justify colonial practices. While presenting themselves as fair and balanced, these narratives perpetuate myths of Israeli victimhood and Palestinian violence, contributing to the ongoing marginalization of Palestinian voices in Western media and culture.

Cite this article: Amani, O. , and Pirnajmuddin, H. "Liberal Humanism and Zionism: A Reading of *Via Dolorosa* and *Wall* by David Hare" *Research in Contemporary World Literature*, 2025, 30 (1), 25-48. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jor.2024.382255.2570>.



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Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jor.2024.382255.2570>.