

An analysis of three community theatre performances created by former Gush Katif settlers following Israel's disengagement from the Gaza-Katif Region in August 2005

By: Varda Blonder, M.A. graduate of the Department of Theatre Arts. Tel Aviv University, The Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts.

Supervised by: Prof. Shulamith Lev-Aladgem, The head of the Department of Theatre Arts. Tel Aviv University, The Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts.

This study focuses upon the political, therapeutic, and artistic processes observed in three community theatre performances. The three performances were created by former Gush Katif settlers, who had been evacuated from their homes following Israel's disengagement from the Gaza-Katif Region in August 2005:

- **The Kissufim Crossing: Five women, one eviction.**
- **The Katif Midrash** [commentary]
- **BaYaar Nirkod** [Let's dance in the forest].

The Israeli disengagement from the Gaza-Katif region was a unique political event, which resulted in a crisis of confidence in the political establishment, and made the Gush Katif settlers feel that they were emotionally and politically betrayed. Because the performances presented in this study sprang from these circumstances, I have named them "therapeutical", i.e. having a combined therapeutic and political value. I examined the specific theatrical manifestations that characterized this type of theater, and the therapeutic processes that were an inseparable part of it.

In analyzing the performances, I used the socio-semiotic model, which aims to decipher the social meanings of representative symbol systems, as well as theories dealing with the political, communal and therapeutic aspects of the theater, also from the drama therapy practice.

The results of the study revealed a gap between the motives that fostered the creation of the works, and the performances' ultimate accomplishment. The performances were created in reaction to the evacuation, and were motivated by an urge to protest, make an impact, and touch the hearts of the public at large. In practice, however, the work on the performances unleashed a process that was mostly internal, through which the artists as well as the evacuee audiences experienced relief and were strengthened. Examination of the connection between rites of passage and the artistic processes of the performances in this study indicated that the process of change also functioned as a rite of passage.

Performances such as the ones presented in this study could be used to examine other political community theater performances born out of politic crisis situations.

Keywords: disengagement, community theatre, 'Place as a source of identity', 'home', the socio-semiotic model, Drama therapy, rite of passage.

Corresponding author: Varda Blonder vardablonder@gmail.com