



Political Sophistry and Logical Fallacies in the Discourse on Israeli occupation: an Analysis of Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children* (2009)

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ABSTRACT:

Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza (2009), ten minutes long in performance, was written by critically acclaimed Caryl Churchill in response to the Israeli army bombings and invasion of the Gaza Strip (Operation Cast Lead) in January 2009. The play was staged at the Royal Court Theatre by nine actors. It focuses on the characters' biases as they recount oral history. Firstly, this study explores Jewish parents' argument through the lens of argumentation theory, focusing on the validity of their arguments' conclusions and premises. Secondly, it identifies and defines the main logical fallacies used to misrepresent unsound arguments. Finally, the study offers a detailed analysis of the play. The discussion is limited to identifying and analyzing logical fallacies in the parents' argument. Churchill warns against a culture of denial that could lead to more violent confrontations in the future. Although the play does not present answers, it provides the audience with a theatrical experience that inspires them to discuss political issues and seek solutions for problematic situations.

Keywords: *Seven Jewish Children, Churchill, Palestinians, Logical Fallacies, Israel, Gaza*

Introduction:

Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza (2009), ten minutes long in performance, was written by Caryl Churchill as a response to Israeli army bombings and invasion of the Gaza Strip (Operation Cast Lead) in January 2009. The attack resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Palestinian adults and children, with 1417 Palestinians killed, including 400 children. Thirteen Israelis were also killed, five by friendly fire. The play was staged at the Royal Court Theatre by nine actors. It attempts to document the history of the occupation over the years, depicting Israeli children as subjects misinformed about Jewish history and drawing attention to the characters' biases when they recount oral history. The play was presented by a Jewish director with a Jewish cast. It was admired by some British critics. However, a number of British Jews claim that the play is anti-Semitic. This study examines the logical fallacies in the discourse of Israeli parents using argumentation and logical fallacies theories.

The play highlights the Israeli military capabilities used against unarmed Palestinians and revolves around what Jewish children should be taught about Jewish history, including the Holocaust, the founding of Israel, the expulsion of Palestinians, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and the Intifada. It questions how honest individuals should be when recounting history and reveals how oral history can be deformed and disfigured. Accompanied by informed discussions, the play aims to educate the public about the background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The play is a critical commentary on Zionist propaganda and provocative Israeli policy that justifies using violence against exposed Palestinians to young generations. Churchill uses monologue as a structure of dramatic representation, bringing the audience's presence into play as an essential part of the discussion that follows the performance. The audience unknowingly becomes jurors and commentators, responsible for raising public awareness of the critical effect of current atrocities against Palestinians.

Seven Jewish Children has received very little critical attention, with only a few published studies. Claudia Maya Prats' thesis, *Ethics and Spectatorship in Debbie Tucker Green's Stoning Mary* (2005) and Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children* (2009) in 2018, examines the role of the audience to respond to the suffering of others. Stef Craps' book chapter, "Holocaust Memory and the Critique of Violence in Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza*" (2014), explores the role of Holocaust memory in Caryl Churchill's play. Sian

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Adishesiah's article, "Political Returns on the Twenty-First Century Stage Caryl Churchill's *Far Away, Drunk Enough to say I Love You?* and *Seven Jewish Children*" (2012), considers the rejuvenation of political theatre in the 21st century, focusing on Churchill's innovative methods of producing new forms of political subjectivity in audiences. Kathryn Leader's article, "'Tell her to be careful.' Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* at The Royal Court Theatre" (2009), presents both textual and non-textual examination of the play.

This paper examines Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children*, focusing on Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It explores how Israeli parents in the play construct Palestinians as an existential threat through logically fallacious arguments aimed at gaining public support. The study's objective is to analyze these logical fallacies. The analysis proceeds in three steps: identification, analysis, and evaluation of fallacies.

The study is structured as follows:

1. **Exploration of Arguments:** It begins by examining the political arguments presented by Israeli parents through the lens of argumentation theory, emphasizing the logical reasoning behind their conclusions and premises.
2. **Identification of Fallacies:** It identifies and defines the main logical fallacies employed by the parents to misrepresent the truth about the occupation. The fallacies include appeal to force, appeal to heaven, ad hominem/name-calling, false dilemma, black-or-white fallacy, either-or fallacy, rationalization, repetition, demonizing the enemy, and inconsistency fallacy.
3. **Evaluation of Fallacies:** It evaluates the impact of these fallacies on the characters' arguments and public opinion.

The study offers a detailed analysis of the play, characters and themes, with a focus on identifying and analyzing fallacious arguments. It seeks to answer the following questions: what do fallacious arguments mean according to argumentation theory? What impact do these logical fallacies have on public opinion? This study is valuable as it promotes critical thinking skills to evaluate and expose the manipulation inherent in political arguments.

Theoretical Background:

Normally, arguments are used to resolve differences of opinion. However, individuals' arguments and logic are sometimes affected by their emotions, leading to errors in reasoning and conflating desirable and probable events. Fallacious arguments are common in daily communication and often go undetected because they are embedded in long conversations. These types of arguments are thoroughly studied in argumentation theory.

Argumentation theory encompasses the arts of debate and persuasion, which originate from logic, dialectic, and rhetoric. Argumentation occurs daily in fields such as law, science, politics, or public debate. An argument is "a set of statements (propositions), made up of three parts, a conclusion, a set of premises, and an inference from the premises to the conclusion" (Walton 2009: 2). Arguments can support or attack other arguments, and the exchange of arguments constitutes argumentation as a communicative activity. Eemeren and Grootendorst consider argumentation studies as a part of "normative pragmatics" (2004: 6). They define argumentation as "a verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint" (2004: 1). According to this definition, argumentation is a speech act used to justify or refute a statement or convince an audience to accept an opinion. It serves as a means of resolving disagreements through critical discussion, evaluating argumentative discourse, and applying pragmatic and dialectical insights. This definition refers to both the process and the byproduct of argumentation as a verbal activity directed at people, following a certain rationale, defending a point of view, and convincing the audience of the argument's suitability. During the evaluation process, listeners or readers act as critics of the argumentation.

Theorists are primarily concerned with several areas in the study of argumentation, including "unexpressed elements in argumentative discourse," "argumentation structures," "argument schemes," and "fallacies" (Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 3). This study will focus on "logical fallacies" as the main problem area of argumentation. Investigating logical fallacies involves tracing their etymology and historical development to highlight their uses in arguments. This requires understanding their connection to the theory of argumentation.

Fallacies attract the attention of various disciplines such as philosophy, logic, communication studies, rhetoric, psychology, and artificial intelligence. They are used to deceive people and persuade them of fallacious arguments. Greek philosophers, theorists, and rhetoricians examined reasoning errors in order to provide certain criterion for judging an argument as sound and correct. Aristotle was the first philosopher to present a systematic study in his *Sophistical Refutations* "*De Sophisticis Elenchis*" (Dowden 2023). Theorists tend to define a

“fallacy” as “an argument that seems to be valid but that is not valid” (Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 158). However, this definition is criticized for using validity as an absolute and subjective standard, excluding a large number of fallacies that are considered valid according to recent standards.

Later, Locke introduced “ad” fallacies such as “ad ignorantiam” (appeal to ignorance), which means that something is true because its opposite has not been successfully defended, and “ad hominem” (name-calling), which involves a direct or indirect attack on the opponent’s characteristics or beliefs. Today, these fallacies are known as relevance fallacies, which define the argument’s type, issue, and goal (Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 159-160). They are called relevance fallacies, because the goal of the argument is “set at the opening stage. If during the argumentation stage, the argumentation strays off onto a different path away from the proper kind of argumentation needed to fulfill this goal, a fallacy of relevance may have been committed” (Walton 2009: 17). A fallacy of relevance could be committed when a dialectical shift to name-calling or appeal to ignorance interferes with the progress of the original persuasion dialog.

In the 1970s, logicians Wood and Walton analyzed logical fallacies using the structures and theoretical vocabulary of dialectical and logical systems. Later, Barth and Krabbe (1982) introduced a formal dialectical framework for a systematic analysis of fallacies (Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 161). Today, theorists offer a broader definition, according to which “a fallacy is regarded as a deficient move in an argumentative discourse or text” (158). This definition not only considers logical insight but also includes pragmatic insight. This analysis of logical fallacies takes into account the communicative and interactional context of social fallacies. Eemeren and Grootendorst present a definition that avoids the ambiguity concerning the apparent validity or correctness of a proposition. They state, “Every violation of any of the rules of the discussion procedure for conducting a critical discussion (by whichever party and at whatever stage in the discussion) is a fallacy” (175). In a fallacy, the discussant makes less constructive moves, as he/she violates the rules to resolve differences of opinion. Eemeren & Grootendorst refer to the parties in argumentation as the protagonist (responsible for the initial standpoint) and the antagonist (who questions the initial standpoint).

Generally, a fallacy is an error in reasoning (Fogelin & Duggan 1987: 255). It could be a false belief or a rhetorical technique used to influence the discussant. There are formal and informal fallacies. Formal fallacies are fallacious because of their form, while informal fallacies are fallacious due to both their form and content. Informal fallacies are “instances of improper *substitutes* for arguments. Into this category fall appeals to force, emotion, pity, etc. Here the wrong-doing seems to be an attempt to establish something by means other than argument where argumentation is demanded” (255). In these cases, the discussant uses emotions instead of reason to establish an argument.

Analysis:

Churchill wrote *Seven Jewish Children* as a quick response to the upsetting events that happened in Gaza in 2009. The play was offered for free, with Churchill requesting donations for Medical Aid for Palestinians. It could be downloaded for free from various websites, including the Royal Court Theatre and Nick Hern Books. She affirms, “It’s a political event, not just a theatre event” (qtd. in Brown 2009). It is “a piece of reactive theatre” (Leader 2009: 133) that seeks to initiate a discussion condemning Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2009. This reveals that theater is an effective tool for drawing public attention to urgent issues that need discussion and change.

The play raises public awareness about the effects of war on people’s lives, exposing the oppressive strategies used by Israel against Palestinians, and questioning the international community’s failure to respond to their suffering. It invites everyone, especially political leaders, to take responsibility and stand against Israeli aggression. The play covers Jewish history in ten minutes, focusing on key stages and delivering a condensed emotional dose that symbolizes the characters’ confusion about the past and present. It suggests that history repeats itself, as the Israeli government uses the same aggressive practices used by oppressive regimes in the past. This study explores Israeli fallacious arguments propagated by biased media to defend the occupation of Palestine, highlighting how oral history is influenced by personal biases. The characters’ discourse reveals that Israeli promises about sharing the land have turned into an abolition war.

The play consists of seven scenes featuring a heated argument among parents about what should be taught regarding Jewish history, from the days of the Holocaust to the foundation of the Israeli nation. Churchill employs Brechtian techniques such as bare settings, compression of time, and unidentified characters. She uses bare settings, with only a table and two chairs placed in the center of the stage. The use of Jewish cast aims to make the audience feel the precariousness of their situation and their support of an aggressive government. The number of cast members, their gender, age and the stage setting are left to the director’s discretion. (In the Guardian production, there is only one actor.) There are two lines of actors, some of them move towards the table, while others lines up against the wall. Churchill’s stage directions state that the lines can be shared in any way the director likes among those characters. Each small scene features different characters as the time and child

change, representing phases in Jewish history, while the Jewish children symbolize the future generation. The lines of the play are directed towards absent children, signifying an uncertain future and suggesting that these mutated notions will be instilled in future generations, creating new oppressors. There are no specific names for the characters. By using these techniques, Churchill allows the audience to focus on events, reevaluate their position toward the crisis, and feel the suffering of the unrepresented Palestinians.

The play addresses the debates within Jewish families about what to tell their children regarding Jewish history over the past seventy years. It presents characters' confused attempts to explain war, violence, hatred, fear, and occupation to their children. The characters' discussion reveals the reality behind alleged peaceful talks and the oppressive practices committed by Israeli forces. The play begins with the subjugation of the Jews during the Holocaust and culminates in the suppression of Palestinians, with a parent shamelessly calling for the genocide of Palestinians, declaring, "I wouldn't care if we wiped them out" (*SJC* 2009: 7).

The characters share backstories that illustrate the impact of traumatic events on their identities. They repeat the main logical fallacies adopted and propagated by Israel, which include appeal to heaven, appeal to force, ad hominem/ name-calling, black or white fallacy, either-or fallacy, rationalization fallacy, repetition, demonizing the enemy, and inconsistency fallacy. The analysis explores the meaning, and theoretical background of these logical fallacies and examines how they are manipulated to justify Israeli atrocities against Palestinians.

The characters' arguments reflect an internal conflict regarding Israeli aggressive policy against Palestinians. They discuss the historical background and past events that led to the current situation. Their monologues are based on logically fallacious arguments that impose biased readings of Jewish history through providing oral testimonies that are passed from adults to younger generations. These logical fallacies aim to distort the truth and convince the international community that Israel is the oppressed party. Politicians need to uphold an ideology that encourages not only peace but also justice.

The characters' speeches are based on repeated and straightforward language such as "tell her" and "don't tell her." These motifs are prevalent throughout the play. The play highlights the transition from giving advice to young girls about being safe to justifying the killing and eradication of Palestinians. The dichotomies in Israeli parents' advice are confusing. This moral conflict on what should be taught to future generations underscores the responsibility of the Israeli political system and media in the shift from a coexistence policy to one of genocide. The scenes of the play discuss episodes in the development of the Israeli-Arab conflict, from migrating to Jerusalem to the Israeli-Gaza conflict in 2008-2009.

In scene one, a parent gives advice to a girl who faces the danger of murder during the Holocaust period. The speaker's contradictory advice conveys her uncertainty. The first part of the advice, "Tell her it's serious", affirms an atmosphere of horror and insecurity. Later, the speaker says, "But don't frighten her. Don't tell her they'll kill her" (*SJC* 2009: 2). These contradictory feelings formulate troubled identities, whose past insecurities extend to overwhelm their current existence in Palestine.

The play deals with relocating Palestinians, asserting that the Jews are the true inhabitants of Jerusalem. The process of moving to Palestine is depicted alongside Israeli appropriation of the land, initially referring to Palestinians as neighbors. However, the tone becomes increasingly aggressive, starting with derogatory terms like "filthy Bedouins" and culminating in blatant justifications of Israeli self-defense claims. The characters evoke the memory of the Holocaust that shaped their identities. Now, this memory is used in a political game to justify the occupation. Stef Craps affirms:

Israel has used the memory of the Holocaust to legitimize political injustices and violence against the Palestinians and neighboring Arab countries. In the years since 1967, visions of a 'second Holocaust' allegedly facing the Jewish people from the Palestinians resisting the occupation or from Arab states in the region have repeatedly been invoked by Zionists as part of a strategy to justify whatever Israel does as self-defense and to reject territorial concessions. (2014: 182)

In Scene Two, the mourning scene, the parent tells the girl how to deal with grief. She recounts her family's experience of tumultuous times, persecution, deportation, and mass murder. Going through these hard times puts the speaker in a difficult situation; she must decide whether to tell the young girl about these experiences now or wait until she is an adult and can better handle these memories. The speaker not only focuses on giving advice about dealing with Palestinians but also issues judgments about others' feelings toward the Jews, claiming that some people hated the Jews. The character's oral testimony is intended to instill hatred and fear in younger Jewish generations against others.

Generally, oral history "is a method of recording and studying the past through utilizing the memories of people who were actually there, usually by interviewing someone and making an audio recording of the conversation" (White 2023). It documents past personal experiences that reflect particular historical periods, offering different perspectives and stories about historical events, especially those belonging to religious and

ethnic communities. This includes capturing the stories of the Holocaust survivors. Churchill's play highlights Israeli family oral testimonies, exploring their experiences of persecution and migration. It examines the influence of these testimonies on their relationships with others and questions intergenerational transmission of trauma as a legacy of the Holocaust. By focusing on Jewish oral history, Churchill reveals the impact of traumatic events on survivors and how these experiences have shaped their views on the current situation with Palestinians.

The play reveals international community's disregard for Palestinian voices and experiences during the current Gaza attacks. While Jewish experiences were acknowledged and supported by the international community during and after World War II, the suffering and voices of Palestinians are currently being suffocated and ignored. Although their testimonies may be overlooked now, they will shape the future understanding of these agonizing events. *Seven Jewish Children* urges the audience to not only consider who is responsible for the current situation but also reflect on its consequences. By highlighting the importance of sharing personal experiences, the documentation of oral history serves as a crucial counter to Israeli aggression denial and historical revisionism. The play aims to document both the past and the present of the conflict, exposing the tragic fate of Palestinian families whose experiences remain undocumented or missing. Churchill uses oral testimonies to illuminate the evolution of dramatic events in the play, presenting them as a narrative genre to engage the audience. This approach allows viewers to relive the past and contemplate the current situation.

The play explores the forcible displacement of Palestinians, addressing issues such as the bulldozing of homes, struggles over water rights, and land appropriation. These issues are highlighted through discussions with the children, who, as passive participants, absorb their families' biased portrayals and interpretations of past and present events. The parents' fatalistic attitudes dictate the children's future, framing their right to inhabit Jerusalem while Israeli forces clear the land of its inhabitants. They rationalize house demolitions as they build their own settlements: "Tell her we're building new towns in the wilderness" (6); "Tell her they said it was a land without people" (5); "Don't tell her about the bulldozer....Don't tell her it was knocking the house down" (5). The recurring phrases "Tell her" and "Don't tell her" underscore the tension within the Israeli community over depicting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Dramatist Tony Kushner and critic Alisa Solomon argue that "the tension between assertions and their negation becomes tighter, more suggestive of conflict within the family or community, as the speakers struggle over how to deal with conflict" (2009). The parents' statements reveal internal conflict, and indecision, reflecting feelings of aggression and guilt over their actions against Palestinians. These messages are laden with past insecurities, current failures, and ongoing violation of Palestinian rights.

The political discourse of Israeli parents in the play is rooted in fallacious arguments that seem logical to listeners. A prominent logical fallacy employed to justify Israeli occupation of Palestine is "appeal to heaven." This fallacy asserts that Palestine is "The Promised Land" and that Israelis are "the chosen people." Appeal to heaven means that the debater claims divine support for their position or actions (Scientia 2014). Such arguments are fallacious, because they provide no further justification and reject any challenge to their claims. The Israeli parents invoke this fallacy throughout the play with statements like, "Tell her it's the land God gave us" (*SJC* 2009: 3); "Tell her again this is our promised land" (5); "tell her we're chosen people" (7). These assertions imply that their actions are divinely sanctioned, reinforcing their belief in their exceptionalism.

As the parents advise their children, Churchill underscores significant incidents and clashes between unarmed Palestinians and the Israeli armed forces. In these confrontations, Palestinians face Israeli tanks armed with only stones, witness their homes being demolished by bulldozers, and see children killed by Israel's bombs. The killing of innocent children, such as Muhammed Al-Dura in 2000, is highlighted. For instance, the parent says, "Don't tell her the boy was shot" (*SJC* 2009: 5). Later she says, "Don't tell her they throw stones. Tell her they're not much good against tanks. Don't tell her that....Tell her we need the wall to keep us safe.... Tell her we kill far more of them.... Tell her we want peace" (6). The use of tanks and bulldozers was insufficient for achieving security, so the Israeli state builds the West Bank barrier. Despite these measures, Palestinians are portrayed as the aggressors disrupting Israeli plans for peace.

At the end of the play, a revealing monologue addresses the central question of what to tell the young girls. This monologue encapsulates the characteristics of Israeli policies that are racist, tribal, and aggressive, displaying a stark indifference to the suffering of others. As the tone of the speakers' monologues intensifies, their rhetoric shifts from "we can share" to "Tell her we're fighters." The parent states:

Tell her she can't watch the news
.....
Tell her only a few of us have been killed
Tell her the army has come to our defence
Don't tell her her cousin refused to serve in the army.
Don't tell her how many of them have been killed
Tell her the Hamas fighters have been killed

Tell her they're terrorists
 Tell her they're filth
 Don't
 Don't tell her about the family of dead girls
 Tell her you can't believe what you see on television
 Tell her we killed the babies by mistake
 Don't tell her anything about the army
 Tell her, tell her about the army, tell her to be proud of the army.
 Tell her about the family of dead girls, tell her their names why not, tell her the whole world knows why shouldn't she know? Tell her there's dead babies, did she see babies? tell her she's got nothing to be ashamed of. Tell her they did it to themselves. Tell her they want their children killed to make people sorry for them, tell her I'm not sorry for them, tell her not to be sorry for them, tell her we're the ones to be sorry for, tell her they can't talk suffering to us. Tell her we're the iron fist now, tell her it's the fog of war, tell her we won't stop killing them till we're safe, tell her I laughed when I saw the dead policemen, tell her they're animals living in rubble now, tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out, the world would hate us is the only thing, tell her I don't care if the world hates us, tell her we're better haters, tell her we're chosen people, tell her I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? tell her all I feel is happy it's not her. (*SJC* 2009: 6-7)

The play denounces bias in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The parent acknowledges that news media should not be trusted. Media tools are manipulated to broadcast Israeli logical fallacies, thereby distorting the truth. The play highlights how Israeli children are exposed to biased media coverage and personal testimonies that perpetuate ancestral prejudices and deep divisions.

The final part of the play portrays the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, revealing the atrocities committed by the occupation against unarmed civilians. Churchill seeks to raise public awareness about the potential consequences of violent practices against Palestinians and calls for political leaders to take responsibility for condemning and ending armed conflicts. She highlights the impact of presenting history to future generations through the lens of past biases. The play suggests that bias extends beyond individuals to include media tools that deliberately omit or distort objective coverage of events. It also exposes the international community's silence on the conflict and Israel's manipulation of this attitude. Consequently, the play is accompanied by post-show discussions to enhance its political influence, encouraging the audience to transition from passive spectators to active participants in the political arena and decision-making process.

In the following quotation, the speaker commits different fallacies such as rationalization, inconsistency, black and white fallacy, ad hominem (name-calling), and appeal to force. The speaker uses a rationalization fallacy when she asserted, "Tell her they did it to themselves. Tell her they want their children killed to make people sorry for them" (6). According to Dowden, "We rationalize when we inauthentically offer reasons to support our claim. We are rationalizing when we give someone a reason to justify our action even though we know this reason is not really our own reason for our action, usually because the offered reason will sound better to the audience than our actual reason" (2023). Instead of expressing regret, the speaker rationalizes the deaths of Palestinians by claiming that they desire their own suffering to elicit empathy, rather than acknowledging that these casualties result from Israeli forces attacking refugee camps and committing war crimes.

As the parent recounts grim events, such as the killing of babies and five girls from the same family while they were asleep in the Jabalya refugee camp, she employs the black-and-white fallacy. This fallacy presents only two extreme options, either killing others or being killed. The parent states, "Tell her they're terrorists. Tell her they're filth....tell her we won't stop killing them till we're safe...tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out, the world would hate us is the only thing, tell her I don't care if the world hates us" (*SJC* 2009: 7). Here, the speaker commits a black-or-white fallacy, also known as false dilemma, unfairly restricts choices to only two extremes as if one must choose between black and white (Dowden 2023). The speaker deceives the listener into believing that the only options are either to sacrifice Palestinians or be killed by them, ignoring the possibility of sharing the land and pursuing peaceful coexistence. This narrow framing of the conflict is misleading and likely aims to justify military interventions designed to expel Palestinians from their land.

The parents believe that Palestinians should be sacrificed for the sake of the Israeli state. This belief employs the scapegoating logical fallacy, which assigns blame solely to Palestinians as the cause of problems, inferring that they are a threat to Israeli national security (Hughes 2016). Israel uses the pretext of national security threats to justify indiscriminate violence. Additionally, the Israeli parent commits the appeal to force (ad baculum) fallacy by asserting that they are the "iron fist" (*SJC* 2009: 7) and have the upper hand in the conflict. The appeal to force fallacy is used to settle an argument or induce assent through intimidation rather than belief, leading to unjustified conduct or assent (Fogelin & Duggan 1987: 160). Finally, the parent uses name-calling (ad hominem)

fallacy by referring to Palestinians as "terrorists" and "filth" to justify the killing of innocent civilians. This fallacy is used to undermine the credibility of the opponent instead of addressing the argument. Thus, fallacies can occur in arguments in three ways: first, when the argument itself is flawed; second, when persuasive devices substitute for logical reasoning, such as appealing to emotions; and third, when false frameworks or propositions are repeatedly used to generate false beliefs (Fogelin & Duggan 1987: 160-161).

The characters exhibit uncertainty about their past, present, and future due to ongoing violence. This uncertainty is contextualized by the play's setting during the Holocaust, a profoundly difficult period for the Jewish people. This confusion is reflected in the parents' speeches as they grapple with whether to disclose the painful events of the past to their children. By the end of the play, this uncertainty culminates in a deliberate omission and disregard towards Palestinians. The parent's refusal to name Palestinians to their child, saying, "Don't tell her who they are" (*SJC* 2009: 5), underscores the problematic and dismissive stance of the parents.

Israel's indifference to the victims is starkly highlighted in the final scene by the parent's directive, "Tell her not to be sorry for them, tell her we're the ones to be sorry for" (*SJC* 2009: 6). This statement underscores a focus on Israeli losses while dismissing the value of Palestinian lives, suggesting that Israeli children should not mourn Palestinian casualties, whether adults, children, or infants. This differentiation between "grievable" and "ungrievable" lives is reinforced by biased media portrayals. Butler argues that media representations often influence normative perceptions of what constitutes a human life and a grievable death: "The media evacuation of the human through the image has to be understood, though, in terms of the broader problem that normative schemes of intelligibility establish what will and will not be human, what will be a livable life, what will be a grievable death" (2004: 146). Media tools contribute to depicting Palestinian lives as less valuable, controlling the narrative of who deserves mourning and recognition, even in their most vulnerable moments.

The play concludes with the parent's harsh speech regarding Palestinian suffering: "I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? Tell her all I feel is happy it's not her" (*SJC* 2009: 7). This statement reveals a disturbing perspective that violence is only significant when it affects one's own family or loved ones. The character implies that violence is acceptable as long as it is directed at others. Butler raises a related ethical concern: "What if violence is done to someone I love? What if there is an Other who does violence to another Other? To which Other do I respond ethically?" (2004: 139-140). This highlights a double standard in the Israeli and international community's treatment of Israeli versus Palestinian victims. The play confronts the ethical dilemma of invoking humanity to protect Israeli lives while simultaneously endorsing the elimination of Palestinian citizens.

The parents commit the inconsistency fallacy. One parent declares, "tell her it's the fog of war" (*SJC* 2009: 7), while others previously affirm that "We can share" (5) and "We want peace" (6). This inconsistency fallacy occurs when an individual or group accepts a set of claims that logically conflict with one another (Dowden 2023). The speakers assert both a desire for peace and a willingness to share the land and its resources. However, by describing the situation as "the fog of war" in the end, they contradict their earlier statements, revealing a logical inconsistency in their arguments.

Churchill employs allegory to explore Jewish history and share the broader human experience of violence and injustice. *Seven Jewish Children* echoes "the travelling medieval morality plays where biblical stories were retold with didactic intention" (Leader 2009: 134). It juxtaposes contradictory concepts such as good and evil, the past and the present, to deliver a moral message intended to evaluate the situation and predict future outcomes if Israel continues to escalate violence. This transformation is starkly evident in the final scene, where the parents shift from victims to violent perpetrators. The parent declares, "tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out, the world would hate us is the only thing, tell her I don't care if the world hates us" (*SJC* 2009: 7). The play exposes the human experience of both facing and inflicting violence. It critiques the double standards of the characters, who justify killing others to alleviate their own insecurities. Churchill condemns the unethical response of treating the death of Palestinians with indifference compared to the death of Israelis. The juxtaposition of peace claims with the use of military force against Palestinian homes highlights that such claims are mere propaganda.

The open ending of the play hints at possible outcomes based on the incidents discussed, highlighting issues that have been silenced. Churchill does not offer solutions but instead focuses on future challenges, suggesting that the current climate will perpetuate ongoing violence. She presents a dystopian vision to warn the international community of impending struggles, and condemning a culture of denial. *Seven Jewish Children* anticipates the normalization of violence, as the character reveals, "I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? Tell her all I feel is happy it's not her" (*SJC* 2009: 7). Through this shocking portrayal, Churchill succeeds in unsettling the audience. The play concludes with the phrase "Don't frighten her" (7), a provocative statement that urges the audience to reflect on the events and consider what actions should be taken to prevent the grim outcomes of the situation.

The play symbolizes the eruption of long-repressed speech and stifled emotions, taking the audience on an introspective journey through actual events that reflect Churchill's interpretation of unreasonable aggression. Many supporters of Israeli policies are influenced by biased media coverage, which shapes their views on the occupation. For instance, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement, defended the Gaza invasion in an Op-Ed for *Forward*, America's weekly Jewish newspaper, describing it as a "tragic necessity, unwelcome but inevitable" (Kushner & Solomon 2009). This highlights the pernicious nature of Zionist propaganda. As Kushner and Solomon note, "a cursory survey of the Internet demonstrates: for example, the chilling story in the March 20 *Ha'aretz* about some Israeli army units making T-shirts celebrating civilian casualties and rape in Gaza" (2009).

The play faced significant pressure from Zionist groups regarding its performance. Adiseshiah notes that "supporters of Israel, such as the Zionist Federation, applied pressure on theatres to cancel performances of the play" (2012: 117). Similarly, broadcasting corporations were likely subjected to similar pressures; for instance, the BBC refused to broadcast the play, citing a lack of impartiality. This response underscores how the play created a space for articulating perspectives that are otherwise suppressed (2012: 117). The media often adopts a biased approach, presenting selective coverage of events. This is evident in the rejection of news content that exposes the harsh realities of the occupation. Churchill's play acts as an objective media tool, bringing to light aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict that are typically excluded from mainstream discourse.

The play exposes the belittling rhetoric of the parents, using a family discussion as its central context to highlight the impact of public policy on private lives. Churchill illustrates how the reasons for the continuous infringement of human rights and the escalation of hostile measures are ingrained in societal norms, becoming a legacy for future generations. The play reveals the troubling justifications for injustice, underscoring the crucial role of media in disseminating the truth without moral falsifications.

Seven Jewish Children features a non-naturalistic treatment of its characters, with a notable absence of action, compressed time, and condensed narration. The characters are not named or individually identified. Instead, the play offers an introspective journey where the characters express their inner feelings, revealing their motivations. It critiques Israeli political inconsistency, highlighting the paradox of valuing the preservation of their own lives while endangering others'. Churchill uses compressed time to provide a condensed account of Jewish history, emphasizing conflicted identities and painful experiences. By drawing parallels between the Holocaust and the current suffering of Palestinians, the play suggests a repetition of historical atrocities.

Churchill employs Brechtian techniques, such as breaking the fourth wall and speaking directly to the audience. By creating a direct relationship between actors and viewers, she suggests that the audience is also implicated in the conflict and part of the current situation. The play features a series of monologues addressed directly to the audience. This approach encourages the audience to reflect on the past and relate it to the present. It implies a cycle of relentless violence affecting Jews, Palestinians, and children on both sides. By referencing the impact of past experiences on the present, Churchill provides insight into the characters' insecurities. The play suggests that enduring violence can produce uncertain individuals constantly seeking security.

In this context, theatre serves both an ethical and political purpose. It aims to raise Western societies' awareness of the aggressive practices inflicted upon Palestinians and suggests that audiences should share this message with their families and friends. The play seeks to challenge and rewrite historical narratives, urging viewers to take action and responsibility in addressing the current situation. It highlights the manifestations of power in political and colonial relationships.

Theatre often mirrors its social and political environment, and this play is no exception. It highlights issues such as insecurity, homelessness, and the characters' ongoing search for security. Leader notes, "This insecurity is aided by the distinct military theme" (2009: 135) that pervades the play. The military theme is evident as characters march onto the stage and line up against the walls like soldiers. This fusion of family and military concerns underscores that peace remains elusive as long as military forces are employed. The characters' World War II clothing reflects the persistent impact of the Holocaust on both survivors and their descendants, indicating that the dark past continues to shape modern Jewish identity. However, Leader also observes that "Churchill's decision to speak for Jews exclusively and to give no voice to the Palestinians arguably perpetuates the dichotomous relationship of perpetrator and victim" (135). This marginalization of Palestinians symbolizes colonial oppression and highlights the play's focus on the audience's role in interpreting the narrative. The performance does not propose a resolution to the conflict. Marvin Carlson argues, "Performance by its nature resists conclusions" (qtd. in Leader 2009: 135).

The play elicited a range of responses. Some critics accused Churchill of blood libel, claiming that the play incited homicidal anti-Jewish violence. A spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews described the text as "horrifically anti-Israel" and stated that it went "beyond the boundaries of reasonable political discourse" (qtd. in Kushner & Solomon 2009). Critic Howard Jacobson expressed his complete disapproval, calling the play "Jew-hating pure and simple" (qtd. in Milner 2003). Milner criticizes Jacobson's attitude. He argues:

Jacobson expressed outrage at the use of the words slaughter and massacre by those protesting Israel's part in "the fighting in Gaza"...What disturbed me, however, is that he doesn't mention the most obvious explanation of the use of those particular words, that is, the enormous imbalance of casualties between the parties to the "fighting." NGOs cite about 1,400 dead Palestinians to 13 dead Israelis, while the Israeli army cites 1,166 to 13— and four of the 13 were Israeli soldiers caught in friendly fire. Using the most moderate Israeli figures, that's a ratio of 90 to 1. In common parlance, that's a massacre, and only a pedant would object. (Milner 2003)

In response to Jacobson's critique, Churchill argued that labeling any criticism of Israeli policy as anti-Semitic is a common tactic used to stifle debate. She stated, "we should be able to disagree without accusations of anti-Semitism" (Churchill 2009, "My play is not anti-Semitic"). Churchill clarified that her aim was to illustrate "the difficulty of explaining violence to children" and to expose the "defensiveness of [people's] threatened position," which she believes only leads "to further violence." The play presents multiple vulnerable Others and acknowledges that while it does not deny the narrative of Jewish victimization, it insists that Palestinian suffering also deserves recognition and voice (Craps 2014:186-187).

There were calls from Jewish organizations to shut down the performance. Ben Spurr reports in *The New Magazine* that David Miller received an open letter from a Jewish human rights organization demanding the play's cancellation, arguing that it incited hatred. However, Miller counters this, stating, "A quick scan of Israeli op-ed pages reveals that many Israelis are deeply conflicted about the country's history and the legacy they're leaving their children. Recent polls indicate most Israelis want an end to the Occupation" (qtd. in Spurr 2009). In contrast, Charlotte Higgins, *The Guardian's* chief arts writer, defended the play, asserting, "I cleave strongly to the view that it is possible to be critical of Israel without being anti-Semitic" (2009). Michael Billington in *The Guardian* argued that the play demonstrates how "security has become the pretext for indiscriminate slaughter" (2009). Dominic Maxwell of *The Times* described the play as "an impassioned response to the events in Gaza that is elliptical, empathic, and illuminating" (2009). Patrick Healy from *The New York Times* noted that the play "at times contains images of heartless Israelis" (2009). Meanwhile, Philip Fisher remarked that attending the play provides an enlightening experience, writing, "If either chooses to see this play or read the text, they will see how great that task is. Then again, they might be happier continuing to follow what Miss Churchill suggests is their not very well-hidden agenda" (2009).

The play addresses personal experiences of aggression and survival, shedding light on the tragedies and histories of both sides. It culminates with a focus on the Gaza onslaught in the final scene, reflecting an ominous future. Kushner and Solomon argue that the play should be widely discussed, describing it as "dense, beautiful, elusive and intentionally indeterminate.... Any play about the crisis in the Middle East that doesn't arouse anger and distress has missed the point" (2009). They suggest that harsh criticism of the play serves to distort Churchill's intentions and hinder meaningful discussion of political issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Kushner and Solomon, "The power of art to open us to the subjectivities of others is especially threatening to those who insist on a single narrative," a narrative often propagated through biased media tools.

The play references Primo Levi, an Italian Jew, who describes Palestinians as "the Jews of the Jews," stating, "Everybody is somebody's Jew. And today the Palestinians are the Jews of the Israelis" (Magid 2014: 237). It highlights the injustice and violence inflicted by Israel on Palestinians, emphasizing that victims should be fairly represented as human beings. According to Butler, "Those who gain representation [...] have a better chance of being humanized, and those who have no chance to represent themselves run a greater risk of being treated less than human" (2004: 141). The play advocates for an objective portrayal of Palestinians' agonizing experiences under Israeli occupation, aiming to address and challenge the dehumanizing narratives that have long been perpetuated.

Theater proves to be a suitable place to discuss and advocate for universal ethics of peaceful cohabitation without manipulating these ideals for political gains or using them as a tool to propagate double standards that prioritize one race or ethnicity over another. It is the perfect spot to address humanitarian matters as well as critical political issues under strict scrutiny. As Kushner and Solomon note, "Theater...has often attracted the ire of people grimly determined to maintain the invisibility of others. It's been twenty years since liberal stalwart Joe Papp caved to pressure and canceled appearances at the Public Theater of a visiting Palestinian troupe, *El Hakawati*" (2009). Imposing such restrictions and preventing audiences from being exposed to objective coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affects public discourse.

The striking brevity of the play is intended to reveal the political complicity of the international community, which remains silent in the face of Israeli violations. Churchill employs dramatic minimalism because the play is an urgent and direct response to the aggressive slaughter of innocent citizens. It reflects the effect of subjective recitation of oral history in maintaining deep-rooted, offensive beliefs that aggravate the current situation.

Churchill describes the children as 'Jewish' rather than 'Israeli' to deliver a global message to Jewish people and those who could influence Israeli policy, stimulating a change.

Throughout the play, fallacies are used to dictate the beliefs of future generations. These fallacies can be misleading even if they are clearly stated in arguments. Therefore, it is important to identify fallacious arguments when they occur. Richard Whately, a researcher into informal logic, said, "A very long discussion is one of the most effective veils of Fallacy; ...a Fallacy, which when stated barely...would not deceive a child, may deceive half the world if diluted in a quarto volume" (qtd. in Walton 2008: 329). Understanding fallacies is an efficient way to expose occupation rhetoric and fallacious arguments. The power of these fallacies resides in their repeated use without being challenged. Continuous references to these fallacies insinuate that they are undoubted evidence. It is important to emphasize that the use of these fallacious arguments has affected the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Conclusion:

Tracing logical fallacies and their development in the Israeli parents' discourse, the study suggests that they manipulate fallacious arguments to justify military conflicts against Palestinians. This policy created the current crisis by identifying Palestinians as enemies rather than neighbors. Staging people's past suffering highlights the influence of the past on the present. The play does not offer a solution for the conflict. However, it tries to explore the possible reasons that sustain this long-term conflict, calling for the international community to acknowledge and stand against Israeli aggression against Palestinians. It reveals an urgent need for open dialogue to reach a fair and lasting solution for both sides.

Seven Jewish Children deals with arguments that encompass historical, personal, and political dimensions. Churchill aims to represent the suffering of the unrepresented and to warn against a culture of denial that could lead to more violent confrontations in the future. The characters use logical fallacies to distort and misrepresent the truth. Conflating Churchill with one of the characters in the play and interpreting the monologue as a statement from the playwright is a distortion and misinterpretation of dramatic art. Clearly, there is a difference between being anti-Semitic and warning the international community about the influence of the existing occupation. Israel adopts a policy of peace through abolition and encourages massive growth in the military forces, which could lead to an endless war.

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