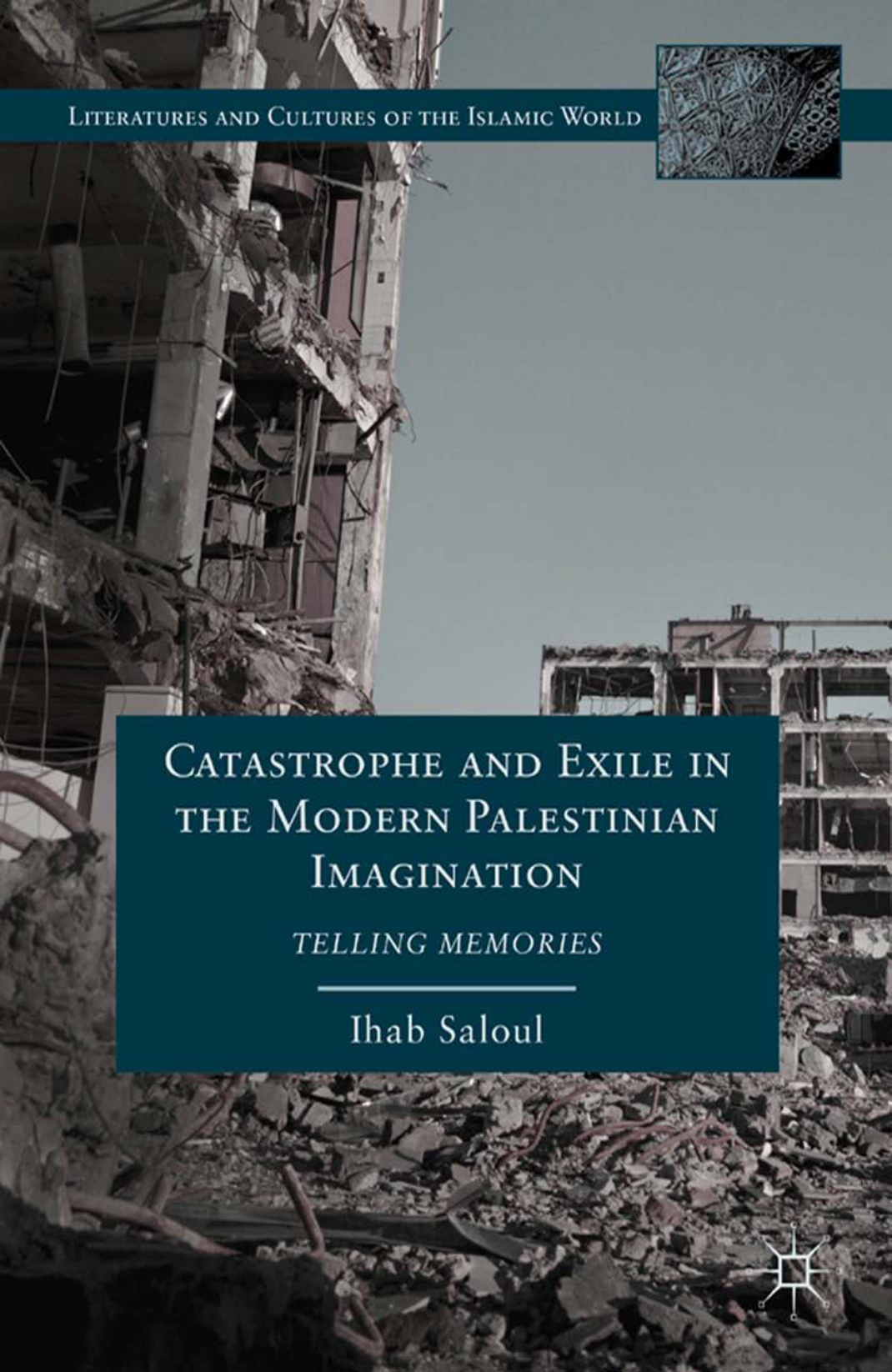
Literatures and Cultures of the Islamic World
Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination
Telling Memories
Ihab Saloul

Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination

Literatures and Cultures of the Islamic World

Edited by Hamid Dabashi

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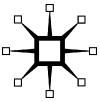

CATASTROPHE AND EXILE IN THE MODERN PALESTINIAN IMAGINATION

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Contents

Illustrations

Note from the Editor

The Islamic world is home to a vast body of literary production in multiple languages over the last 1,400 years. To be sure, long before the advent of Islam, multiple sites of significant literary and cultural productions existed from India to Iran to the Fertile Crescent to North Africa. After the advent of Islam in the mid-seventh century CE, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Turkish authors in particular produced some of the most glorious manifestations of world literature. From prose to poetry, modern to medieval, elitist to popular, oral to literary, this body of literature is in much need of a wide range of renewed scholarly investigation and lucid presentation.

The purpose of this series is to take advantage of the most recent advances in literary studies, textual hermeneutics, critical theory, feminism, postcolonialism, and comparative literature to bring the spectrum of literatures and cultures of the Islamic world to a wider audience and appreciation. Usually the study of these literatures and cultures is divided between classical and modern periods. A central objective of this series is to cross over this artificial and inapplicable bifurcation and abandon the anxiety of periodization altogether. Much of what we understand today from this rich body of literary and cultural production is still under the influence of old-fashioned orientalism or post–World War II area studies perspectives. Our hope is to bring together a body of scholarship that connects the vast arena of literary and cultural production in the Islamic world without the prejudices of outmoded perspectives. Toward this end, we are committed to path-breaking strategies of reading that collectively renew our awareness of the literary cosmopolitanism and cultural criticism in which these works of creative imagination were conceived in the first place.

Hamid Dabashi

Acknowledgments

This book reflects an intellectual and personal experience during which I met many people who had decisive influence on my development. I must content myself with thanking them collectively, with only a few exceptions. My teacher and friend Mieke Bal started me on an interdisciplinary journey involving cultural analysis, literature, and many other fields in 2001 and has been a steadfast source of inspiration and critical thinking ever since. Likewise, I thankfully acknowledge the support of colleagues and friends in various places whose criticism and suggestions sharpened the text considerably: Murat Aydemir, Ernst van Alphen, Rey Chow, Timothy Brennan, Sharif Kanaana, Carol Bardenstein, Marianne Hirsch, Tarik Sabry, Ginette Verstraete, Patricia Pisters, Ann Rigney, Maaike Meijer, Lies Wesseling, Renee van de Vall, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, and Rein de Wilde.

I was fortunate to conclude this manuscript during 2011—2012, which I spent as EUME-Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Berlin (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin). In this unique institution, I have benefitted from the help of several friends, so special thanks to Georges Khalil, Cilja Harders, Angelika Neuwirth, and Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin. Brigitte Shull and Hamid Dabashi were an ideal publisher and series editor, respectively, and made the ordeal of preparing the manuscript an instructive and genuinely intelligent process.

Finally, special thanks to my wife Barbara and my family in Palestine for their loving support, which made much of the work enjoyable. I dedicate this book to my daughters, Lina and Nour, and their new Palestinian generations in exile. I hope this book will speak to them and that they will carry some understanding of these ideas with them into a better future.

Introduction

On May 15, 2012, Palestinians across the world will mark the sixty-fourth anniversary of *al-Nakba*. The Arabic word *Nakba* means "catastrophe." Palestinians use the word to refer to the events that took place in Palestine before, during, and after 1948. These events culminated in the establishment of the State of Israel, but also in the loss of Palestine. The direct outcomes of these events were both the destruction of more than 450 Arab villages and towns—most of which were renamed with Israeli or Hebraized names—and the forced expulsion of more than 780,000 Palestinians who used to reside on 78 percent of the territory of the Palestine Mandate. Today, there are approximately ten million exiled Palestinians. While four million of them are internally displaced in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and inside Israel, the majority of Palestinians are scattered across the Middle East and beyond.[1]

A vast literature already exists on Palestine and the Palestinians, so why write another book? Two immediate and related feelings inform the present book. Both feelings instantiate my authorial voice in a double role: in its academic aspect, as a cultural analyst; and in terms of location, as an exiled Palestinian belonging to the third generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, born after 1967. The first is my continuing sense of horror at the Israeli military occupation and unremitting war against the Palestinians, combined with the deafening silences of the so-called world opinion. The past decade is a case in point, for it has seen momentous political developments in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but has produced no improvement and in most ways a marked deterioration in the living conditions of Palestinians. In the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem the Palestinians live under conditions of siege, enduring a blockade of towns, crippling economic measures, land confiscations, and military attacks on civilian areas. Under different

yet equally appalling circumstances, the Palestinians inside Israel live as second-class citizens, who face sociopolitical discriminations and restrictions on their cultural and economic opportunities. Neither has there been much improvement in the fate of Palestinians in the diaspora outside historic Palestine. The majority continue to live in dire straits in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

The second feeling that informs this book is my pride that Palestinians all over the world have managed to maintain a shared national identity since *al-Nakba*, even though the different groupings know little about each other. Although the Palestinian national movement predated 1948 by several decades, nothing forged Palestinian identity as adamantly, it seems, as the loss of Palestine. There is not one Palestinian family that has been unaffected by this loss. Indeed, forced or prevented movement, as well as the condition of exile that scattered families and communities, has produced specific lifestyles, cultural beliefs, and identifications. Factors such as class, legal status, and economic and political affiliations shape Palestinians' identity, while most of them nonetheless retain a self perception that pictures Palestine as an unified country with a language and distinct cultural values, whether that is true in the present or not. As I demonstrate in this book, two striking features of current Palestinian identity are the great diversity of personal memories of the loss of the homeland, and a sense of overwhelming belonging to one another in a shared exile. Both features, I realized, facilitate the cultural remapping of a concrete Palestinian identity, which has been persistently and systematically *unmapped* out of time and space since 1948. It is from this realization that my project emerged.

This book deals with the cultural memory of *al-Nakba* as a powerful narrative signifier of the modern Palestinian imagination. I explore the ways in which Palestinian popular literary, audiovisual, and oral narratives and life stories articulate memories of the loss of the homeland, memories of historical events around 1948 in relation to the continuing exile today. I argue that the persistence of catastrophic output in Palestinian culture and politics is closely linked to their construction of exilic identity. Narratives of *al-Nakba* offer a set of symbolic identifiers and images or, as I will call them, "imagings" of loss of place. They provide the exiled subject with a concrete geopolitical orientation of the lost home, and expose the ways in which that loss continues to be experienced in the present, influencing the identity and agency of different generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians.

As the Palestinians continue to be denied the "Right of Return," *al-Nakba* remains indeed the key narrative of Palestinian historical and

political discourses.[2] As I have mentioned above, a great deal of scholarly work concentrates on Palestine and the Palestinians; yet little attention has been paid to the cultural memory of *al-Nakba* and its relevance for narratives of exile. One of the few recent books on these issues, with which my study shares various theoretical and thematic points, is the collective volume *Nakba: 1948, Palestine and the Claims of Memory*, edited by Ahmed H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod. The book comprises ten contributions that weave together a tapestry of Palestinian memories. They examine the ways in which Palestinians remember their past and carry it with them into the present through symbols, maps, deeds of land, and the keys of the houses, stories, habits, and poems. Drawing on diverse theories and methods to highlight the modalities of Palestinian loss of place in the cultural present, Sa'di and Abu-Lughod's study outlines the historical emergence of Palestinian collective memory, the challenges to it by marginalized voices and the moral and political implications of its erasure. As the editors explain in their introduction, the volume contests the notion that Palestinian collective memory is ontologically given. Instead, the authors contend that no memory is ever pure or unmediated (2007: 3–5).

My book pursues this line of thought, and thus situates itself within the larger field of cultural identity and memory studies. *Telling Memories* focuses on the ways in which an exiled nation negotiates, challenges, and crucially reshapes its cultural memories. What are the cultural-political significations of memories of *al-Nakba*? How can we conceptualize contemporary memory practices that are structured, though not determined, by a past history? And how can we take those practices into account as articulations of power relations without neglecting the distinct agencies and imaginaries of different generations of exiled Palestinians today? These are questions my book attempts to answer.

Memory is a volatile concept. The work of memory in all its forms, from historical essays to personal reminiscences, legal testimonies, and imaginative recreations, is not only slippery but also inherently contradictory. On the one hand, memory posits a past reality that is recalled outside the person's subjectivity. Yet, on the other hand, memory requires a narrator who is equipped with conventional cultural filters of generational distance, age and gender, class, and political affiliations, on whose authority the truth of the past can be revealed. Memories are narrated by someone in the present. Nonetheless, we still use them as authoritative sources of historical knowledge.

Memory is always mediated, even in the flashes of so-called involuntary memory. They are complex constructions in which our present experience

conjoins with images that are collected by the mind from all manner of sources, including from our inner worlds. Furthermore, memories are always both individual and collective. We are constantly confronted with images of the past, whether we actively observe them or not. Memory moves from the world of smell, sensations, habits, and images to the outer world via cultural forms such as literary texts, prose poetry, and film. We enmesh memories with myths, folktales, and popular narratives in the ways that we talk about traditions, national consciousness, and identities. The work on memory, then, must address itself not only to questions of what happened but also to how we know things, whose voices we hear, and where silences persist. I discuss the meanings of silence and denial in Palestinian narratives of identity in relation to the generational memory of *al-Nakba* more in depth in Chapters 4 and 5 of this book.[3]

Most scholars today distinguish between official, hegemonic histories promoted by state institutions and popular practices of memory, memories by marginalized segments of society, even when they acknowledge that the boundaries between them are not rigid. In the Palestinian case, the absence of a sovereign state and the institutions required to promote an official version of events problematizes the relationship between history and memory. In fact, all Palestinian histories—those of the elite and the marginalized—are, to borrow one of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's central terms, "subaltern," in relation to the dominant narrative of Zionist discourse. I refer here to the appalling colonial metanarrative of historic Palestine as "a land without a people for a people without a land".[4] This narrative claims a Jewish historical presence in Palestine based on a timeless Biblical attachment to the land while rejecting, with brutal military force, Palestinian historical or temporal counterclaims. I use Spivak's term in this context not to idealize victimization but to foreground the relationship between official Israeli history and silenced Palestinian memory as one of ongoing obliteration and inscription.

The conflict between Palestinian and Israeli discourses and their matrices of power, denial of *al-Nakba*, victimization, and agency will be central to my discussion in the fourth chapter of this book. The grounds of these discourses, as I attempt to show there, are inherently uneven, yet inextricably *related*. The main battle is over land of course, but when it comes to questions of who owns the land, who has the right to settle and work on it, who cultivates it, and who plans its future, all of these issues are effectively reflected, contested, and decided in and through narrative. The power to narrate or to prevent other narratives from emerging is crucial for the balance between Zionism and what can be called Palestinianism. With respect to obliteration and inscription, two

overtly political aspects emphasize the connections between Zionism and Palestinianism today. The first is that the history of the "ethnic cleansing" of Palestinians remains largely an untold story. This story is notably eclipsed by pervasive public commemorations of the Holocaust and celebrations of Israel's establishment, much of which, as Norman G. Finkelstein succinctly puts it, is "a tribute not to Jewish suffering but to Jewish aggrandizement" (2001: 8).[5] The second aspect is that the near-total omission of Palestinians' history of *al-Nakba* from mainstream academic and public discourses in Europe and the United States has nevertheless not impeded the continued cultural life of memorizations of the catastrophe across different generations of exiled Palestinians. Both aspects oblige me to make an important clarification.

My aim is neither to compare the Palestinian narrative to the Zionist one, nor to propose a model for comparative analysis between both narratives. Although they both merit serious analysis, those goals would exceed my current project. Instead, I propose a culturally meaningful reading of the loss of Palestine that exposes what it means to be a Palestinian subject in exile today. This approach is premised on a view of exile, not simply as metaphorical or existential, but rather as physical and actual condition of forced displacement that is connected to the cultural logic subtending the historical catastrophe of 1948. This view of Palestinian exile constitutes the focal point of my discussion in the second and fifth chapters of this book.

Telling Memories does not recount the history of *al-Nakba* but traces in Palestinian literature, films, and oral narratives and life stories how the collective wounds of a culture can emerge in specific narrative and artistic forms, and how these in turn affect the identity of different generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians in exile. In this regard, this book is not concerned with what actually happened in 1948. I am interested less in the particularities of *al-Nakba*—what happened, where, and why—than in the fact that this catastrophic loss has not ended but endures to this day. Indeed, the extraordinary violence and exploitation of the condition of loss persist in various forms in the present. To recognize the cultural significance of the Palestinian catastrophe, as well as to provide an avenue for long-smothered voices, I follow trails of memories in the narratives that are scattered across geopolitical borders and settings.[6]

My desire to investigate Palestinian narratives in exile has guided my decision to focus on a limited number of cultural objects. My corpus consists of two literary texts, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's novel *The Ship* (1985) and Liyana Badr's collection of short stories *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* (1993); two films, Tawfiq Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un* (The Dupes, 1972) and

Mohammed Bakri's *1948* (1998); and a collection of oral narratives that was published in 1998 by the *Journal of Palestine Studies* as "Reflections on Al-Nakba," combined with some personal interviews that I conducted in my fieldwork in the Gaza Strip in 2004. For this corpus I have chosen what I consider to be important and essential narratives. Mine is definitely not an encyclopedic approach; nevertheless I have made an effort to choose narratives from diverse geopolitical settings, a diversity that reflects the plural sensibilities of the Palestinian experience.

The subtitle of this book, "Telling Memories," is programmatic of the underlying principle of my analysis. From the beginning, readers will quickly discover that the narrative constellation between the act of remembering the loss of homeland and the act of telling this loss in exile is crucial to my argument. I posit an unstable relationship between the historical *Nakba* of 1948, as the starting point for this study, and the conceptual metaphor of "catastrophe" as a cultural-narrative motif. In deploying *al-Nakba* in this way, as both the material event and the conceptual metaphor, my analysis not only tracks the diverse contours of Palestinian memory representations of the past loss of place but also accounts for the processes of narration through which these memories are told in the present. My point is that the memorial modes of storytelling, or what I specify as "fragmented narrativity" or "exilic narrativity" and "performative narrativity," respectively, are at the heart of how Palestinians narrate loss of homeland in exile. Thus, my formulation of the title maintains the distinctive theoretical aspects and cultural significations of the two terms, "telling" and "memories," in order to show how they can work together in taking the past memory of *al-Nakba* into the present and the future, both in time and space. Palestinian exilic narratives have a performative function in the precarious preservation of cultural optimism or even stability in the face of the ongoing catastrophe.

My focus on the memory of loss of homeland and its narrativity in exile is prompted by the cultural dynamics of *al-Nakba*, not merely as the political event of the establishment of the state of Israel (or loss of Palestine), nor even as the humanitarian event of the creation of the world's most enduring military occupation and refugee problem, but rather as the existential experience that continues to define most Palestinian history, shatters their society, and simultaneously consolidates their shared national consciousness. Indeed, memories of *al-Nakba* reinforce the centrality of the land in Palestinian identity discourses. As we will see in the following chapters, Palestinians acknowledge both the presence and the absence of the homeland as an

existential resource: they experience the loss of place in exile as the loss of a whole way of life.

More relevant to my point about remembering and storytelling from a cultural-analytic point of view is that Palestinians' memories of *al-Nakba* also influence the substance and the style of their narratives of exile. In his article, "Half a Century of Palestinian Folk Narratives" (2007), Sharif Kanaana examines the rupture and dislocation in Palestinian folk narratives that accompanied the overall rupture of *al-Nakba*. According to Kanaana, in the aftermath of *al-Nakba* many changes occurred in the types of narratives Palestinians told and their habits of narration. These changes, Kanaana writes, can be summarized in two broad trends. The first is that

> traditional narrative genres ceased to be used, totally or partially. The genres associated with truth and believability, that is, men's genres, went out of use much faster than did genres associated with fiction and imagination, that is, women's genres. (2)

And the second trend is that

> [a] strong politicization of folk narratives occurred after 1948, and two types of narratives took the place of traditional types. One type consisted of narratives of war and loss of homeland. The other came later and was connected with the immediate political situation under Israeli occupation. The new narrative types are less sharply divided by gender, and more by age, than traditional narrative types. (2–3)

Following Kanaana's thematic division but not as a typology, I consider both narrative themes—that of war and loss of homeland and that of the immediate political situation under Israeli occupation—as one type of Palestinian narratives, namely "exilic narrative."[7]

In order to gain purchase on the memories of *al-Nakba* and modes of storytelling in Palestinian exilic narratives, I develop an interdisciplinary approach. This approach adopts insights from a range of disciplines and subdisciplines such as literary theory, especially narratology and postcolonial criticism, media and audiovisual analysis, and cultural anthropology. I use "interdisciplinarity" in the sense of Roland Barthes's conceptualization of the term in his article "Jeunes Chercheurs". According to Barthes,

> Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing

> to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a "subject" (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one. (1972: 3)[8]

This view of interdisciplinarity is foregrounded in my method, which I call cultural analysis.

In her edited volume, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis* (1999c), Mieke Bal offers the framing theoretical backgrounds and analytical coordinates of cultural analysis as an interdisciplinary, self-reflexive practice that "seeks to understand cultural objects and theories from the past as part of the present" (1). Against complaints about certain vagueness in cultural studies, Bal contends that cultural analysis "does have an object that is specific enough, as well precise methodological starting point" (2). The issues at the core of this methodology, Bal continues, include "the standpoint in the present and subsequent relation to history, close reading, and methodological (self-) reflection" (13). These issues, as Jonathan Culler argues, highlight the main differences between cultural analysis and cultural studies. According to Culler, cultural analysis defines itself in terms of a self-reflexive methodology, which does not settle the debate between popular and high cultures in prematurely operational terms. Instead, as a "particular kind of theoretical engagement," cultural analysis blasts spaces open for dialogue (1999c: 345).[9]

The present-orientedness and self-reflexivity of its practice and the dialogic relations that its technique of close reading constructs between past and present and between the analyst and his or her object of analysis: these are the elements of the methodology of cultural analysis that I found particularly useful for the present investigation. In the following chapters, I elaborate on all these elements in some detail in view of the ways in which I adopt them in my analysis of Palestinian exilic narratives. For now it suffices to say that my close readings of these narratives do not, to borrow Bal's terminology, "claim some sort of 'purity' from the object of analysis" (1999c: 37). Instead, I actively interact with these narratives by acknowledging my own situatedness (or personal inflection) as the analyst, as well as the narratives' specificity as cultural objects. This means that Palestinian narratives are both open to questioning and at the same time question the theories that I bring to bear on them. The method of cultural analysis turns the cultural object into a subject participating in the construction of theoretical views. The relationship between the cultural object and the conceptual discourse

is not arbitrary in the sense of haphazard but neither is it necessary: the cultural object, so to speak, theorizes on *its own* terms (13). This is why the objects in these transactions are often called "theoretical objects."[10] Finally, although my readings retain close attention to the details of Palestinian exilic narratives, they do not stay inside the texts. Rather, I tentatively place these narratives in their contexts and see how the contexts are affected by these narratives and vice versa. In other words, I propel the narrative's past context into a present one, and examine their function as part of contemporary Palestinian cultural memory. This interplay between the narratives' text and context, from past into present, transforms them into, to borrow Barthes' words, new objects that belong to no one.

In this interdisciplinary setting, my readings of Palestinian exilic narratives will unpack the ways in which their modes of storytelling can bear on a specific system of memory representation of *al-Nakba*. What are the narrative devices and stylistic patterns through which the loss of homeland is expressed in these narratives? And what do these, in turn, reveal about the implications of literary, audiovisual, and oral texts for alternative epistemic insights about the rhythm and order of Palestinian identities and memories of loss of place in the cultures of exile creating them?

Each of the following chapters addresses issues pertinent to debates over Palestinian cultural memory and identity such as nostalgia and trauma, narrative fragmentation and notions of home and forced travel, space-time configurations and the anti-linearity of memory, the play of power in memory and the meanings of silence and denial, performance as representationally performative, and "post-memory" and geopolitical continuity of loss of place in the everyday. By way of detailed readings of textual and audiovisual imagings of loss of homeland and collective articulations of identity, I demonstrate how the complex modes of memorial storytelling of *al-Nakba* function as an alternative discourse of Palestinian exilic identity, which not only challenges official versions imposed by dominant Zionist discourses, but also tests the limits of literary and cultural criticism of the condition of Palestinian exile. Palestinian exilic narratives utilize memorial storytelling as a mode that scrutinizes different retellings and realizations of the same story or related stories of *al-Nakba*, so that they give coherence and meaning for the aftermath of that catastrophe as "the ongoing catastrophe." Most importantly, memorial storytelling offers a cultural envisioning that calls on a specific notion of collective memory in narrative, not only as an assertion or testimony of the past *Nakba* but as a point of departure that exposes the repetitive

quality of past loss of place as well as the durability of this loss in the present. Current exile: this is where we are steeped in Palestinian narratives as specific media manifestations of cultural memory in which the ongoing spatiotemporality of *al-Nakba* appears particularly intense and urgent.

In Chapter 1, my analysis of Jabra's novel *The Ship* examines the formations of shattered cultural memory of *al-Nakba* under the concept of "nostalgia" in relation to the traumatic loss of homeland. "Nostalgic memory," I will attempt to show, need not always to be negative. Rather, nostalgic memory can be taken as a potentially productive mode of remembering that goes beyond recovering or idealizing the past, and instead functions as a cultural response to the loss of home in exile; what I will call "a reconstitution of injured subjectivities." This positive function of nostalgia is possible and offers a cultural potential of great value, because nostalgic memory, I argue, is a present-oriented memorization that links the past to the present and future: a cultural recall of a traumatic past of loss of place that constantly impinges on equally problematic immediate present of exile.

In Chapter 2, I analyze Badr's collection of short stories *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* as a collection of cultural expressions that expose the psychic consequences of the loss of homeland and repeated displacements for the minds and lives of Palestinians. I base my analysis of these narratives on the assumption that in the everyday of exile the subject's memory of *al-Nakba* shifts, in time and space, from a nostalgic memory of the lost homeland to a "critical memory" of his or her immediate experience of being denied access to this place. Within this shifting framework of memory, my reading of Badr's short stories shows how Palestinian exile constitutes an entangled spatiotemporal condition of forced travel and undesired movement. This actual condition, I argue, involves a past loss of homeland but also, crucially, an everyday denial of access to home. Within this condition, the subject is physically denied his or her cultural space of selfhood. As we will see, Badr's collection presents this condition to the readers through a fragmented narrativity. Multiple voices and instances of personal memories are conjured up repeatedly as concrete (verbal) imaginations. Each of these literalizes, retrospectively, conceptual metaphors of "travel," "movement," and "mobility" in Palestinian exile; these imagings of loss of place expose the subject's present denial of access to home as an effective construct of identification that prompts his or her meanings of Palestine as the (lost) homeland, not the other way around.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on audiovisual narratives of *al-Nakba*. My analysis of these narratives progresses from discussing how Palestinian

exile constitutes an actual condition of displacement to an examination of the relationship between Palestinian identity and the exilic space itself. In other words, both chapters mark a transition from how narratives of loss of homeland assert cultural notions of a denied subjectivity in exile to the performance of space through collective images and discourses of historical uprooting of 1948 within the geopolitical continuity of exile. At the heart of this transition is the question of how audiovisual (filmic) narratives reactivate, through memory, collective flows of reterritorialization against continuing deterritorialization. With regard to memorial storytelling of *al-Nakba*, I will reflect on Palestinian identity in its spatiotemporal negotiation of the rigorous boundaries between "home" and "not-home" in two related ways.

In Chapter 3, my analysis of Saleh's film *Al-Makhdu'un* develops a vision of the connection between audiovisual storytelling and memory of loss of homeland, a connection I will indicate with the term "exilic narrativity," as a spatially charged mode of fragmented narrativity that has the potential to take the literary "imaging" of exile in Jabra's novel and Badr's short stories to its visual version: the image evoked in language can be shown in the film. *Al-Makhdu'un*'s exilic narrativity, I argue, connects spatial representations of Palestinian collective memory to the exercise of political power. It exposes a transformation of the construction of Palestinian identity, from catastrophe and victimization to ideology and political movements.

What are the details of this construction? And how does it take shape in audiovisual narratives of *al-Nakba*, especially in relation to the notions of Palestinian "self" and Israeli "other" and their conflicted discourses of memory? These two questions are the focus of my discussion of Bakri's film *1948* in Chapter 4. My analysis examines the ways in which exilic narrativity is put to use in a post-*Nakba* culture where Palestinian identity, but in different ways also Israeli identity, is addressed, and potentially influenced by audiovisual narratives of *al-Nakba*. This is what I will refer to in my discussion of *1948* as "performative narrativity." The notions of the play of power in memory, the meanings of silence and denial, and performance as representationally performative will be crucial to understanding the film's performative narrativity as a special case of exilic narrativity that has the performativity effect to transform, slowly and through iteration, the formation of identity of the viewer. Audiovisual narratives of *al-Nakba*, I argue, not only present us with a stark example of a displaced identity but also articulate the construction of Palestinian identity as a matter of existing "in the act" of collective reenactments and the cultural recall of loss of place in and for exile: an

exilic identity that needs to be performed through continuous practices of retellings and re-readings.

Finally, Chapter 5 explores oral narratives of *al-Nakba*. Two sets of objects are central to this chapter: a collection of the narratives that was published in 1998 by the *Journal of Palestine Studies* as "Reflections on Al-Nakba," and a selection of personal interviews that I conducted in my fieldwork in the Gaza Strip (2004). My analysis focuses on cultural processes of the preservation of collective memory and the roles they play in the construction of a Palestinian exilic identity. In particular, I address the question how the geopolitical continuity of loss of homeland affects our understanding of the daily exile of subsequent generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians as an ongoing catastrophe in the present? I attempt to provide an answer to this question in two analytical parts.

In the first part in connection with the collection "Reflections on Al-Nakba," I propose an alternative reading of oral accounts of *al-Nakba*. Instead of treating these accounts as ethnographic fieldwork notes, I treat them like the literary and audiovisual narratives I analyze in this study; namely as narrative configurations of memory in exile. What underlies this mode of reading, as we will see, is a shift of focus from the historical catastrophe of 1948 to the everyday condition of exile; a condition I will mobilize in my discussion as the *mankoub* (catastrophed subject). A reading of oral accounts of *al-Nakba* as configurations of memory in this narrative framework, I argue, may provide a useful analytical tool. This tool not only attends to the nuances of loss of homeland and forced exile with which many narratives of *al-Nakba* resonate but at the same time exposes, through memorial storytelling, cultural imaginings (or when particularly audiovisual, "imagings") of practices of Palestinian identity in terms of an event/subject constellation between the past and present experiences of catastrophe.

I conclude this chapter, and the book, with the personal interviews that I conducted in my fieldwork in the Gaza Strip in 2004. In this section I draw on the problematic notions of "post-memory" and geopolitical continuity of loss of place in the everyday. I do so in order to derive a tentative "imaginative-discursive" framework for the analysis of the generational transmission of the memory of *al-Nakba* within exile.

Within this framework, I do not use the term "post-memory" to suggest that *al-Nakba* is in the past, but on the contrary, to suggest that the originating moment of the ongoing catastrophe has been transmitted to later generations of Palestinians. To put it differently, I use the term as shorthand for the presentness of a temporal, ongoing *Nakba*. As I will attempt to show, narratives of subsequent generations of

post-*Nakba* Palestinians expose a resoundingly present-oriented model of post-memory. At the heart of this model, subsequent generations of Palestinians take the position of the previous generations in terms of the effect of the trauma of *al-Nakba* in their parents' past experience. Most importantly, the distinction between memories of what the previous generations lived through in 1948 and what the subsequent generations experience 64 years later, may become so blurred that the intergenerational continuity of loss of place can in fact be sustained both in memory and experience. This is so simply because the Palestinians' loss of homeland, through their exile, did not stop. Hence, in the case of Palestinians, the problem of the term "post-memory" is not so much with memory but with "post." The "post," I argue, is by no means constitutive of the experience of catastrophe of subsequent generations of Palestinians: they do not have just post-memories of *al-Nakba*. Rather, Palestinian cultural memory is diffuse: the past and the present are more closely bound up together than in other situations. Whereas the first generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians have memories and experiences of the originating event of *al-Nakba*, second and third generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, although they have not experienced this originating moment (1948), are still "inside" the event itself living the catastrophe on a daily basis as *mankoub* subjects whose lands as much as lives are being persistently violated under Israeli occupation and in exile.

CHAPTER 1

Nostalgic Memory and Palestinian Identification

> And Nostalgia for Yesterday?
> A sentiment not fit for an intellectual,
> unless it is used to spell out the stranger's fervor for that which negates him.
> My nostalgia is a struggle over a present which has tomorrow by the balls.
>
> —Mahmoud Darwish (2004)[1]

Like those of many exiled Palestinians either inside or outside historic Palestine, the words of prominent poet Mahmoud Darwish express a nostalgia for a past that Palestinians experience when they identify themselves as "Palestinians" in a present in which there is no independent Palestinian state. In the wake of the events of 1948, *al-Nakba* emerged in Palestinian culture as a concept that signifies an unbridgeable break between the past and the present, and that romanticizes the Palestinians' loss of the homeland as a loss of paradise. In her vast research on Palestinian exiles in Lebanon, Rosemary Sayigh describes their feelings of being expelled from paradise as a sentiment that is not exclusive to this specific segment of Palestinians.[2] This articulation of a lost paradise signifies a nostalgia for a relatively distant past. Nostalgia, as Barbara McKean Parmenter notes in her book *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature*, became "the most characteristic element of Palestinian literature in the decades following *al-Nakba*" (1994: 43). In this chapter, I argue that this nostalgia informs the Palestinians' cultural memory of loss of place in exile, through which both their sense of themselves

as Palestinian subjects and their identification with Palestine as their homeland are shaped and, crucially, reshaped.

Before beginning to tackle this argument, let me lay out briefly some definitions of my principal concept, *nostalgia*. With its Greek roots, *nostos* meaning "to return home" and *algos* meaning "pain," the word *nostalgia* came to signify, at first, a severe condition of homesickness. This medical-pathological definition of nostalgia dominated seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' understanding of the term. But by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a considerable semantic shift had occurred in which the word lost its purely medical connotations: nostalgia went from being a curable medical illness to an incurable condition of the psyche as the modern cultural disease per se.[3] In contemporary theory, nostalgia has often been criticized as a negative sentiment that entails an emotional addiction to an unreliable and idealized past. According to its critics, nostalgia makes the past appear as more attractive to live in than the present and hence can make people want to relive the past and invent allegedly ancient traditions, while turning away from the present. In this view, nostalgia is seen in opposition to progress. It supposedly emerges because of an identity crisis or lack of self-confidence; it paralyzes political agency in the present, and therefore, by and large, it remains a sentiment to be shunned.[4] Yet, it seems to me that such critiques do not address several important issues nostalgia calls forth, particularly the questions of how the past is transmitted to the present and of how this transmission might be productively used in order to specify notions of cultural memory and identity.

What motivates my questioning is an attempt to account for the collective workings of nostalgia in geopolitically conflicted discourses of memory and identity such as that of Palestinian *al-Nakba* and exile. Instead, therefore, I take nostalgia as an emotion that allows for a form of cultural transmission of memory. Within this transmission, historical and political purposes can vary, and thus the emotion can bear a complex and potentially productive relationship to the past. My contention is that, in the context of a loss of homeland, the process of idealizing the past is simultaneously linked to a process of identification with the legacies of that past in the present. The object of nostalgia is as much a part of the present as it is of the past. The subject cannot idealize this object (the homeland) without at the same time identifying with it. Thus, rather than arguing with or against nostalgia's idealizing impulses, I wish to examine alternative uses that these impulses might fulfill in the identification processes between the subject and his or her

(lost) place as (re)presented in Palestinian literary and cultural artifacts. At stake in my discussion, then, is a shift of focus from nostalgia as a mere psychic sentiment to the ways in which this sentiment is employed as a cultural response to the loss of homeland. In my case, nostalgia functions as a political activity of remembering that, as Darwish puts it in the poem quoted as epigraph to this chapter, is "used to spell out the stranger's fervor to that which negates him." Hence, the emotion can help configure alternative spatiotemporal relations between the Palestinian subject and his or her past and present conditions of loss of home and exile.

In this view, understanding the dynamics of transmitting the past into the present necessarily requires, as Nanna Verhoeff argues in her book *The West in Early Cinema: After the Beginning* (2006), studying a sentiment that is more specific than the general term *nostalgia* suggests. For Verhoeff, "instead of dismissing nostalgia as sentimental and escapist, we should understand that sentiment as historically relevant and culturally helpful" (149–50). Moreover, rather than perceiving nostalgia as a romantic longing for the past in order to escape the present, one should perceive it as a longing that attempts to deal with a problematic present. In other words, Verhoeff continues, "where the present is in crisis, the recent past whose loss partly accounts for that crisis can be invoked, absorbed and integrated within the present [. . .] Thus, the present and the past become unified in a nostalgia that functions as an investment of the past *in* the present" (149).[5]

In his article "Nostalgia for Ruins" (2006), Andreas Huyssen puts forward a similar productive impulse of nostalgia. According to Huyssen, the contemporary obsession with ruins in a European context has developed as part of a much broader discourse about memory and trauma, genocide, and war. This obsession "hides the nostalgia for an earlier age of modernity that had not yet lost its power to imagine other futures" (6). For Huyssen,

> [. . .] it will not do to simply identify the desire for authenticity with nostalgia and to dismiss this nostalgia as a cultural disease, as Suzan Stewart argues in her book *On Longing*. Neither will it do to understand the modern imagination of ruins and its link to the sublime as expressing nothing but phantasies of power and domination [. . .] (15)

Rather, Huyssen claims,

> the dimension present in any imaginary of ruins but missed by such reductive critiques is the hardly nostalgic consciousness of the transitoriness of

> all greatness and power, the warning of imperial hubris, and the remembrance of nature in all culture. (16)

Unlike what has been generally allowed in recent discussions, both Verhoeff's and Huyssen's views put forward a distinctively different approach to nostalgia. Their views introduce nostalgia not as an opposite to the idea of progress but as a special case of it. Through investment, nostalgia turns from a negative category held hostage to the past into a productive activity that can help people, applying Darwish's words, to "struggle over a present which has tomorrow by the balls."

In what follows I will chart some of the ways in which nostalgia travels in Palestinian culture from derogatory to productive. The focus of my discussion, therefore, will be on the dynamics of the Palestinians' nostalgia for the lost homeland, in relation to other and related concepts such as "trauma," "exile," "memory," and "identification," as presented in the writings of the first generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians who lived and witnessed *al-Nakba*. The object of my analysis is Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's novel *The Ship*, which I take as an example of this literature. Jabra (1920–1994), who resided in Iraq after he was expelled from Palestine in 1948, is one of the most distinguished Palestinian writers who lived and died in exile. His novel *The Ship*, published in Washington in 1985, is the English translation of *Al-Safina*, originally published in Arabic in Beirut in 1970. In *The Ship*, the story of the exiled Palestinian Wadi Assaf, and particularly his experience and memory of *al-Nakba*, serves to buttress the novel's argument in detailing the Palestinians' nostalgia in general and their cultural memory of loss of home in particular.[6]

A close reading of *The Ship*, coupled with a selection of insights provided by theorists working in the field of cultural memory, will demonstrate that Jabra's novel, as a literary narrative written from the point of view of the first generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, transmits the cultural memory of *al-Nakba* through detailing a specific and productive form of nostalgia by which a sense of attachment to the lost homeland emerges in the presence of exile. To illustrate how this can work, I first briefly discuss what I mean by the productive potential of nostalgia. As I will argue below, central to *The Ship*'s emphasis on the past is the concept of "trauma." Nostalgia helps to overcome this trauma. I will then move on to the narratives of the two main characters Isam Al Salman and Wadi Assaf. I read these stories in light of their nostalgia's dependence on a return to a traumatic past of loss, as well as in relation to their different attitudes with regards to escaping the land and its past: Isam has a homeland (Iraq) but is determined to flee its burdens;

Wadi lost his homeland (Palestine) yet constantly searches for ways to reattach himself and return to his land. It is the Palestinian side of this split between the narrators that ultimately concerns me in this chapter.

Nostalgia and Trauma

The Ship is about a group of people at sea on a cruise through the Mediterranean. The story begins as the ship departs the land. It is narrated by two main narrators, Isam (an Iraqi engineer) and Wadi (a Palestinian merchant), and one marginal narrator, Emilia Franesi (an Italian divorcée). While Isam and Wadi take turns in their narration of most of the sections in the novel, Emilia only speaks once. Each narrates different parts of the action that takes place on the ship.

In this novel, Jabra makes use of multiple points of view, interior monologues, first-person narration, and most of the technical devices associated with modernist stream-of-consciousness style such as memory flashbacks, italicized words, and peculiar punctuation. These devices function as a way of revealing the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters and to disclose their memories of the past. In fact, the novel as a whole is made up of a set of monologues and long discussions between a group of people, all highly educated and well informed in literature, mythology, and philosophy, despite their respective professions of engineer, merchant, and physician. The only two actions that happen in the novel are two recollections, what can be called "acts of memory": acts that reveal memory to be a cultural activity in the present of the characters by which they constitute themselves as subjects in a process of identification.[7] The first recollection is of a love escapade in a car recalled by Isam. The second recollection, much longer and more central, is the story of Wadi and his friend Fayez, who dies while defending his hometown during the events of 1948. As acts of memory, both recollections expose not an individual but a collective memory in the sense that the narrative representation of the characters' past includes a larger history than that in which these characters live.

The story that unfolds in *The Ship* is one of loss of place, agony, and nostalgia for a relatively distant past. While the characters suffer in the present (in this case, the late 1960s), their grief emanates from a past agony that shapes memory as nostalgic yearning. Indeed, in its emphasis on the past, *The Ship* seems to turn sharply toward a nostalgia that exhibits obsessive Palestinian longing for a lost home and its past times. The novel ends with a description of the past, and its final scene is set in the lost homeland. However, the past of the lost homeland to which *The Ship* returns is a troubled one. *The Ship*'s nostalgia for this past is not

conventional. It is not a nostalgia that aims at recovering the past of the lost homeland as an idealized site of origin. Rather, the concern of the novel, as it turns to the relatively distant Arab past in general, and to the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948 in particular, from the vantage point of the Arab condition in the late 1960s, is with the issue of the cultural transmission of memory. As such, the novel portrays the agonized self, its political and ideological distortions, and the varieties of nostalgias through which the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, apprehend their past in the present. *The Ship*, therefore, presents a specific form of nostalgia that is built on a juxtaposition of past and present, the preagonized self and the present, together with the hesitations and anxieties of each. Within this nostalgia, the past constantly inhibits the present. This inhibiting effect seems to underscore the negative views of nostalgia. At the heart of *The Ship*'s conception of how the past inhibits the present, however, lies the concept of "trauma." I will argue that in the confrontation of nostalgia with trauma, the more productive potential of nostalgia may be realized.

For this discussion, I adopt a discursive notion of trauma, following Ernst van Alphen's conceptualization of the term in his article "Symptoms of Discursivity: Experience, Memory and Trauma" (1999a). I find Van Alphen's argument most useful for my discussion of nostalgia and trauma in the Palestinian case because he addresses trauma as a cultural concept that operates within the realm of discourse and that is closely linked to other concepts such as "experience" and "memory." Van Alphen outlines an important aspect of experience that pays careful attention to cultural implications.[8]

In his discussion, Van Alphen examines the interconnectedness of experience and discourse. At stake in this relationship, as he argues, is the notion that "subjects are the effects of the discursive processing of their experiences." The subject's experience, moreover, does not "depend on the event or history that is being experienced but also on the discourse in which the event is expressed, thought and conceptualized" (24). Thus, for Van Alphen, the interconnectedness between experience and discourse is grounded in the understanding that "experience depends on factors that are fundamentally discursive." Discourse here does not constitute "a subservient medium in which experiences can be expressed. Rather, discourse plays a fundamental role in the process that allows experiences to come about and in shaping their form and content" (25). As Van Alphen succinctly puts it, to understand experience as the result of an integration of what is happening in discourse is to suggest that "experience can no longer be strictly individual.

Although experience is subjectively lived, it is at the same time culturally shared" (37).

At the heart of this intricate understanding of experience and discourse, trauma occupies a central position. According to Van Alphen, trauma can be seen as

> failed experience, because in the case of a traumatic event the discursive process that enables experience to come about has stalled. Failed experience excludes the possibility of a voluntarily controlled memory of the event: it implies at the same time the discursivity of "successful" experience and memory. We can now say that experience and memory are enabled, shaped, and structured according to the parameters of available discourses. (36)

Thus, it is in trauma as a "failed experience" (or an experience that has not come about) that the close connection between experience and discourse is disrupted. This disruption, to paraphrase Van Alphen, enables us to see what makes experience discursive in the first place.[9]

With this discursive notion in mind, I treat trauma as a signifier of loss. By saying a "signifier," I mean that the trauma and the loss are not identical. Loss can be traumatic, in which case the trauma signifies it. In other cases, different signifiers come into play. Articulations of loss, however, can vary. In our novel, they vary from factual to experiential, depending on whether the loss corresponds to the death of a significant other or involves the experience of separation from this significant other. In my reading of *The Ship*, I consider both these articulations of loss as traumatic. This traumatic quality, however, is determined not so much by the nature of the loss that triggers it but by the discursive structure through which this loss is perceived and (not) understood. This is why I consider trauma a signifier. Trauma is not characterized by the extremity of the loss that takes place. Rather, borrowing Van Alphen's terminology, loss becomes traumatic for a person only when this person's symbolic order fails to provide consistent frames of reference in terms of which the loss can be experienced. As a result, trauma becomes legible on the level of discourse, where signification takes place or fails. Nostalgic memory does not take place on the level of discursive symbolization only. Instead, where trauma is generative of a form of paralysis, nostalgia makes dealing with the loss possible. And, since in both cases the relationship of the present to the past is at stake, this discursive notion of trauma enables me not only to distinguish trauma from nostalgic memory but also helps us assess trauma as a disorder of both memory and time.

This discursive notion of trauma can be productive for exposing the specific problems that Isam and Wadi experience in their return to the Arab past as they negotiate trauma and nostalgic memory. Both of them, albeit differently, return to the past not as a site of ideal wholeness and comfort, but as a site of historical disorder and political catastrophe. In this past the moment of traumatization took place. Yet, paradoxically Isam and Wadi invest this same moment with nostalgia. The historical moment in which their nostalgia is invested is one that stands for unwilled, that is traumatic, reenactments. Those reenactments persistently leap forward into the present and invade the agonized self. And yet, as *The Ship* presents it, within the compulsive return of the traumatic past into the present, a situation emerges that becomes enveloped in nostalgia, so that a moment of possible salvation comes into view. This moment of salvation is synchronized with the ongoing traumatic past by means of a nostalgia through which Isam's and Wadi's reenactments bring back with them a memory of a moment from the past that *preceded* the moment of trauma. In other words, the characters' return to the past not only shows nostalgia but also indicates why their nostalgia is not fulfilled in the present.

The Ship's portrayal of the cohesion of trauma and salvation suggests a cultural and political urgency, particularly for Palestinians. Through this cohesion the allegedly ideal past that existed, as well as the traumatic moment in which this past ceased to exist, can be loosened, opened up, and become subject to change. As I will show below, this potential salvation occurs in two distinct temporal forms. It arises not only through reenacting the moment that preceded the trauma in the past as in Isam's case, but also by transmitting the memory of that particular reenacted moment—simply to *tell it*, as in Wadi's case. To put it differently, rather than bearing the trauma of the past like Isam, Wadi transmits its presence. Thus the nostalgic return to, and *of,* the past as a site of catastrophe as well as salvation is an essential move through which dealing with the present and the future becomes possible.

This nostalgic return, in addition, always takes on specific cultural frameworks. In Isam's return, those frameworks expose the chaotic condition of the Arab world in the 1940s and 1950s, as initiated in large measure by Western colonial rule: British, French, and Italian. At the heart of this chaos is the Arabs' struggle with issues that relate to gender relations, tribal values, and oppressive authority. In Wadi's case, a nostalgic return to the Arab past exposes its disorder in terms of political betrayal and military defeat, both in 1948 and 1967, against the backdrop of the loss of Palestine. In his return, Wadi reflects on

Palestinians' forced expulsion, their attempts to establish a link with the lost homeland in exile, and their inability to reclaim this land in the present. Hence, the aim behind the nostalgic return to the past is not to recover the ideal time of the homeland. Instead, it is a transmission of memory that attempts to bridge the gap in exile between the subject and the object of loss, between the Palestinians and Palestine. In this sense, nostalgic memory can be put to work as a cultural response to loss of homeland in exile. In order to delineate this mode of remembering, I first discuss Isam's nostalgic return.

The Sea: Lovers' Escape and Vicious Dogs

In the beginning of *The Ship*, Isam attempts to escape from his land as a way of healing his past wounds only to find that escape is nothing but an illusion—a kind of reenactment. This is so because there is nowhere to escape to; hence, the setting on a ship. The opening passage, narrated by Isam, contains the following description:

> The sea is a bridge to salvation—the soft, the hoary, the compassionate sea. Today, it has regained its vitality. The crash of its waves is a violent rhythm for the sap that sprays the face of heaven with flowers, large lips, and arms reaching out like alluring snares. Yes, the sea is a new salvation. (1)[10]

Isam's description reveals an obvious gendering of the sea. This gendering is brought about through the use of images such as "flowers," "large lips," and "arms." As a result, a feminine image of the sea emerges. Such a personification conforms to traditional feminizations of water and of nature more generally. Yet, what looks like a poetic description of the beauty of the sea turns into a statement that sets up the theme of the impossibility of escape. This impossibility is presented through the use of imagery of seduction and capture.

In the beginning of the passage, the sea is presented as a possible "bridge" that may lead to salvation. This possibility of salvation is suggested by the personification of the sea, as a soft compassionate entity that embraces people without a home. Yet the sea is neither soft nor compassionate. The sea is ever changing, and "[t]oday, it has regained vitality." The vitality of the sea is determined by its unstable cosmic rhythms. Because of its vitality, the sea is not only a place for compassion, but it can also be a place that harbors and produces "a violent rhythm." This violent rhythm, in turn, contains contradictory forces: beauty on

the one hand and danger on the other. The violent rhythm of the waves produces a vital force that "sprays the face of heaven." The spray of the sea contains beauty, "flowers and large lips," that entices a person into its seductive trap of alluring snares, from which it is difficult to escape. Thus, through the imagery of the "alluring snares," the sea not only becomes a confining or undesirable contrivance from which escape or relief is difficult but it also becomes a potent symbol of being lost and trapped.

This symbolism of entrapment is particularly evocative if we read this opening passage in terms of exile. Read as such, the sea can be interpreted, at first, as a bridge to salvation that leads the exile to a different destination, *somewhere else*. Later on, however, the sea becomes salvation itself: it becomes this somewhere else. The affirmation expressed in the final sentence supports this reading: "Yes, the sea is a new salvation." But how can the exile find salvation at sea, other than by drowning? Seen from this perspective, then, the exile remains stuck between the lost homeland and the new place that is unreachable. The sea, therefore, does not appear convincing as a place of salvation. This makes any interpretation of this image as naïvely nostalgic, inappropriate. Rather, the sea's image as a dangerous trap makes it appear as a *void*, a nonplace. This emptiness, which is potentially infinite, causes the escapee's feelings and thoughts to be caught in a nostalgic reminiscence that revolves on a past (and a place) left behind. As a result, the past from which the characters seek to escape constantly impinges on the present before which they stand helpless and cannot change. In front of that present they are deprived of their will. Hence, by means of its metaphoric language that hints at the difficulty of trauma in the face of discursive symbolization, the sea foregrounds the uselessness of escape. The sea is an empty space that imprisons its voyagers.

Besides the imagery of the sea as a void, the ineffectiveness of escape is also made visible in the temporal construction of the plot. Temporal disorder, one of the characteristics of trauma I have indicated above, is signified in the mode of storytelling. The plot in *The Ship* is constructed as "murder story" with a reversed chronology.[11] While the reader together with the narrators, except for Emilia who knows more, thinks that the gathering of this group of people on the ship is a matter of coincidence, by the end of the novel, the reader and the narrators discover that the gathering is the result of rigorous planning. The act of death (Dr. Falih's suicide), which triggers this revelation in the narrative, arrives as the culmination of the events and as the last step in the gradual process of revelation. This destabilizes the linear temporality of

the narrative. And, as a consequence, random events turn out to be part of a plot, and the plot turns out to be more multifaceted than initially assumed and presented by the narrators.

The temporality of the plot, thus, plays on the dualistic motif of appearance versus reality, the characters' gathering as a coincidence versus their gathering as planned, and thereby achieves an ironic effect. This effect, as Roger Allen and Adnan Haydar argue in their introduction to *The Ship*, is "produced through beginning the plot at a point that is close to its temporal ending as if to underscore that time in its chronological order and expansiveness is irrelevant" (1985: 8).[12] Instead, what counts in relation to time in the novel, is the moment at which the past is released in the present in order to accompany the possibility of the future. This moment is the same moment with which the novel starts: "the end," when the characters depart the land and their past. The narrative begins with this moment precisely because "the end" is *the* moment out of time that the characters are incapable of reaching. It is in this moment that the characters' past emerges. Accordingly, this moment causes them to question their own condition in the present and, through that uncertainty, it generates their nostalgia for the past.

This nostalgia enters the characters' present in the form of memory and recollection. A stark example of this nostalgia can be seen in the part that follows Isam's opening statement in which the reader is told of his failed love story with Luma Abdul Ghani. Isam states his reasons for being on the ship as follows:

> I am here in order to escape. I am here for many reasons, but mostly because I could not make Luma my own sea, my own ship, and my own adventure. (11)

These statements accentuate and motivate Isam's previous gendered focalization of the sea as a feminine figure. I use the verb "motivate" here following Phillipe Hamon's use of the term "motivation" to describe rhetorical devices that make a description pass as "naturally" belonging to the narrative that in fact they interrupt.[13] As soon as Isam utters these words, he indulges in a recollection from the past describing his failed love story with Luma. The narrative can be summarized as follows: Isam, an Iraqi engineer, falls in love with his fellow student Luma while studying at Oxford University in England. Upon their return to Iraq, Isam proposes to Luma. His attempt, however, is doomed to failure. Apart from class differences between their families, Luma turns out to be a relative of someone, Jwad Al Hamadi, whom Isam's father has

murdered over a land dispute. The moment Luma's family discovers this about Isam, they refuse his marriage proposal, and his relationship with Luma ends as she marries her cousin, Dr. Falih. As a result, Isam is determined to escape this painful past. For him, the only means to do so is by deserting his homeland.

Although Isam manages physically to escape the land by boarding the ship, he cannot escape the memory of his past with Luma in that place. In the same opening section, Isam meets Emilia Franesi who tells him that her marriage had "lasted a little over a year," leaving her "with nothing but the memory of the lush green mountains above Beirut and the feeling that she had to escape" (12). When Emilia tells Isam that she is escaping her past like him, she also reminds him that while it is possible to escape the land, the memory of that place remains inescapable. According to Emilia, the place returns, and is returned to, through memory: "'Do you understand?' She asked. 'It is the memory of a landscape, not an emotion; the memory of a country, not a man'" (12). At this point of the narrative, Emilia's view carries no weight for Isam. Her view, however, becomes more reliable shortly afterwards when Isam discovers that Luma and Dr. Falih are also travelling with them on the ship.

As the object of Isam's deep affection, and also the subject of his agony, Luma's presence accelerates his confrontation with the traumatic past of their separation. Describing the moment when he first sees Luma on the ship, Isam says:

> But Luma's face [. . .] is the face of tragedy, the face which haunts you forever, like desire and sorrow [. . .] I might forget it for days, for months, but then in a flash it would come flooding back. Feeling of stupor and inanity would leave me with a sense of drowning in sheer fury [. . .] When I saw her on the ship I wished she had not been there. I wished I could lower the ship's gangway to the wharf again and disappear into the crowds. I had run away from her, but there she was, standing before me, like a wall, like a giant, like the sea itself. (13)

Through the use of images such as "flooding" and "drowning," this passage is a continuation of the sea's image, which Isam reiterates throughout his focalization. Narratologically, Isam's florid style shifts narrative elements: it displaces narrative action into simile and metaphor with no coordination on the side of imagery. The metaphors go nowhere; they do not return to the object they are meant to illuminate. This lack of coordination can be seen, for example, when he says: "there she was, standing before me, like a wall, like a giant, like the sea itself."

In this sentence, the images of a "wall," "a giant," and "the sea" lack the requisite element of commonality.

It is this displacement of action and lack of coordination that, I argue, signifies trauma. In accordance with trauma, symbolization is disrupted, both on the narratological level of temporal sequence and on the metaphorical one where metaphors do not bring Isam closer to, but remove him farther from the elusive past. For Isam, Luma's face is a "face of tragedy" that keeps chasing him and from which he cannot escape. Like the traumatic past, her face unwilledly comes "flooding back" in a "flash," and it is accompanied by mixed feelings of shock, hollowness, and bewilderment. While Isam seeks to escape these mixed feelings, Luma's face stands in front of him "like a wall" that he cannot bypass: it *blocks* the possibility of escape. This blocking effect is precisely what makes Isam's experience "failed experience," in Van Alphen's terms. With regard to the event of his separation from Luma, Isam is incapable of making the necessary narrative frameworks in terms of symbolic order and discourse: we can say that his trauma resists integration. For him, the figure of Luma represents a "giant" from the past that inhibits and haunts his present. This giant is so powerful that it extends as "the sea itself" before which Isam stands impotent. The same sea that allowed him to escape now embodies the very reason for his flight.

Isam's response to Luma's presence on the ship presents yet another indication of the correctness of Emilia's view of how the past (or at least, figures from it) returns involuntary and somatically in the present. In one sense, the figure of Luma becomes a paradigmatic figure for portraying the return of the trauma of their separation that Isam failed to experience. For Isam, the figure of Luma is propelled from the past into the present and bears a message, invariably one of agony. Yet, in another sense, the figure of Luma does not bear the message of agony, but instead it, itself, is the message that turns into a sign that points back to the traumatogenic experiences of the past and forces those experiences back into his memory. Therefore, for Isam, Luma becomes a constant reminder of his trauma; a symptom of it. As a symptom, however, the figure of Luma does not merely signify individual loss, separation, and agony. Rather, as I will attempt to show, she carries with her underlying collective cultural disorder from the past that invades the present. This is more than a tragic love story. This cultural disorder is revealed through Isam's nostalgic return to the past.

Together with Isam's return to his own personal mishap with Luma, the reader is introduced to the wider cultural context of the Arab past. This past is represented as a time that contains cultural disorder and

political upheavals. Isam's love story with Luma fails due to circumstances that are beyond their control. What binds the personal and the political is the issue of values. The failure of their love story is determined by a familial tragic past that is never resolved, within an Iraqi society living during a chaotic transitional period shortly after independence, and struggling to move from traditional to modern values.[14] In Isam's story, this struggle is presented through the act of "tribal revenge," his father's murder of Jwad Al Hamadi, of which both Isam and Luma are suffering the results.

The struggle between traditional and modern values was a typical condition of the majority of the Arab societies during the 1940s and 1950s. Within the context of decolonization and political transformation into independent states, Arab societies not only faced cultural challenges centering on rapid changes in thinking about gender relations, tribal values, and class issues but they also faced tremendous political challenges such as democracy, nationalism, and military defeat. These difficult issues characterize the Arab past as a chaotic condition through which the Arab individual, as much as the societies, lived in limbo and stood paralyzed in the face of these challenges.[15]

In this context, a significant aspect to which Isam's return to the past alludes is the internal political situation of those societies: namely, the oppressive form of authority under which its citizens were ruled. This aspect is hinted at in the scene of the love escapade, the first main flashback in the novel. While Isam and Luma are making out, their act is interrupted by a violent "dog's barking" so that they are trapped in the car:

> I drove for a while longer, stopped the car, and started to kiss Luma [. . .] Suddenly, the night was rent by the sound of violent barking, and involuntarily Luma moved away from me. I turned on the ignition and the car sprang forward. We saw a man coming from a distance, his dogs around him, jumping and barking. "Turn back, Isam. Turn back!" Luma cried. I backed up, and the rear wheels of the car fell into a ditch [. . .] The engine roared, but the wheels turned in vain. "What a mess. What a mess," Luma kept repeating. "What does the man want? I am scared of dogs." The dogs bounced ahead of their master, filling the night with their vicious barking. Finally, the man arrived and suddenly flashed a light, which glared like an obscene eye among his dogs' eyes. (16)

The dogs with their master, later called "barking dogs around that ghost in the dark" (17), interrupt Isam's and Luma's act, and they also trigger in them a state of intense fear. Their fear, as I read it, is the fear

of an omnipresent oppressive political authority. My reading is justified by the use of the public imagery of "vicious dogs," which is often interpreted in Arabic popular speech as a metaphor for the security services and the police apparatus that adhere to the ruling political authority and sustain its cruel forms of governing.

However, at the end of the love scene, my reading of Isam's and Luma's fear, and the passage as a whole, as a political statement reflecting on the oppressive political authority in Arab societies, seems to be weakened by the fact that the dogs turn out to be harmless:

> He could have given us hell, for sure. We were trapped, and his dogs lunged at the car like a pack of wolves. Instead he gave us a smile. "Good evening. Are you stuck?" he asked with a gentle sympathy [. . .] "Don't worry," he said. He went back to check the wheels. (16)

Yet, despite the fact that the dog's master turns out to be a help for Isam and Luma, rather than doing them harm, my political reading is supported by the rhetorical fact that, later on in the novel, the metaphor of the "vicious dogs" occurs once again in Dr. Falih's return to the past. This repetition of the metaphor in Dr. Falih's recollection is important in relation to the identification of the characters in the novel.

Dr. Falih is the hyperliterate character, yet the most cynical. His despair and cynicism are not prompted by Palestinian or other contemporary political conflicts and dilemmas. He admits to alcoholism and hints at impotence (181). The depth of his existential angst exceeds that of the other characters and often contradicts the qualified optimism of Wadi's narrative. If Isam and Wadi divide Arab consciousness in *The Ship*, the suicidal Dr. Falih reflects the loss of cultural identity. His character gives voice to the fears of cultural collapse in the aftermath of *al-Nakba* and the political defeat of 1967. Dr. Falih does not think of himself as Arab; as a physician and a thinker he had crossed a line that collapsed his Arab identity. In his case, the land ceased to support his distinctive persona. Isam and Dr. Falih identify with each other not only because they belong to the same tribe and are both in love with the same woman, Luma, in spite of Dr. Falih's affair with Emilia Franesi, but also because they are Iraqis with a keen sense of nostalgia for "old-time Iraq": a time the Greeks called Mesopotamia (180–86). This can be seen, for example, in the notes that Dr. Falih leaves to Luma after his suicide. These notes, part memoir, part essay, and part narrative, are folded into Isam's final narration, and in them Dr. Falih describes himself as "a Greek god." This mythical resonance of Dr. Falih's conception of himself derives from the view

Emilia had of him when she first encountered him, "[w]hen she woke up, she saw me and thought I was a Greek God challenging her Italian femininity, a Greek God from the banks of the Arabian Euphrates, from the remote regions of the desert" (180). I only refer to Isam's and Dr. Falih's identification in passing, but in their narratives there are several references to life in ancient and medieval Iraq; their narratives incorporate a similar nostalgic desire to return to that time.

Returning now to the metaphor of the "vicious dogs" in Dr. Falih's recollections, we see that the dog's master obliquely becomes part of the community that is damaged. The dogs appear as harmful and they are even considered, together with what they symbolize (political authority), as an "inside enemy." In a conversation with Wadi and Mahmoud Al Rashid about politics and authority, Dr. Falih recounts the following scene from his past:

> One night [. . .] there was a very urgent case. In the usual way, the sick person's family explained to me how to get to their house [. . .] As ill luck would have it, I took a road with a number of vacant lots along it [. . .] I had barely walked more than twenty meters from my car when a dog came rushing toward me, barking. Behind it came another, then a third and a fourth. They were all stray dogs living in these empty spaces [. . .] Just imagine six or seven huge, black dogs. I could see their teeth gleaming even in the dark as they made ready to tear into my flesh. They formed a hideous circle around me, and their howling alone was more than enough to scare a complete tribe [. . .] my whole body was shaking [. . .] The key was in one of the pockets of the coat I had been using to keep those vicious teeth at bay [. . .] As I was looking for it and at the same time kicking out at the dogs, one of them bit me in the calf of my leg. When I used my utmost strength to get it off me, it ran away taking with it a piece of trousers and a bit of my skin too. (104–5)

The dogs turn out to be harmful as they take some of Dr. Falih's flesh. While the link to the oppressive form of authority does not directly appear in this passage, this connection is made in Dr. Falih's subsequent interpretation. When Wadi comments on the story by saying, "What a piece of luck!" (105), Dr. Falih directly says:

> You see what I mean by the guillotine? "The enemy?" You [Wadi] are thinking of the outside, and I [Falih] am thinking of the inside [. . .] We have to be prepared to face the enemy outside; fine, we agree on that. But what about the enemy inside, the solid teeth that stick into your flesh as you're on your way to save people closer to death? (106)

Dr. Falih's interpretation of his story makes clear that the metaphor of the "vicious dogs" stands for an oppressive form of authority, a "guillotine." Later on in the same conversation, Dr. Falih even hints that these dogs are similar, or even identical, to the ones that appear in Isam's recollection. This similarity between the dogs is established when Mahmoud is reading a passage from Dostoevsky's book *The Devils* (1872), which is about the thin line between authority as protection and authority as exploitation. In his immediate response to this passage, Dr. Falih says: "Do you mean, authority as the opening up of a blocked road, and authority as guillotine?" (108). Dr. Falih's interpretation of the protective role of authority as "the opening up of a blocked road" becomes a clear reference to the love escapade scene in which the master and his dogs help Isam and Luma from their trap on the road.

To be sure, these images of the "vicious dogs" as well as the tribalism expressed in Isam's and Falih's returns to the Arab past are not so much traumatic in their content—nasty dogs and the fight can cause trauma but they do not necessarily do so—but as a conveyer of temporal collapse. If it was not for the temporal and metaphorical disruptions of their storytelling, the reader would have no way to understand that Isam's and Dr. Falih's suffering is traumatic. Thus, it is the narratological structure and the words used that together become the symptom. Hence, time stands still, or past collapses with present: both traditional tribal culture and oppressive authority in their confining effects live on in the present of the characters and perpetuate their painful reality. In other words, the tribalism and the oppressive authority represent the constant impingement of the past on the present, erasing the boundaries between them, and thus rendering the latter helpless.

At this point of *The Ship*, the reader, sensitive to the recurrence of the motif of the dogs, sees the Arab past, through Isam's internal focalization, and complemented by Dr. Falih's, as a site of cultural disorder and political oppression. This chaos invades Isam's present, and therefore, appears as the legitimate reason for his escape. The political and the personal motivations for Isam's escape are intertwined to the point of indistinction, a prime symptom of the cultural chaos of nations whose development has been disrupted by colonization. Yet, Isam and Dr. Falih are not the only characters in the novel who return to the Arab past as a site of cultural disorder.

Another central figure who returns to this past is the exiled Palestinian Wadi. While Isam's and Dr. Falih's nostalgic return to the past exposes Arab societies' cultural and political struggles after decolonization, Wadi's return sets out to tell this past from the perspective of

a Palestinian specificity. In his return, Wadi presents us with a stark difference in focalization from that of Isam and Dr. Falih, particularly in relation to the subject's decision of escaping the land and its past. His focalization, thus, also has a different relationship to trauma and nostalgia. The difference, as I argue below, is that Wadi's nostalgia shifts in site from the temporal to the spatial: his is a yearning to return, not to a time, but to a place.

Mr. Palestine: The Past Between Truth and Lie

The first time Isam introduces us to Wadi, he describes him as a man who "would talk and laugh with gusto, and when he stopped talking, all other voices sounded like croaking noises" (18). Moreover, Wadi is the only character in *The Ship* whose physical appearance is described in detail:

> He [Wadi] was tall, and his shoulders were bent forward in eager anticipation of whatever lay ahead. His thick black hair was always perfectly combed and betrayed a sense of elegance and a care for his personal appearance. (18)

This description of Wadi involves more than an introduction of a character in the novel, Wadi is made into a character with a Palestinian specificity. This specificity emerges through the combination between Wadi's physical appearance and a particular accent. In his comment on Wadi's appearance, Isam makes clear that the appearance of Wadi influences his intuition of Wadi's identity. It is Wadi's Palestinian accent that confirms this intuition:

> I could sense right away that he was a Palestinian, and my intuition proved right when I heard his accent. He reminded me of many Palestinian students I had met in England. One thing has always surprised me about the Palestinians: their love for words, even when they speak in English. (18)

Not only does Isam's intuition of where Wadi comes from prove right, but Wadi's character is also given specific Palestinian characteristics, particularly his "accent" and his "love for words." Indeed, Wadi's love for words, hence, of storytelling, becomes a remarkable technical feature of *The Ship*. For example, Wadi's share in the conversations narrated by Isam amounts to about one-third of them.[16] As a result of this substantiality and specificity, Wadi becomes a figure who has all the trappings of "the Palestinian."

With regard to the larger issue of escaping one's homeland and past, Wadi's specificity and the great share in the narration that substantiates it serve as a narratological device that facilitates the occurrence of a different internal focalization. This focalization mediates between his personal memories and a more general Palestinian cultural memory. Thus, by having a space to speak up with a Palestinian accent, Wadi—focalized within Isam's generalizing discourse—becomes an allegorical figure for the Palestinian people. And, therefore, he becomes a qualified individual to address the Palestinian loss of the homeland. Moreover, Wadi's specificity as an allegorical figure gives his character an advantage over the other characters in *The Ship*. Thanks to that special status, his nostalgic return to the Palestinian past not only reflects individual narrative but also represents a collective one. His memories, opinions, and stories of the past cannot only be understood as elements of exclusively individual memory, but they can also be read as instances of a collective Palestinian memory of that past. To help understand how this general cultural memory can be seen in connection to trauma and nostalgia, the specificity of Wadi's character as well as his views on the chaos of the Arab past need to be understood first.

Wadi is a gregarious, engaging character. This is the perspective that Emilia offers when she describes him as a man who "will stop at nothing, at nobody [. . .], [and] who can attract men and women with such speed and respon[se] to every person looking for some warmth of his radiant sun" (158). Again here, like in Isam's description, Wadi's character is given a special status in the narrative, this time as a social magnet. Indeed, at times the other characters are defined by their relationship to Wadi. This does not mean, however, that Wadi's position is that of *the* hero in the novel; all the characters of *The Ship* are heroes in the sense that each contributes one or more pieces to a complex mosaic, at the center of which is the land. In fact, if there was a single hero, then, this would be the land since, as Roger Allen and Adnan Haydar put it in their introduction to *The Ship*, "the quest for [it] is the motivating force behind the action of the novel" (1985: 9). Wadi's status is special precisely because his relationship to the land is unique. The image of the land saturates his discourse and sharply contradicts the image of the sea with which Isam's narrative abounds. His only real dispute with the other characters, particularly with Isam, is about alienation from one's roots and land. Like Isam, Wadi sees the Arab past as a time of cultural disorder. Yet, unlike Isam, he does not see this disorder as a legitimate reason to escape one's land. In so doing, not only does Wadi offer a different interpretation of the past and its chaos, but he also stabilizes his

own position as a composite figure of a focalizer, a narrator in his own right, and a transmitter of the (Palestinian) narrative.

To be sure, in Isam's case the land is an imagined enemy that drives a wedge between him and Luma and compels him to escape. His chief worry is precisely the obsession with the land and the tribal traditions and the oppressive forms of authority bound up with it, which maintained their hold on contemporary Arab culture, and still do so. This is why Isam is continuously searching for ways to break his ties with his homeland. His decision to sever his relationship to the land is a voluntary one. In sharp contrast to Isam, Wadi has been driven out from his land, and, as a result, has lost an integral part of his identity. Wadi's journey on the ship away from his homeland is simply one of the multiple journeys he is compelled to undertake in his forced exile. He always keeps alive his dream of returning to his land, and so he is deeply troubled by the past. When Dr. Falih, for example, dismisses Wadi's obsession with the past because he would be "like most Palestinians, obsessed with himself," Isam gives it a spin: "[m]ost Palestinians are obsessed with the innocence they've lost and want to regain" (94). According to Wadi, Isam "must return to his land, to his roots, in order to find the freedom" he is searching for (75). With respect to nostalgia and trauma, this dispute between Isam and Wadi and the differences between their perspectives on escaping the land distinguish their characters psychologically, of course, but the cultural and political dimensions, especially Wadi's insistence on the value of the land in his life as a Palestinian subject, are vital here.

In Wadi's account, specific political betrayals are responsible for the chaos of the Arab past. The most poignant example of these betrayals that Wadi offers in his story is the British betrayal of Palestinians during their colonial mandate in Palestine (1922–1948). Wadi accuses the British of handing over Palestine to the Zionists and allowing them to move into forward positions before the Palestinians could establish themselves in Jerusalem:

> At the beginning of May 1948, modern Jerusalem was a battleground between Arabs and Jews. Actually the British army had not departed yet, but it had left things to the Arabs and the Jews, thereby feigning "complete" neutrality [. . .] It was understood that the army would be withdrawing on the fifteenth of May and that the camp and everything in it would be handed over to the Arab freedom fighters [. . .] The appointed day approached. Our morale was high and communications with other parts of the Arab world were still good. However, early on the morning

> of the fourteenth of May, we were surprised to see the British army moving its vehicles and equipment and withdrawing a day earlier than agreed [. . .] The army was withdrawing and actually handing over the modern city [known as West Jerusalem nowadays] to the Jews, step by step, under its protection. We suddenly became aware of the Jewish advance from every direction, filling the void which the British were leaving behind them. (56–57)

Hence, the loss of Palestine. According to Wadi, the betrayal of the Palestinians embodies the chaos of the Arab world. For him, this political betrayal is also invariably linked to bodily and moral ones. When Wadi participates in a general discussion about "truth" and "lie," he describes the disorder of the Arab past as epistemological failure of exactly these notions. To describe this failed epistemology, Wadi takes both the "shameful meaning of the body" and its "animalistic nature" as his points of departure:

> You see when it comes to love and sex, I'm romantic. If you come with me when we get to Naples, you will understand what I mean. I am on vacation now [. . .] In Naples [. . .] you'll understand the meaning of the body. It is a shameful meaning. And why? Because it's the animal in you. The body is the only irrefutable truth. The thing which connects you and me with beasts. Why be supercilious and hypocritical? In Naples, we'll get four, five, six women, depending on the size of the room, and there we shall behold wonders. The only truth, the ultimate boredom. Because truth is ultimately boring. I always prefer liars. Liars are aristocrats. They're rebels in their own way, and rebellion is always aristocratic. (19)

Wadi views the body as morally shameful because of its physicality, but at the same time as "irrefutably true." However, because of this physicality that "connects [us] with beasts," the truth is "ultimately boring." Moreover, Wadi connects the truth of the body with a lie. This is a paradox he performs himself.

While Wadi is talking about the meaning of the truth, he lies. His lie appears in his account of his reasons for being on the ship as being on "vacation." Wadi's lie manifests itself when, later in the same monologue, he describes himself as an exiled Palestinian: "I was forced out of my country" (20). By lying about his status, Wadi creates epistemological confusion between what is true and what is not. As a result, Wadi's preference seemingly is for lies and liars. Romantically, he describes lies as a rebellion and as a feature of aristocracy. In so doing, however, his

description produces confusion, this time of lie itself. For, one cannot be a rebel and aristocrat at the same time, since these categories are opposed, and have historically and socially emerged as contradictory. The contrast between aristocracy and rebellion can be seen in their respective meanings: aristocracy signifies an elite where power rests, rebellion suggests resistance against or opposition to such power.

Accordingly, the confusion of truth and lie leads Wadi to a denial of these notions, particularly of "truth." Wadi "believe[s] nobody," and he does not "presume to tell the truth" either (21). For him, truth does not exist, and therefore, he "never wants to know it" (19). Even if truth were to exist, it would exist as "[a] beggar, a monk, a heretic, a despot, a son of [a] bitch [. . .] Actually, anyone who claims to be telling the truth is either deluded and doesn't know it, or a liar and knows it" (19). Wadi's admonition of the opposition between truth and lie, and perhaps by implication of all conceptual oppositions, is further enforced by the negative categories that describe truth, all serving as opposites of the romantic pair of rebel and aristocrat. The figures of a "rebel" and "aristocrat" fit in perfectly in Wadi's case as exiled Palestinian particularly if we read these in correlation to Isam's narrative as forms of rule. Read as such, rather than by an oppressive authority as a state builder in Iraq, Wadi's world appears to be ruled by the aristocrat and the rebel so as to emphasize the absence of the national state and its bourgeois subjects.

Wadi argues that the opposition between truth and lie cannot serve as the epistemological frame for the representation of the reality of Palestinians' loss of homeland. This is how Wadi narrates the failure of these notions:

> We [Palestinians] spoke the truth till our throats grew hoarse, and we ended up as refugees in tents. We fancied the world community cherished the truth, and turned out to be the victims of our own naiveté. We came to realize all this both as a nation, and as individuals. This is why, as an individual, I don't care what people say any longer. The only thing that matters for me is my feelings and intuition. Long live liars, dissemblers, and impostors! At least, I'm safe from their harm because I'm a master at their game. As I told you, I am on a vacation; and hope it'll last a year or two [. . .] I was forced out of my country, and yet I've managed to make money in Kuwait, I still make enough, thank God. (20)

For Wadi, the failure of truth manifested itself through the lack of response to what happened to the Palestinians in the past. The Palestinians "spoke the truth," but the world community did not respond. The Palestinians' collective belief that the world community

"cherished the truth," turned out to be a "naiveté" by which they were victimized and exiled: they "ended as refugees in tents." Because of this "naiveté" the failure of truth turns into a symbolic representation that oscillates between victimization and protest. This failure, caused by a mismatch between his expectations (the response in the present) and the event itself (the loss of the homeland), induces Wadi's experience of the past as a betrayal. Since he was victimized despite telling the truth, Wadi now prefers liars. Significantly, his preference for liars is motivated by an attempt to survive in the aftermath of the loss of the homeland, "At least, I'm safe from their harm." This notion of "survival," as we will see later, plays an important role in Wadi's nostalgic return. Because Wadi is "a master at [liars'] game," he is capable of lying as easily as them. When he lies "I am on a vacation" while meaning "I am in exile," Wadi is also saying he is on vacation from the truth.

Narratologically, Wadi's description evokes the loss of homeland (the trauma) between the collective and the individual. This can be seen in his alternating use of pronouns, "we" and "I." In the beginning of the passage, Wadi articulates this loss in a collective manner as "[w]e spoke the truth [. . .]." Later on, however, his narrative shifts emphasis to the implications of this loss on his individual self in the present. In this part, Wadi expresses a keen sense of individuation. This is most obvious when he says: "I don't care what people say any longer. The only thing that matters for me is my feelings and intuitions." However, Wadi's sense of himself is emphatically determined by the collective loss of homeland in the past. This becomes clear in his reasoning: "This is why, as an individual [. . .]." Thus, the collective and the individual become relational, and in his case, they are specifically brought together in a cause-effect relationship.

Wadi's articulation of the way the collective loss of the homeland makes an impact on his individual self in the present is relevant particularly to the larger conflation between the political and the personal motivations for escaping the land in *The Ship*. I use the terms collective/individual and political/personal interchangeably here. Whereas in Isam's narrative, as I indicated earlier, these motivations are intertwined to the point of indistinction, in Wadi's narrative they are neatly connected, yet they remain distinct as two entities: they do not merge, nor do they completely separate. This simultaneity affects the ways in which Wadi invests his (personal) nostalgia with/in the collective trauma of loss of homeland in exile. His return, I argue below, exposes the past with all its agony and it follows up on it into the present. In so doing, the past not only justifies the present, as in Isam's case, but more

importantly, for Wadi, the present of exile becomes an *instance* of the past. This is so because in this present the "reenactment" in the sense of the enduring consequences of the traumatic loss of place are evident everywhere.

By saying, "the present becomes an instance of the past," I do not mean to suggest a cyclical temporality between past and present: the past does not recur as such. What actually happens in this case is that the past loss of homeland is not preserved but reemerges, and the loss is integrated on the basis of, and within, the present experience of exile. Wadi deploys nostalgia to transform and appropriate this wounding resurfacing. He thus manages to maintain the simultaneity between the political and the personal. In other words, Wadi's nostalgia not only preserves the Palestinian past but it also entangles and connotes the resonance of this past in the present. At the heart of this entanglement is Wadi's attempt to connect himself, his inner world of dreams and imagination, with the world around him. This spatiotemporal configuration underlies my reading of Palestinian loss of homeland between the historical catastrophe of 1948 (*al-Nakba*) and the ongoing one (exile) together. I do this throughout this book, and especially in my analysis of oral narratives of *al-Nakba* in the fifth chapter. This is also the same kind of joint reading that I will be practicing in my discussion of Mr. Palestine's (Wadi) nostalgic return in the remainder of this chapter.

Nostalgia for Jerusalem

Now that Wadi has mastered the art of lying, he can go on with his life, sublimating the loss of his homeland with trade and with works of art which he calls "poetry" (20). Yet, these sublimational works neither ease Wadi's pain of the past, nor do they bring him relief in the present. This is so because Wadi's present is "plagued by painful memories, very painful" (20). The memories that haunt Wadi's present evoke both the beauty of the homeland and its tragic past:

> After all, all Palestinians are poets by nature [. . .] because they have experienced two basic things: the beauty of nature and tragedy. Anyone who combines these two must be a poet [. . .] You were probably too young when the Zionist monster gobbled up the most beautiful half of the most beautiful city [Jerusalem] in the world [. . .] But I walked up and down all its hills, among its houses built of stone—white stone, pink stone, red stone—castle-like houses [. . .] You'd think they were jewels [. . .] remind me of flowers in its valleys, of Spring, of the glitter of its

> blue skies after spring showers [. . .] Flowers like children's eyes spring up from beneath the stones and around the barren roots of trees. [. . .] This is why nights bring back to me memories of Jerusalem, and I grieve and rage and cry. (20)

Wadi's statement, "You were probably too young [. . .]," introduces the issue of the transgenerational transmission of the past by which he, once again, stabilizes his own position in the narrative as a transmitter of the story. Moreover, for Wadi, precisely the combination of beauty and tragedy produces language, in the form of poetry. This experience of beauty is specific, having the lost homeland as its object. In order to articulate this beauty, Wadi returns to the past from which sweet images of the land emerge. The sweetness of the land is symbolized by means of simile such as the houses that look like "jewels." The Spring of the homeland is so beautiful that even the "barren roots of trees" experience it and flourish with flowers like "children's eyes." These sweet images of the homeland symbolize the "innocence" that Wadi, like most Palestinians, lost together with the loss of their land. This "innocence" highlights the problematic idealizing aspects of nostalgia. However, as I argue below, Wadi's nostalgic return is not concerned with recovering this sweet past of the homeland, but the land itself.

Furthermore, Wadi's rhetorical imagery is noteworthy. His similes are framed in the concrete spatiotemporality of the homeland. Compared to Isam's description of "the sea as a void" that I analyzed earlier, Wadi's description shows a stark dichotomy between sea and land. Unlike the sea, Wadi's homeland is described as a place with concrete features and boundaries: neither Palestine appears frozen, nor does it stand outside of time. The loss of this land accordingly makes it appear as a discontinuity. The difference between void and discontinuity is crucial: the former is inert absence; the latter is disconnection that requires a connection. As a Palestinian exile, the odds against a reconnection of Wadi with his land are severe. I shall discuss the audiovisual imagings of this transformation of the loss of homeland as a geopolitical discontinuity in exile in my analysis of Saleh's film *Al-Makhdu'un* (1972) in the third chapter.

With respect to nostalgia and trauma, this imagery bears as much on the similarity as the difference between Isam's and Wadi's respective nostalgic returns to the past. The similarity between Isam and Wadi is simply that their nostalgic returns are both oriented toward a traumatic moment: for Isam, this moment is his separation from Luma, and for Wadi, it is the loss of homeland. Their returns, however, differ

significantly as to the way in which the traumatic moment affects their narratives. While the traumatic moment in Isam's narrative "blocks" Luma's face as the wall blocking the escape, in Wadi's narrative this moment "bring[s] back to [him] memories." In those memories, Wadi recalls scenes from his childhood in Jerusalem. He nostalgically elaborates the charms and the beauty of his city, "the most beautiful of God's cities." Yet, Wadi's memories not only evoke beauty but also catastrophe, when "the Zionist monster gobbled up the [. . .] beautiful city." In his return to the past, then, the traumatic reenactments of *al-Nakba* are unleashed first, and those reenactments subsequently and paradoxically trigger his sweet memories of the homeland's houses, hills, and seasons. In other words, through Wadi's reenactments of the loss of homeland his memories of its beauty and sweetness become mobilized, its innocence invoked.

Wadi's telescoping of idealization through catastrophe makes his evocation nostalgic. This nostalgic evocation takes the form of a "flow of memories" in which each element activates the memory of what follows. Temporally, however, Wadi's flow of memories is incoherent, as it is not governed by a chronological order, because the catastrophe (or loss of homeland) precedes the beauty of home rather than following it. Thus, the catastrophe retrospectively produces the beauty and the sweetness of the homeland. In other words, it is the loss of homeland and its subsequent investment through memory, with nostalgic longing and imagination, which turns it into a "paradise." As a result, there is no possibility of going back to that paradise since it is neither quite the place that was left behind, nor is it the place one can return to, but one that only exists as a place of a longing that is foreclosed. Hence, what Wadi expresses in his nostalgic return to the past at this point of the narrative is not just memory, but memory in combination with *imaginative* investment. This does not mean that the place itself (Palestine) does not exist. But it does mean that if the Palestinians would be allowed their "right of return," they would not enter the "paradise" that was created as their object of nostalgic longing. However, the nostalgic idealization of the place thus becomes more politically compelling and urgent rather than less: it attests to the historical loss of homeland (*al-Nakba*) that made it necessary as much as the injustice that sustains this loss in contemporary Palestinian exile.

This is particularly significant if we take into consideration Wadi's allegorical status as the representative of a Palestinian cultural memory and his conception of return: for what and to where does he want to return? As I suggested above, Wadi's nostalgic return shifts from the

temporal to the spatial. What I mean is that his nostalgia, unlike that of Isam and Dr. Falih in *The Ship*, engages in an active rather than a passive form of idealization of place. This active idealization not only manifests itself in Wadi's concrete imagery of the land as a discontinuity, as I pointed out above, but also in his understanding of a specific relationship between time and space. For him, time, unlike place, cannot be returned to—not ever; time is irreversible. This effect becomes clear in his articulation of time itself as an entity that is marked by loss. Consider the following description:

> What you knew two days ago [. . .] and what you know today are not the same thing. Life runs, speeds on, racing people. Every day it changes you, erodes you, gnaws at your sides, enlarges the numb areas in your heart. Every day, it adds to you, blows you up, and hammers into your heart the nails of pain and joy. You're forever changing. Your childhood accompanies you, but it's no longer a part of you. It's there, far away, with those waves on the horizon, on that island you behold in the sea of your dreams [. . .] I was staying in a hotel in Damascus once when such memories [of the loss of homeland] came back to me unexpectedly. A man I knew saw me crying and asked me what happened. I told him I was crying for my father, my mother, and my brothers and sisters, and that I had lost all shame. That was many years ago. Others wrote poetry instead of crying. But who can compose words that are the product of thirty years of experience in the most beautiful of God's cities? Our creative attempts are merely tranquilizers, a kind of weeping. Yet, nothing in life can take the place of large flowing tears. Time, in any case, is a horrible thing. In its unabating tide it robs everything of vigor and newness. In the end, it leaves you nothing of any worth. Time has trampled down everything I see and left it faded and dull. If I were a painter, I'd paint it. Do you know how? One huge black smudge on a canvas. In two or three places I would spot it with red paint. Time is the enemy. Live, if you wish; stay alive as long as you can. But you'll have nothing else; a big black smudge filling the fabric of your life, with a red spot here and there; the trivia that come your way whether you want them to or not, without you['re] ever being able to achieve that great relentless experience which is the product of choice and will. [. . .] We survive in spite of ourselves. It is a kind of passive survival, something we accept, but cannot control. [. . .] I won't put up with passive survival. (19–21)

The theme that dominates Wadi's description is that of the transformation of experience in time. Through Wadi's understanding of time we can remark, then, that his nostalgic return is not meant to be for the (sweet) time of the place but for the place itself. Moreover, the word

"unexpectedly" substantiates the notion that the historical moment in which he invests nostalgia is one that stands for traumatic reenactments. Wadi's reenactments turn the catastrophic loss of Palestine into intense loss that cannot be easily sublimated: *al-Nakba* becomes encompassing. The loss of the homeland cannot be sublimated by writing poetry, only tranquilized.

Wadi chooses crying over writing poetry because, in his view, the experience of living in the homeland for a finite time cannot be expressed in words. And if that "great relentless experience" cannot be put into words, then the loss of that experience cannot be encompassed in words either. In view of this finitude, marked and enforced by loss, Wadi describes the works of sublimation, "our creative attempts," as mere "tranquilizers." These tranquilizers may temporarily ease the pain, but can never stop the "flowing tears," and therefore, these attempts cannot relieve him in the present. Poetry cannot do this, because of time, "the enemy," which tramples down creative attempts and leaves them "faded" and "dull." After all, as Wadi puts it, time "[i]n its unabating tide [. . .] robs everything of vigor and newness." I shall further discuss Wadi's interpretation of creative works as "tranquilizers" in the next section.

For now, it suffices to say that, for Wadi, language is unqualified to articulate the experience of living in the homeland as well as of its loss. Unlike those who "wrote poetry," Wadi refuses to compose poems because "words deflate his resolve" (21). Wadi's dismissal of language as a possible sublimation of loss is enforced by his preference for tears: "yet, nothing in life can take the place of large flowing tears." Tears, not language, become the mnemonic compensation for the loss of the homeland and its sweet experience. Significantly, Wadi's tears are shed for the sake of his family: "I told him I was crying for my father, my mother, and my brothers and sisters, and that I had lost all shame." The word "shame" here signifies the intolerable sense of humiliation that accompanies the loss of homeland. In Palestinian culture, land is associated with honor. Its loss, therefore, signifies the loss of honor. The proverb *Al-Ard A'ard* (the land is honor) in Palestinian dialect expresses this association. Wadi's evocation of shame fits in with the way in which many first-generation post-*Nakba* Palestinians viewed the political defeat of 1948 and their subsequent exile as a tragic failure that has tormented them ever after. This cluster of negative sentiments, as Gannit Ankori argues in her book *Palestinian Art*, is common to their narratives, and also often denotes their "survivors' guilt" (2006: 51).[17] Wadi's employment of the familial dialectic signifies the loss of the

homeland not merely as a loss of geography, but also of the human relations that flesh out that geography. This notion of loss of place is a prescient evocation of estrangement in exile that will be central to my analysis of Badr's collection of short stories *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* (1993) in the next chapter.

Wadi's focalization of the past sets up, yet again, a different perspective from that of the other characters in *The Ship*: this time from Emilia's conception of what encompasses the escapee's memory. In the course of the narrative, the difference between their memories becomes significant particularly if we read it in terms of Emilia's character as an "Italian tourist." I refer to Emilia as a tourist here not so much because of her European (Italian) identity, but because of the views she expresses. Emilia appears as a tourist in *The Ship* because she speaks like one. Her memory of the past, as she told Isam before, is composed of "the memory of a landscape, not an emotion; the memory of a country, not a man" (12). Thus, Emilia's memory is tied to landscape rather than to people. Wadi's memory, instead, conjures up both. Through the dialectic that informs his tears, his memory evokes the land as well as the emotional bond with the people who inhabit it. Hence, Wadi's nostalgic return reflects what I call here "native nostalgia." With "native" I do not mean to imply a form of privilege in terms either of origin or essential identity. The term "familiar" would perhaps be the most adequate choice of words here; however, I opt for this risky and loaded term to suggest the degree of deep affinity, attachment, and belonging that Wadi expresses.[18]

Wadi's nostalgic evocation of the past has another consequence for the way it impinges on his present. Time not only shatters language and makes poetic sublimation inadequate, but also life itself, through the "unabating tide" of time, becomes "a kind of passive survival, something we accept, but cannot control." For Wadi, this passivity is determined by his lack of "choice and will" as a Palestinian exile. Indeed, one could attempt to continue living, but in the end, in Wadi's view, nothing but a formless shape will remain: "a big black smudge filling the fabric of life [. . .]." On Wadi's canvas, the "red spots" are few. The "red spots" signify a switch from inadequate poetry to abstract visual art. As I will attempt to show in the next section, Wadi's shift to art relates to his view of works of sublimation as "tranquilizers" of trauma. In other words, Wadi cannot recreate the past's "great relentless experience" of living in the homeland. This is so because this experience, for Wadi, has proven materially transitory; it does not last. It is an experience that is always lived in time; after exhausting its time, its material reality disappears, and then, the experience is transformed into memory.

This temporal configuration between experience and memory is given shape in his description of childhood as an experience that "accompanies [the subject], but it's no longer a part of [him or her]. It's there, far away, with those waves on the horizon, on that island [the subject] behold[s] in the sea of [his or her] dreams." The word "dreams" highlights the temporal transformation of real experience into the scope of imagination and fiction, hence, into memory. By means of this analysis of time, Wadi not only enacts nostalgia but also ruthlessly indicates its uselessness. Although his nostalgic return gives coherence and legitimacy to the Palestinian past, it equally shows that this nostalgia cannot retrieve it. Yet, Wadi in time comes up with an alternative to nostalgic longing alone. This alternative is memory, seen as an act directed to the future. This can be appreciated in Wadi's story about his friend Fayez, which forms the second main recollection of the novel.

From Nostalgia to Active Memory That Remains

Before I proceed with Wadi's story about Fayez and his conception of nostalgic memory, I wish to tackle his interpretation of the work of sublimation as the "tranquilizers" of trauma. Besides his dismissal of language (poetry) as a possible form of sublimation, later on in the narrative Wadi equally discredits trade. For him, the commerce that he both inherited "in spite of himself" and "was rewarded with for his exile" (38) cannot compensate for the loss of the homeland. For example, while Wadi would do anything and "travel a thousand miles" for money, in the end, he nevertheless "tramples it under [his] foot" (21). To clarify Wadi's view on the works of sublimation, I take a closer look at the following monologue, one of Wadi's many in the novel. I discuss this monologue in particular because it helps me unpack the ways in which Wadi conceives of the political and psychological possibilities, as much as the limitations, in the arts for sublimating his trauma of loss of homeland. Unlike Isam's case, Wadi's trauma does not cause him to withdraw into his inner world: he does not break with the world around him. Instead, he keeps his inner and outer worlds in constant contact with each other. Wadi also elaborates on the importance of memory for his survival in exile.

As indicated, Wadi dismisses poetry and trade as methods of sublimation, but not of art per se: he paints and this practice is directly related to the loss of homeland. This revelation emerges in one of his conversations with Isam and Fernando, Wadi's Spanish roommate in the cabin on the ship, when the three of them are engaged in a discussion

about how each understands art and what it means to enjoy it. This is how Isam begins their exchange:

> Since some of our conversation was in Arabic, Fernando busied himself with a thorough examination of the paintings. He picked them up one by one and shook his head, sometimes to express contentment, and at other times the opposite. Then he clapped his hands. "When I don't understand a painting," he said in English, "I enjoy it. Take this one, for example. I don't understand it, but I feel it penetrates me. It hurts me, but I enjoy it. Masochistic? Why not, as long as I enjoy it." "My own sense of enjoyment is purely intellectual," I [Isam] said, studying the painting carefully. "I love to observe relations, proportions, contrasts between lines and masses. It's the kind of thrill one experiences after solving a difficult mathematical problem." (70)

At work here are two views of the reception of art. Fernando's view is triggered by his inability to understand the paintings. Accordingly, this generates the emotion of pain in him, which shapes his sense of the masochistic enjoyment of art. For Isam, art is a scientific venture; his enjoyment takes the shape of observation and study. Both views conceptualize art as a problem in need of a solution: Fernando and Isam make sense of art in either visceral or intellectual terms.

This is how Wadi responds to their views:

> "But," Wadi said, "there are no solutions in art. The problem is what counts [*muhima*]. The solution is in the next issue that you never buy. I enjoy anything that tears me apart within, that makes me feel I'm walking to left and right at the same time. You know, most of us are like a man in love with two women at once, a brunette and a blonde." [. . .] "This kind of man," [. . .] "regards each of them as a paragon of beauty, and in his solitude he sees each one all that he can possibly want in a woman. He sees himself moving back and forth between them, kissing one while the taste of the other woman's kiss is still fresh on his lips. He thinks they know nothing about each other, that his game is one of his own closely guarded secrets. But, in a devilish moment of fantasy, he sees them both making love strangely to each other. The idea strikes him as ludicrous. It upsets him, and he dismisses it from his thoughts. One day he discovers that they are indeed in love with each other, that they are lesbians, torturing him for their own sport, and finding true pleasure only in each other. He becomes aware that he is jealous of each of them, jealous of a woman whom he loves and whom he thought he was able to deceive and use in order to deceive his other woman. This is how we constantly tear ourselves apart between the things we love

> (or imagine we love) while these things actually love themselves and hold fast to their own logic and eccentricities much more than they care for us or our desires. Our own life in society is one example of this. Power and its contradictions, money, possessions, marriage, children—they're all constantly tearing us a part. In the end, what a pleasure it is to seek refuge in the world of *Vogue* where there's no pain, no tearing apart, just a dream that lasts for an hour or even less!" (70–71)

Wadi is not so much concerned with "making sense" of art, but with the "sense-making" of it. For him, the issue is not how we ascribe meaning to art. On the contrary, the point is how art conceives of us as well as of itself. The word *muhima* is necessary to understanding this view of art. *Muhima* in Arabic is more specific than the English phrase, "what counts": it literally means "function," and in this case it signifies a cultural and political relevance. For Wadi, art does not offer solutions to real-life problems. As he puts it, "the solution is in the next issue that you never buy." Much like reality, art offers problems that cannot, and should not, be redeemed. Nevertheless, nothing short of survival is at stake.

Unlike Isam and Fernando, Wadi does not seek clarity in art but conflict. He describes his sense of enjoyment of art as follows: "I enjoy anything that tears me apart within, that makes me feel I'm walking to left and right at the same time." The act of "walking to left and right at the same time" is physically unattainable, and thus, it signifies a conflict-ridden standstill rather than movement. Unlike poetry and a fashion magazine like *Vogue*, the paintings that Wadi creates offer no way out of the pain and torment of the world: "what a pleasure it is to seek refuge in the world of *Vogue* [. . .]." Escaping into the world of *Vogue* is limited: the escape is like a dream that lasts "for an hour or even less!" This short duration of escape is what motivates Wadi's previous interpretation of creative sublimations as "tranquilizers."

The most moving part of this monologue is the following fragment, in which Wadi elaborates on his view in relation to his own practice of painting and the loss of his homeland:

> Today the tempest swept me away. The nightmares that I fear and pour onto my paintings whenever I can, have begun to haunt me once again. People say that, for a man, the nightmare is an incubus, a lustful woman who attacks him at night, sucks his life out of him for her pleasure, and make him see whatever she wants him to see. But my nightmares are different. All I see are human massacres. I fight my way through them, but only manage to escape to places that are full of ruins and garbage.

> What is the meaning of escape anyway? Where are we escaping to? I may escape into these paintings, which I only show to a very few people, or I may withdraw into silence that lasts for many days, flirting with my own thoughts. These thoughts usually revolve around my homeland, and my silence—a kind of internal silence, like a cosmic night whose spaces cannot be spanned [. . .] And visions are important, no matter how obscure they may be. How many people throughout the centuries have held fast to their visions or even become martyrs because of them? [. . .] But what exactly did I remember? What did I see? [. . .] It was a dizzying silence, the silence of intense joys and agonies that came to an end and yet were about to start anew, just when they had reached a conclusion [. . .] Music was blaring on the ship. People came and went, watching the sunset, sighing, laughing, flirting. I stood there like an idiot, completely absorbed by the scene [. . .] You would probably say, along with Freud, that the whole thing was sexual. Sexually deprived people often imagine they're either the world's giants or its vermin. But the issue is not that simple. For me, it's a question of life, the very matter of survival. [. . .] illusion is still something that [man] cannot avoid. It is as though he would say, "Take away illusion, and darkness will prevail." [. . .] Illusion is all the sweet things in life. Remove it, and the final pleasure reverts to naught [. . .] All the time I see myself running over the hills, walking among the mountain crags or even on the water of Lake Tiberias. Christ keeps me company. I see His large, bare feet, His long, slender fingers flowing with miracles, while He himself hardly utters a word [. . .] (71–73)

Wadi links his practice of painting to loss of homeland: "[t]he nightmares that I fear and pour onto my paintings [. . .]." Moreover, Wadi states that his nightmares are different from common interpretations of what constitutes them. Wadi's articulation of these interpretations evokes a gendered image of imposition, a narrative image that is simply too profound to be left unanalyzed. In this image, "an incubus, lustful woman" sexually assaults a man's mind by which the woman becomes a Godly figure. This figuration emerges in particular if we consider the three narrative acts that compose the image itself. The first act is the act of invading or conquering the self in which the "woman [. . .] attacks [man] at night." The second one is that of murder in which the woman "sucks [man's] life out of him for her pleasure." And in the third act, the woman gives back life to man (resurrection of the dead), and she imposes her authority on him, "[she] make[s] him see whatever she wants him to see." Through these acts, the woman becomes a Goddess. As I read it, by setting up the difference of his nightmares through common interpretations, Wadi humanizes himself. When he says "people say" as meaning "common sense," Wadi in fact engages in a sequential

narrative act of recitation by which he repeats the original act of the people, and hence, inserts himself within the collective: he becomes one of the people. This humanization clearly stands in opposition to the dehumanization he experiences as result of the loss of homeland.

Wadi's nightmares are not prepared for him by a ghostly incubus or by the Freudian unconscious but by historic events: "All I see are human massacres." His nightmares are of this world, not of another. Escaping these nightmares is useless since his escape only leads him back "to places that are full of ruins and garbage." Wadi can only escape in his paintings or withdraw into silence. The compulsion to silence conforms to the interpretation of trauma in which the subject lacks the words to process events into experience: silence suggests paralysis, failed experience because of a lack of relevant discursive frames. What supports this idea is the sheer intensity of the used image of silence: "my silence—a kind of internal silence, like a cosmic night whose spaces cannot be spanned." This silence is at once internal, psychic, and external, even "cosmic." The historic trauma has caused a spatialized silence that stretches between the interior psyche of the Palestinian subject and the outer reaches of the cosmos. This chasm cannot be bridged or spanned by words or art, only visually indicated by a formless smudge of black with red spots.

Wadi's inner-outer silence is mixed with the noise of the outside world, real setting, and nightmare bleed together: "[m]usic was blaring on the ship. People came and went, watching the sunset, sighing, laughing, flirting. I stood there like an idiot, completely absorbed by the scene." That Wadi is able to notice each of these acts requires attention on his behalf, thus, some engagement with that is taking place around him. The word "scene" becomes indeterminate, as we cannot know whether it stands for what he sees in his nightmare or of what he sees around him. Reality and nightmare become contemporaneous. At the same time, illusion remains necessary for survival: "Illusion is all the sweet things in life. Remove it, and the final pleasure reverts to naught." The illusion returns Wadi to the homeland that is unreachable. He sees himself "running over the hills [. . .]" of his land. The image of Christ that concludes the fragment condenses the effect of the trauma—speechlessness, as Christ "hardly utters a word"—and its resolution—walking across the lands and waters of Palestine as the biblical figure of Jesus once did—while it also suggests the only means through which survival can be attained: through miracles and visions that are necessarily and avowedly illusions, but yet inflect *this* world. Wadi's nightmare is both imaginary and all too real, and so is the

vision that allows for his survival, as Christ serves both as a metaphysical apparition and a historical inhabitant of Palestine, in that sense a Palestinian.

This brings me to the ways in which Wadi's "return" to the past shifts from nostalgic longing to a productive relation. For Wadi, the point is not to establish the reality of the experiences of the past in time. The truth of experience, in his view, is not determined by its transitory existence in time. Instead, experience resides in memory, and with this shift, the medium at stake changes once more, from poetry to painting to music:

> The only real thing is my memory of it, a memory that is transformed into something resembling music. Daily happenings recede into the dark tunnels of time, leaving behind waves of music in the mind. Everything is transitory except these waves, not only metaphorically but physically as well. (22)

Experience passes and vanishes in time. Yet it always leaves memories behind, which become "waves of music in the mind." These tunes transmit not facts but feelings, both "joy and sorrow" (22).

Wadi's shifts between artistic media—from poetry to painting to music—may be read to indicate his attempts to give imaginative and material shape to the unrepresentable trauma and its aftermath. From the ineffectual sublimation of poetry Wadi moves to the formless smudges and spots of his paintings to ultimately end up with waves of memory, akin to music, that are as metaphorical as they are physical, and that are, as he claims, the "only real thing." The progression shows that Wadi is not so much involved with returning to an original state; he is not concerned with the repetition of the experience. Rather, what matters is the process that runs from poetry to painting to music, the wave of memory that is not transitory, that *remains*.

In this sense, for Wadi, memory is like a story: it runs its course towards the end. As I indicated above, the characters of *The Ship* struggle with teleology. In Wadi's case, it is the ending (or the not chosen present of exile) that resists story. As Wadi says: "I can usually remember the beginning, but it is the ending which gives me problems" (24). This makes sense if we read Wadi's memory as present-oriented: his memory concerns the historical moment of loss of homeland (the beginning), yet can only take place in the present of exile (the end). The narrative time of Palestinian trauma and memory is necessarily convoluted, folded. As Mieke Bal explains, "cultural memory signifies that memory can be

understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as individual or social one [. . .] We invoke the discourse of cultural memory to mediate or modify difficult or tabooed moments of the past—moments that nonetheless impinge, sometimes fatally, on the present" (1999b: vii). Wadi's nostalgic return undoubtedly offers a "before" and "after" around which a narrative framework is erected to make sense not only of what happened in the past, but also what is happening in the present. Following Bal, we can argue that such narrative emplotments enable Wadi to negotiate the past moment of loss of homeland, the "taboo moment" that fatally impinges on his present, thereby transforming "cultural trauma" into "collective memory." This present-oriented mode of cultural memorization can also be seen in Wadi's story about his friend Fayez. In this story, Wadi's narrative moves from a romanticized nostalgia about life in pre-*Nakba* times, to the debilitating sense of loss that exile triggers.

Fayez is Wadi's best friend in childhood. For Wadi, Fayez represents everything that is innocent and beautiful. What brings them together in the first place is both a shared fascination with the beauty of the homeland and the attempt to articulate this beauty in drawing. This is how Wadi recalls an encounter with Fayez:

> When the breeze blew across the shady part of the building, it was pleasantly cool and reached from the doorway to a short stone passage at the end of which was a stairway going down to the lower courtyard. We sat on the threshold by the doorway. A pretzel seller came by, and each of us bought a piece [of thyme] for a piaster. [. . .] Like me, he [Fayez] was fourteen years old at the time. However, he had an appetite for visions [. . .] Unlike him I was ignorant of all this at that age. [. . .] We used to meet after returning from school in the afternoon. We lived a few minutes' walk apart. Whenever he came up to my house, we went into a neighboring field [. . .] We sat on the rocks under the olive trees and talked till the sunset. (48–50)

This is a characteristically nostalgic memory. In the beginning of this memory, Wadi and Fayez are sitting in the pleasant shade "on the threshold of the doorway" eating thyme. The act of eating thyme symbolizes Palestine and its most distinctive produce. By eating together Wadi and Fayez also perform a traditional act: the forging of a bond that signifies the strength of their friendship. In Arabic tradition, the act of eating together, particularly with strangers, functions as a way of establishing or showing trust in each other. By performing this act together, the strangeness of others is often overcome so that they become familiar figures, and therefore easier to identify with or relate to. Performing

this act on the threshold of the building adds to the symbolic charge of this simple event.

Having become friends, we see Wadi's relationship with Fayez as a dear childhood friendship, but it also contains an element of learning. In the second part of the passage, Fayez is described as a person who "has an appetite for visions," while Wadi, in comparison, views himself as "ignorant" to what happens around him. Fayez sees more than reality, Wadi less. Through Fayez's knowledge of visions and Wadi's ignorance of them, their friendship is constituted as a learning relationship. During their long conversations among the olive groves, Fayez teaches Wadi how to paint things: "I found myself venturing into lines and colors. Where had this talent been hiding that now came raining down on me so suddenly with just a gesture from Fayez's hand?" (55). Wadi learns how to paint scenes from the homeland, but he also learns how to appreciate this homeland as a specific place, as he puts it, from "whose firm surface we extracted our gorgeous vegetables and sweet smelling fruit" (55). No longer is the object of attachment and identification an abstract political entity, but a homeland with a mothering earth of soil, trees and stone, and a way of life. In accordance with Wadi's view of artistic practice, painting takes on a cultural-political function: painting is not only an image of the real, it is also stencilled off this real. His practice affirms the authenticity and ontology of the painting not only as a mimesis of the experienced world, like writing poetry, but as an arti-factual trace of it. Wadi's paintings elicit an acknowledgment of the presence of the land through which he comes to identify with Palestine as more than a place whose beauty one enjoys, but also as a source of life. This perspective of the homeland as existential resource, a distinctive aspect of the narratives that I discuss in this study, is relevant to understand the ways in which the loss of place is experienced by Palestinians in their ongoing exile: the loss of Palestine as a loss of life.

Wadi's relationship with Fayez does not last as it is interrupted by war and subsequent death. During *al-Nakba*, while they fight to defend their city, Fayez is shot and dies in front of Wadi. This death becomes a synecdoche for the loss of the homeland. Describing the moment of Fayez's death, Wadi says:

> But there was no need to look [for water]. He started shaking uncontrollably; I could not stop him. His mouth kept opening and closing in jerks in a desperate quest for air or water or both. I kept shouting, "Fayez, Fayez . . ." Then a thin trickle of blood flowed out of the corner of his mouth, and his eyes remained fixed on the walls of Jerusalem like two

> glittering stones. My friend had been killed, and I had stood there by him as helpless as a child. (61)

The moment of Fayez's death represents an apocalyptic moment of incomprehensible violence. Standing there "helpless" in front of his dying friend, Wadi finds himself stricken and shattered beyond the limits of human comprehension. For him, the moment of Fayez's death entails the death of human relations; he feels "abandoned by God and man" (62). Wadi's focalization of Fayez's death imprints itself on the larger moment in which this death occurred. Fayez's death becomes an affirmation, even a mortalization, of the loss of the homeland. The larger moment of death, *al-Nakba*, becomes a double signifier: both of death of human relationships and of Wadi's memory in which his loss of home is anchored. This anchoring effect is enforced through Fayez's gaze that remains "fixed on the walls of Jerusalem like two glittering stones." The phrase "glittering stones" here embodies a fixation of the gaze as much as the affirmation of the loss of the homeland.

For Wadi, this occurrence of *al-Nakba*, as a moment of loss of homeland, will always remain a transitory happening that exhausted its material time. As part of his childhood, the experience remains with him as a memory. As Wadi says, what remains of it is its reenactment that he "remember[s] everyday, and [has] remembered for over fifteen years" (64). Paradoxically, while Wadi reenacts *al-Nakba*, he does not name it. Instead, Wadi describes this experience as a year, 1948. In one sense, his unnaming of *al-Nakba* can be read in relation to trauma as a form of paralysis. By not being named, *al-Nakba* is signified as a traumatic event that resists integration in Wadi's symbolic order, and thus forms, according to Van Alphen's terminology, a "failed experience." Its lack of name articulates trauma and the loss of language it entails. In another sense, by not naming *al-Nakba*, Wadi shows he cannot put into language the shattering of language, and he cannot put into humanity the death of humanity: the friendship and the love that joined him with Fayez. He refrains from doing so, not to master this event, nor even to document it as truthful, but, on the contrary, to depict it as an *indefinable* nonname of this incomprehensible death. In other words, rather than bearing the trauma of the past as in Isam's case, Wadi bears witness to its incomprehensibility: he transmits the catastrophe's presence. Precisely in this transmission the present of exile becomes an instance of the past loss of homeland. At the heart of this transmission is Wadi's identification not with the dead, Fayez, but with the living, Palestine. This identification with the homeland can be seen in the closing parts of Wadi's narrative.

Memorization, Exile, and Nostalgic Identification

Wadi's nostalgia evokes the past yet takes place in and for a problematic present. His present is problematic because of his forced exile. And forced exile can be particularly traumatic because the departure from the homeland is involuntary and the return to it is impossible. Hence, as Anette Mansson succinctly puts it in her book *Passage to a New Wor(l)d: Exile and Restoration in Mahmoud Darwish's Writings 1960–1995*, in Palestinian exile "there is simply no ending" (2003: 37). This impossibility of return to the homeland, as I will argue in the next chapter, constitutes a specific condition of denial in which the Palestinian subject is enduringly barred from access to home.

Commenting on his lost homeland, Wadi describes it as a paradise shaped through personification: "nothing is equal to that red rocky land that greets your feet like a lover's kiss" (24). For him, to be exiled from Palestine, therefore, is like "a curse, the most painful curse of all" (24). This curse takes the form of spatiotemporal infinitude in which the conviction of the loss of the land personified becomes, in time, intensified and problematized as a property of exile. Exile, as a result, not only represents a major consequence of the loss of the homeland but it also becomes a symptom of the inability to end that loss through which, as Wadi puts it, "the tragedy [of the past] renews itself" (25). For example, Wadi's nostalgic memory of the sweet past of the homeland is activated when he begins questioning his present exile. It is only when Wadi asks "[w]hy was I uprooted and cast under hoofs and fangs, driven into flaming deserts, and screaming oil cities?" (25) that his reenactments of *al-Nakba* burst into the present, bringing back with them a nostalgic memory of the moment before, of the sweetness of the homeland. Wadi's questioning of the present of exile induces the mode of his nostalgic memory as present-oriented through which the image of the past is mediated in and by the present: the past loss of homeland "renews itself."

In Wadi's internal focalization, the reader sees the past in *The Ship* as a place of catastrophe and loss of place. Yet, unlike Isam and Dr. Falih, Wadi introduces a different focalization in relation to the decision to escape the homeland. In his narrative, the catastrophic moment contains the revelation that all social structures and acts of desire are subject to violence and death. However, Wadi's account proposes alternatives that entail neither passive withdrawal, such as Dr. Falih's suicide at the end of the novel, nor the escape from the homeland, as in Isam's case. While the first of these alternatives is an attempt to narrate the loss of the homeland

as a way of working through this loss, and its symptomatic reincarnations in exile, the second entails a recurring vision of salvation through which the possibility of returning to the lost homeland emerges. These alternatives are what, in fact, inform *The Ship*'s specific articulation of nostalgia.

Wadi's first alternative appears in his relationship with Isam. Before meeting Wadi, we see Isam as a broken person whose failed love story with Luma leads him to a point of resignation and a quietism in which he decides to escape the land. Yet, the moment he meets Wadi, Isam's understanding of his own loss changes. Isam's change, however, is not so much determined by his ability to narrate his loss to Wadi but rather by his ability to listen to Wadi's story. Isam describes his listening and Wadi's storytelling as follows: "I listened as the words poured out of his [Wadi] mouth like incessant rain, like a never-ending storm" (18). In this statement, "incessant rain" symbolizes catastrophe. This symbolism is enforced by the imagery of the "never-ending storm," which can turn into a catastrophe if it does not end. Significantly, the "incessant rain" serves also as a metaphor for the impact of Wadi's storytelling on Isam's personal growth. Through Wadi's uninterrupted narration, Isam not only changes his mind about escaping the land—"I am going back to Baghdad" he decides (198)—but Wadi also finds for himself a way of healing by which he substitutes a symptomatic repetition of loss with a narrative remembering it. Thus, instead of recalling *al-Nakba* as something belonging to the past, Wadi, through his narration, elaborates on this loss of homeland in the present of exile. Thus, Wadi integrates the repressed material, "the grief he stifled" (64) at the moment of Fayez's death in the past, into a contemporary experience.

By incorporating *al-Nakba* in exile, Wadi overcomes the past loss of homeland. In so doing, he manages to destabilize the present itself. In pointing out this destabilization of exile in Wadi's nostalgic return, I am not arguing that the imaginative enterprise of *al-Nakba* is subsumed in order to construct the future as a projected idealized image of the lost homeland and the past. Instead, the point I wish to make is that *al-Nakba* was subsumed in order to construct the future through projecting the present of exile as the aftermath of the loss of homeland. To put it differently, the construction of the future becomes possible only when this aftermath, the ongoing exile, ends. Thus, Wadi's destabilization of the present is meant to criticize the *un-ending* of catastrophe that Palestinians endure in the form of exile, simply because they can never, by definition, reach either backward or forward to the lost homeland. Through this first alternative, Wadi's nostalgic return,

then, transmits the memory of *al-Nakba* in the present loss of place in exile.

Wadi also describes a second alternative. This alternative contains a vision of salvation through which the possibility of "physical return" to the homeland materializes. This vision emerges at the same moment of the catastrophe and inevitably returns with the reenactment of its event in the present. While Wadi is carrying the dead Fayez in his arms, he takes on an oath that he will always return to the homeland: "I swore [on the rock] that I would come back, somehow, as an invader, as a thief, as a killer; I would come back, even as a casualty" (64). Wadi's oath is highly charged with images of bonding with the homeland. His act of "swearing on the rock" personifies Palestine as a holy figure by which his relationship with this land is transformed into a divine bonding. Wadi's bonding with the land is further intensified by the narrative acts with which he describes his inevitable return. Through the first three acts of "invading," "theft," and "killing," Wadi emulates his return to Palestine by the same means with which this land was lost as well as the way he was driven out of it. The fourth act of return, as a "casualty" is a result of the first three and it bears on Wadi's insistence on return. It is, in fact, a non-act.

Wadi also suggests a concrete model for his return. This model can be seen in his actions. For, if Wadi in fact does not return as "an invader, as a thief, as a killer [or] as a casualty," he can still return by transferring money to Jerusalem. Wadi has bought a piece of land near Hebron, and he is planning to buy another piece in Jerusalem. All he wants is to build a house and to cultivate the land with his own hands (190–92). This is his alternative model for returning to the land, and "only on this basis can [Wadi] be happy with anything" (200). Wadi's model not only brings about a vision of salvation, but also turns into a model of identification that affirms his relationship with the lost homeland. This identification finds its expression in his perception of the homeland as a metamorphic landscape that replaces both the metaphor of the sea as a seduction to escape and the metonymy of the land as an entity that drags one back. This identification, in addition, entails more than knowledge of how life in the homeland used to be before it was lost. It also includes specific material processes of attachment to this land in the present such as transferring money, buying lands, and building houses.

As I argued above, Wadi's two alternatives, especially his model of identification, bring about a possibility of returning to the lost homeland. Yet, at the end of the novel, this possibility turns out to be distant as the reader knows full well that Jerusalem is occupied, the "Palestinian

refugees" are barred from returning to their land and even the Palestinian citizens of Israel are prevented from buying property. Wadi's nostalgic return, then, seems to be for unrealized possibility. His is a yearning for a (lost) place that, similar to the cultural traumas surrounding it, returns of its own accord together with these losses, yet also *opposes* them. Within this nostalgic return, the unrealized possibility of social harmony and justice symptomatically arrives to provide alternatives and motives for changing existing conditions of loss of home and exile. Furthermore, Wadi's nostalgia returns, and is returned to, in and by the present, but at the same time it entails the effort to work through the cultural trauma by transmitting its presence as a way of imagining the future to which it aspires. Hence, Wadi's nostalgia is, in fact, a future-oriented one that gives a new political and cultural meaning to the painful memories of the past. This nostalgia need not be reactionary and escapist, but can also travel from a negative to a more positive function, as "a reconstitution of injured subjectivities."

A final issue raised by Wadi's nostalgic return is the role of exile in the determination of the subject's identification with the lost homeland. Despite the apparent reunion between Isam and Luma, as well as Wadi's possible return to his homeland that concludes *The Ship*, their problems remain unresolved. While the tribalism that separated Isam and Luma still exists, Wadi's return is far from certain. Yet, in the novel, at least, one thing is certain: Wadi's nostalgic memory is meant to be transmitted as it is, 60 years after *al-Nakba*, to the reader, who, seeing the Palestinian loss of homeland through Wadi's focalization, could feel the liberation of the moment of return. The most productive aspect of this transmission of nostalgic memory is that it draws hope, or what Wadi calls the "unjustified faith" (79), that anything is possible and that nothing could stand in the way of the return: *The Ship* does not undercut the dream itself. Within this transmission of nostalgic memory, the contours of *al-Nakba* could be determined, for the reader, by his or her perceived distance, coded as the ongoing exile, from Palestine. Loss and distance become the prevailing articulations of the past that through nostalgic memory reaffirm the subject's identification with the lost homeland in the present. Within this identification, the subject's experience of loss of homeland becomes portable and interiorized as a spatiotemporal point of reference that splits this subject's narrative into a "before" wherein the subject existed in the homeland and an "after" wherein he or she is exiled from it in the present. This is the essence of a nostalgic mode of remembering as a collective activity in exile. Precisely both its confrontation with trauma and the attempt to narrate the past

loss of the homeland as part of the present of exile give this activity its distinct productivity in the Palestinian case.

One additional remark should be added here, lest I appear to be idealizing this sentiment. Indeed, Wadi's nostalgia, with the productive potential I attributed to it here, responds to the past loss of the homeland by which the ongoing exile comes into play. However, Wadi's nostalgia seems to leave something out: namely, it shows little understanding of the dynamics of the condition of exile. Although his nostalgic memory articulates the subject's inability to return to the homeland as a direct result of exile, it does not completely detail that which prevents this return in this condition. In the next chapter, I turn to a more contemporary narrative that exposes the discursive effects of the loss of the homeland on Palestinian identity within the reality of exile: Badr's collection of short stories *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* from 1993. I argue that the Palestinian subject's "critical memory" of loss of home in exile complements what the subject's nostalgic memory of loss of homeland leaves out. At the heart of this shift to critical memory, the subject's memory of the loss of Palestine is triggered by a physical condition of denial of access to home in the present.

CHAPTER 2

Traveling Theory: On the Balconies of Our Houses in Exile

> Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.
>
> —Edward W. Said (2000: 173)

In the previous chapter, I discussed the concept of *nostalgia* with regard to the cultural memory of *al-Nakba* as the traumatic loss of the homeland in the past. The most affective aspect of nostalgic memory, as we have seen, is that it retrospectively makes an impact in the transmission of its effect through "repeated reenactments" on the subject's identification with the lost homeland.[1] Although my reading of nostalgia acknowledges the omnipresence of nostalgic reenactments that inform the Palestinian subject's cultural and political identification with Palestine, as well as the depth of his or her bereavement in exile, some important questions remain, which I will address in this chapter.

A primary question emerges from my reading of postcolonial literature concerned with exile and interconnected issues of displacement and migrancy, as well as the subject's relation to loss of place. In this literature, the key metaphors are "travel," "movement," and "mobility." In the context of these metaphors, exile is often theorized as a concept-metaphor of deterritorialized travel that signifies a liminal condition of being and a romanticized nomadic consciousness of displacement. This metaphoric projection of exile allows it to become generally celebrated both as a transgressive condition of travel across borders beyond conventional ways of living and as a liberating notion of movement and mobility that resists the totalizing personality of cultural thought

and the fixation of cultural identity. This generic productive view of exile manifests itself in postmodern critique's emphatic claims about the multiplicity of cultural borders, historical temporalities, and hybrid identities closely aligned with nomadic experience of thought, language, and "placelessness": the nomad as a desirable cultural identity, the subversiveness of the different self, the so-called "end of the subject," and fragmentation as the ontological characteristic of the postmodern self.[2] While I shall return and further discuss this metaphoric projection of exile in the next sections, it is important to note at this point that this metaphorization uneasily fits the experience of exile Palestinians live on an everyday basis. The question, then, is: how can Palestinian exile be understood as an actual political-cultural experience more specific than what is implied in generalizing impulses of metaphors of travel, movement, and mobility, namely, as a geopolitical denial of access to one's home in which the Palestinian subject is not where he or she *ought* to be in the present?

In the spirit of my epigraph to this chapter from Edward Said's book *Reflections on Exile* (2000), my question pertains not to the humanistic and philosophically "compelling" flow of thought and the condition of enlightened existence that the exilic state of mind engenders but to the "terrible" experiential frameworks and the political implications of the mode of travel in Palestinian exile with regard to the concepts of "home" and "homeland." I see these concepts as related but without reducing one to the other. This irreducibility is particularly salient for the specificity of Palestinian loss of place. This loss must be understood not in terms of an idealized lost world but as an imagining that takes place in the interplay between "memory" and "the everyday of exile" as subjective constructs that are constitutive of a Palestinian cultural identity. This identity manifests itself on the levels of nostalgic identification with the lost homeland as well as cultural belonging to what I call "a denied home."

This interplay between memory and the everyday of exile where intergenerational loss of place is at stake constitutes the underlying problem of my discussion: namely, 64 years after *al-Nakba*, what does it mean to be a Palestinian refugee, or so-called *stateless* subject, in exile today? I use the word *stateless* here with great hesitation, because this word signifies exclusive negation of subjectivity to the extent that it leaves unexplored the ways in which the subjects in question perceive and politically identify themselves as specifically *Palestinian* subjects. This is, however, the word that is commonly used to refer to Palestinian identity in official travel documents and identity cards issued by various

countries around the world when it comes to specifying the political state from which they come. Another common phrase used in this context is "nationality unknown."

With respect to national identity and political citizenship, these are more than just words. As it is well known, he who controls the terms often determines the debate. Both words, *stateless* and *unknown*, reiterate a misleading rhetorical discourse regarding Palestinians. Overtly pronounced in various scholarly, public, and institutional forums both in Europe and the United States, this discourse is not simply a matter of coincidental terminology at the level of mere citation and description of the political status of the Palestinians today. Rather, implicit within this rhetorical discourse is a political enunciation of a colonial narrative that enacts the utter negation of the existence of Palestinian people in the present. As Edward Said succinctly puts it in his book *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969–1994*, these instances of political enunciation are "thoroughly consonant with a Zionist vision since [Theodor] Herzl" (1995a: 24). This vision is represented mostly in Israel's publicly stated policies that have categorically denied, and continue to deny, both the existence of Palestine as a historical-political entity and the reality of a Palestinian people as its inhabitants (or citizens) in the present.[3]

In order to avoid the mishaps of this grave negation and to delineate an alternative vision, in this chapter I propose to explore the Palestinians' sense of themselves as subjectively determined in their experiential narratives and memories of loss of homeland and exile. Starting from the premise that Palestinian demands for recognition and return, self-determination, and freedom constitute first and foremost a cultural demand for the right to tell the Palestinian narratives, I raise the following questions. For second and third generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, how does the memory of loss of homeland erupt as a memory of denial of home in exile? And how does this memory affect the Palestinian subject's notions of "home" when he or she is barred from this place? In order to answer these questions, I will focus on Badr's collection of short stories, *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* (1993), which was originally published in 1983 in Arabic as *Shurfa ala al-Fakahani*.[4]

Forced Departures and Narrative Imagings

A Palestinian exile herself, Badr was born in Jerusalem in 1950. Her family departed for Jordan after the 1967 Israeli military occupation

of East Jerusalem, West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, and then for Beirut after the massacres of *Black September* in 1970.[5] After the Palestinian exodus from Lebanon in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion in 1982, Badr lived in Damascus, Tunis, and Amman, before she was finally granted permission and allowed to return to Ramallah in the West Bank in 1994.

The three short stories in Badr's collection acquaint their readers with Palestinian exile as a subjective condition in which there are no homecomings but only a series of forced departures and denials of access to home. Entitled respectively "A Land of Rock and Thyme," "A Balcony Over the Fakihani," and "The Canary and the Sea," the stories interweave the narratives of two women, Yusra and Su'ad, and one man, Abu Hussain, recounting their successive uprooting: 1948 from Palestine, 1970 from Jordan, and 1982 from Lebanon.

Set during the Lebanese civil war (1975–76) and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the three stories poignantly record the brutal reality of war in the daily lives of ordinary people determined to survive overwhelming conditions of loss of homeland and exile. The name "The Fakihani" in the title of Badr's collection symbolizes a predominantly Palestinian suburb in Beirut. This is the name that is used to describe the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon and the state of affairs at that time as "a state within a state." In this context, the PLO-controlled areas in Lebanon were often referred to in Arabic as *Dawlat al-Fakihani* (the state of Fakihani). Both the civil war and the Israeli invasion pushed Lebanon into a vicious sectarian conflict of Christians against Muslims, and they also inflicted further dispersal on exiled Palestinians who resided there, and still do, as "refugees" after the establishment of Israel in 1948. This war was concluded by the departure of the PLO from Beirut during the Israeli siege of the city in which Palestinians were given a safe passage into the sea to their new exile in Tunisia.[6]

In the first short story, "A Land of Rock and Thyme," the young girl Yusra narrates her repeated flights from one refugee camp to another and from "crowded museums" (17) taken as temporary shelters, where empty ammunition boxes become doors to deserted houses that "have no doors, no windows, no floors and no sanitation" (4). In the second story, "A Balcony Over the Fakihani," Su'ad is constantly forced to move—from Amman, to Beirut, to Damascus—before she finally settles in "the Fakihani," soon to discover, however, that this dwelling is as precarious and as transient as all the others. This is precisely what Abu Hussain al-Shuwaiki, the narrator of the third story "The Canary

and the Sea," comes to realize as well at the end of his narrative. During *al-Nakba*, as a child Abu Hussain is forced out of Palestine for Lebanon, only to return later as a visitor and again as a prisoner of war. After he is exchanged for an Israeli soldier, compounding the ordeal of exile once back in Lebanon, Abu Hussain is finally expelled to Tunisia.

To give my reader a taste of the experience of displacement as imaged in these stories, let me start with a fragment from Abu Hussain's story in "The Canary and the Sea" that describes the uprooting that Palestinians undergo in their ongoing exile:

> On the twenty-third day, they brought us blue overalls, boots, socks and underclothes and told us to get dressed. I was sure we were leaving here for prison [. . .] About fifty of us stood in line till the Red Cross bus arrived, when we were called out by name [. . .] they gave us our personal belongings [. . .] I put on my watch, which was marked with my own blood. It had stopped at the very moment I was hit. The bus moved off, and I saw the land and orchards and trees and sky of Palestine, its cotton fields and the grapes in its vineyards—our country which we're forbidden even to approach [. . .] By the sides of the road we saw abandoned Arab houses with the names of their owners still on the doors. I wept, not alone, but with all the prisoners returning with me on the bus. I hadn't wept since I was wounded, but I wept now. There was the country that was beyond my reach, and there was the sea—the sea shimmering and gleaming behind the roofs of Shuwaika, the village which I was even now leaving behind me! It had nothing to say to us, as if it had no understanding of the secret of our tears. We reached Tyre, where I got in touch with my relations. The day I arrived was the very day on which they'd told my wife of my death in the battle; I had already been officially announced, but they'd hidden the news from her because she was a nursing mother and they were afraid of the effects on my baby daughter. Three days later I was on the sea, in the last ship of fighters leaving Beirut. But I didn't talk with the sea. Now I understand the secret of my tears. (124–25)

Abu Hussain's words accentuate the fact that the experience of Palestinian exile implies a forced travel and movement across multiple symbolic and physical spaces. Since he is a Palestinian in exile, Abu Hussain's narrative is framed by an involuntary removal from one place and time to another. This constant flux or dispersion is both individual and collective. Accordingly, Abu Hussain does not travel on the bus alone, but with 50 other prisoners; all of whom weep with him: "I wept, not alone, but with all the prisoners."

Moreover, for Abu Hussain, exile is both a condition of separation and constant undesired movement so much as of estrangement. Abu

Hussain is estranged because he is deported out of his country and denied access to it: "our country which we're forbidden even to approach." This denial of access represents the moment in which Palestine, functioning as a constructed articulation of subjectivity, enters the narrative space and receives its voice as a great loss of direction and of expulsion from what "being at home" means. It is precisely the depth of such a moment of separation, disorientation, and denial that manifests Abu Hussain's effective deportation: This is as exiled from himself as he could have been, but is not allowed to be, both in time and space.

For Abu Hussain, being in an Israeli prison under military occupation is not the "real" imprisonment. Instead, being expelled and denied access to return to his home is the moment of entering *the* prison: "I was sure we were leaving here for prison." Thus, to be denied access to home, one's source of security and belonging, becomes an end station where time simply stops. This is given concrete form when he says, "my watch [. . .] stopped [. . .] ," a final point that is equal to finding oneself in a prison. For Abu Hussain, the experience of imprisonment and denial (being restricted and confined in exile) brings estrangement, even destruction. This estrangement is figured in the passage through the personified landscape—village and sea. These two places no longer allow for a mutual dialogue and understanding with the exiled subject: "There was the country that was beyond my reach [. . .] It had nothing to say [. . .] ." After his expulsion from Palestine, Abu Hussain's only destination is nowhere but an uncompassionate, "shimmering," and "gleaming" sea. Neither the village nor the sea understands the meaning of his tears for what was lost. Nor are they available for dialogue. Again, the story gives concrete form to this experience. The day Abu Hussain is put in the sea of exile is "the very day" he is "officially announced" dead, a moment at which he finally "understands the secret" of his own tears. Hence, this psychic death also offers epistemic insight.

With these words, Abu Hussain narrates his uprooting from his home village in Palestine at the end of Badr's collection of short stories. I started my analysis of the short stories in this chapter with the ending of Abu Hussain's narrative in exile as well as the ending of Badr's collection as a whole, because it is an ending that bears witness to a historical moment of loss of homeland that is etched in a present moment of a denial of home. At stake is a narrative, the narrative of a memory of subjective loss of place through different narrative strategies of displacement, repetition, and resubstitution. The fictional nature of this narrative, however, does not take away from the truth of what is being presented. Instead, it makes concrete experiences, gives them visual

shape and form—it "images" these. The narrativity of the stories allows for the literalizations to perform these images. Within the fiction, the watch "really" stops; the death is "really" announced. Hence, the narrative produces these imagings by means of what cannot be dismissed as metaphors (the watch stopping, the death announced). These images are, in fact, the opposite of metaphors; they are literalizations of abstractions. This is the primary means through which narrative fiction is able to offer epistemic insights otherwise inaccessible.

Narratologically, these strategies are highly significant. They point to how the temporality of memorization and narrative in Palestinian exile is antilinear in its most basic form. The connection of the story's ending in the present and the reader's memory of the pastness of the beginning of that story is inherently a connection between the way the subject reads a certain narrative and the cultural and political environment of which he or she is a part. This is why I began my analysis with the ending of the collection. Badr's collection is a tour de force to give literary and imaginative figuration to the everyday victimization of the Palestinian people and their denial by the state of Israel of their homes in Palestine. The key to this experience is *ghurba* (estrangement).

Ghurba: Beyond Metaphorization of Palestinian Exile

The multiple departures of the main characters in *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* are violent uprootings that imply a state of radical disconnection between the subject and his or her home. The term Palestinians employ to describe such a disconnection is *ghurba*. In Arabic, this word literally means "estrangement," and it is derived from the same verbal roots as the word *ghareeb*—both as a noun: strange; as an adjective: strange or estranged. And yet in Palestinian cultural discourse, *ghurba* suggests something quite specific.

Significantly, in Palestinian dialect, *ghurba* is synonymous with the word "exile," and as a concept it signifies issues such as dislocation and expulsion from one's home, family, and community. A pertinent example of this specific use of *ghurba* can be seen in the ways Palestinian writers and intellectuals frequently deploy this term in order to denote notions of uprooting, cold, winter, and suffering to the desperate situation of Palestinians in exile.[7] *Ghurba*, thus, is a suggestive term for *al-Nakba* as an experiential category precisely because it refers to the experience of displacement *of* and *from* home. And it does this in terms of a different mode of being, a temporal and an existential circumstance, and a spatial geopolitical process of forced removal in which the Palestinian subject,

to borrow Edward Said's terminology, is continually put "out of place" in the present.[8] This violent condition does not only lead to a loss of the homeland but also to a breaking up, an undesired detachment that is permanent in some cases, of one's family and community. The geopolitical significations of *ghurba*, then, stress both the experiential and the material dimensions of the condition of estrangement and enclosure of exile, both temporally and spatially yet without subsuming one to the other. This equality of the different elements lies at the heart of Palestinian exile. These elements, I argue below, cannot be covered—in fact, covered up—by the upbeat metaphors of travel.

I have rehearsed the etymological significations of the Palestinian use of *ghurba*, not to assert some form of etymological determinism but to provide a specific rhetorical and cultural context within which narratives of Palestinian loss of homeland and estrangement of exile can be read both cognitively and discursively. Before I embark on such a reading of Badr's three short stories, let me return and briefly unpack the theoretical parameters of the act of metaphorizing exile in critical theory in terms of travel and displacement as well as the problems of using this metaphoric projection in the Palestinian context.

In her article, "Comparative Identities: Exile in the Writing of Franz Fanon and W. E. B. Du Bois," Anita Haya Goldman succinctly summarizes the issue at hand:

> In current literary discussion, there has been a rather misleading tendency to use the term metaphorically, so that the experience of exile has come to mean, more broadly, the experience of difference and estrangement in society, and most broadly, an aspect of what is human in all of us. (1995: 180)

Thus, the act of taking exile as a metaphor works to generalize it, such that the experience becomes a trope for the staging of humanity itself. Moreover, the metaphorization of exile, through difference and estrangement, leads to a misleading assumption in which "we all become exiled subjects." Exile, so to speak, becomes *exiled* from its spatio-temporal referentiality: the experience itself comes to represent not a discontinuous state of being displaced from a specific place and time, but as a general condition of displacement in itself. Through the dropping of place as a reference of exile, the exiled subject (or the referent) becomes merely configured as a figure of speech whose travelling lacks both a cultural and historical specificity.

This lack of specificity of the meaning of cultural phenomena perilously contradicts what Edward Said theorized in his essay "Traveling Theory." After all, as Said claimed, "like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another." But Said also warned only too ominously: "Having said that, however, one should go on to specify the kinds of movement that are possible, in order to ask whether by virtue of having moved from one place and time to another an idea or a theory gains or loses in strength, and whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation" (1983: 226).

Indeed, such a lack of specificity, as Peter Hallward illustrates in his critique of postcolonial theory in *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific*, highlights the charge of "insufficient political specificity," which has become the most cutting accusation in the field of postcolonial studies and practices of criticism (2001: 22).[9] According to Hallward, much of postcolonial theory can be read through "the interest postcolonial criticism maintains in locating cultural performance and political agency in terms that emphasize their contingency, ambivalence and displacement" (22). At stake, as Hallward puts it, is a theoretical commitment "to an explicitly *deterritorializing* discourse in something close to the Deleuzian sense—a discourse so fragmented, so hybrid, as to deny its constituent elements any substantial specificity at all" (22).[10]

What is problematic about this deterritorializing (or nomadic) discourse is the dubious conflation between literal and metaphorical aspects of travel through which the specificity of histories of displacement are erased under the signs of difference, estrangement, and migrancy. An insightful critique of this conflation can be found in Carin Kaplan's book *Questions of Travel*. In her deconstruction of the subject position of the poststructuralist theorist and cultural critic who uses metaphors of travel, movement, and mobility, Kaplan drags out the destructive and imperialist heritage of colonial travel in critical theories that are supposedly emancipatory. For Kaplan, "postmodern [theories] operate through a contradictory, discontinuous, and uneven process of connection with modernity." At the heart of this process, postmodernism metaphorizes travel, through translating the literal into the metaphoric, within "pre-postmodernist" fields of power (1996: 23).

With respect to exile, Kaplan's discussion focuses on the prevalent figure of the author who gains the prerequisite of distance and

detachment for cultural production through exile. Her analysis of the exilic aesthetic reveals that it dislocates the historical and the material conditions of Western imperialism and constitutes an imperialist nostalgia through which the aestheticization of exile ends up creating an opposition between the high cultural displacement of exile (art) and the low cultural displacement of tourism (commerce). Whereas tourism and its counterpart, forced displacement and exile, are postmodern phenomena, the figure of the traveler, Kaplan notes, is generally regarded as a typically modern subject: a subject who is nostalgically yearning for the other and relentlessly attempting to locate it in another territory (1996: 47). In this sense, travel, for Kaplan, is an existential activity and discursive formation, but it is also a metaphor for reading postmodernism.[11] What is at issue in these postmodern articulations, as Kaplan argues, is a dangerous "mythologized narrativization of displacement" that does not "question the cultural, political, and economic grounds of [. . .] privileges, means and limitations" (1996: 2). Thus, through the conflation between the literal and the metaphorical aspects of travel in nomadic discourses, exile does not refer to material and actual experiences of being displaced from home, but becomes a way of thinking without a home.

Within this mode of thinking, the political-cultural phenomenon of exile has acquired a theoretical quality; something far removed from being a literal travel that contains violence and loss (of place), into travel that descends into metaphysical idealism often unleashed around predominantly nomadic realms and peripatetic institutional fashions. In his seminal critique of "cosmo-theory," Timothy Brennan exposes the mishaps of such a theorization. According to Brennan, cultural theory often bestows a positive inflection on diasporic and migratory experiences, yet without remarking on the coercive aspects of these experiences that resist theorization; especially the fact that people often do not want to be diasporic (2001: 659–91).[12] In this framework, narratives of exile, as Sophia A. McClennen notes in her book *The Dialectics of Exile*, lost their reference to "a painful state of being and were empty of history and an association to material reality" (2004: 1). This neglect of the literal (and violent) aspects of exile is at the core of academic disciplines such as cultural studies, identity and border studies so that "exiles had been appropriated by the theory" (2004: ix) and stripped of their tragic and above all political edge.

Following these critiques, I argue that Palestinian exile cannot be treated merely as metaphorical; otherwise one falls into the gullible argument that every intellectual is always already what Edward Said

calls a "metaphorical exile" (1994a: 53).[13] Rather, it is the other way around: everyday experience of exile offers a test case to both exile's metaphors and the subject's sense of estrangement. This conceptualization, as I will attempt to show below, is momentous for the understanding of Palestinian exile epistemologically, not as a condition of ultimate travel, movement, and mobility, but as a subjective trajectory of *forced* travel that is always predicated upon immobility, enclosure, and a lack of freedom to move under the threat of either imprisonment or deportation and expulsion.

In order to unpack the implications of the suspension of this trope in Palestinian exile, I will now turn to Badr's collection of short stories as narratives of *ghurba*. I read Palestinian exile as imaged in these narratives as an entangled spatiotemporal condition of displacement that affects the subject in the present. What characterizes such a reading is the attempt to deviate from notions of "the mind-body separation" wherein the (estranged) self is relegated to the so-called purity of the metaphorical world while at the same time the physical world is denigrated.[14] A word-sensitive and image-foregrounding reading, I contend, can transform our understanding of Palestinian exile as well as the subsequent estranged condition from a general individual pathology to include the meaning and conduct of the politics of involuntary exile and displacement as a whole. The desire to promote such an understanding underlines this book and this chapter in particular.

Therefore, in my reading of Badr's stories, I compare the relationship between home and exile (or not-home) in terms of memory in order to show how the subject's memory of Palestinian catastrophe shifts from a "nostalgic memory" of the lost homeland to a "critical memory" of the immediate experience of exile and the denial of home in the present. This shift from nostalgic to critical memory allows us to understand *al-Nakba* as an actual political condition of the past loss and the present "denial" of the subject's cultural space. This denial is not a denial of home in the sense of a fixed origin but of home as a space that constitutes a resource of memories wherein a sense of self can be constructed. At stake is the notion of home as a cultural space—that is personal, filial, and ideological all at once—to which the subject desires to travel, yet to which he or she is constantly denied access. This specific understanding of Palestinian exile brings with it certain affects with respect to concretizing the present denial of home as an affective construct that foregrounds the subject's view of the meaning of this (lost) homeland, not vice versa. The *ghurba*-based memory is, therefore, critical, engaging the enforced condition from within. Such

a critical memory is also, emphatically, situated in the present. Hence, it is not a memory *of* exile—as something that happened in the past—but a memory *in* exile. The preposition *in*, here, means both locally and temporally *within*.

From Nostalgic to Critical Memory of Loss

For every Palestinian who seeks a shelter from his or her memories of loss of homeland, the short stories in Badr's *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* offer a compelling account of the experiences of Palestinian subjects who are uprooted and dispossessed. The three short stories deal with the relationship between memory of loss of place and the everyday of exile. It is from these personal narratives that Badr constructs a collective narrative of Palestinian loss of homeland. Foregrounded in this narrative, the telling of the stories becomes memory's struggle with *al-Nakba* in the present.

The three main characters in Badr's stories, Yusra, Su'ad and Abu Hussain, must flee to save their lives after brutal camp massacres and bombing attacks. The most powerful weapon that these characters have in the face of uprooting and dispossession is a tenacious memory. The characters' resorting to memory accordingly shapes the form of their narratives. This has literary consequences. In a violent and ever-shifting presence of exile, omniscient narration and chronological order cannot be maintained, and give way to fragmented first-person narratives that uncover layer after layer of everyday instances of personal memories. Within this fragmented narrativity, nothing becomes too trivial to remember: Yusra's rented wedding dress, Su'ad's wine-colored wrap, and many other daily moments and small happenings are all recalled and arrested—as if the loss of those moments means the subject's certain annihilation in the present. For Yusra, Su'ad and Abu Hussain, remembering, thus, becomes a narrative mode of resistance in exile. At the heart of this mode is the exiled subject's constant attempt to anchor him or herself not in the past loss of homeland in 1948 but in the present of this past against uncertain future of forced travel and displacement. Through its antilinear progression, memory becomes the only reliable, solid, and permanent possession of the exiled subject.

This stubborn insistence on remembering can be seen in Yusra's narrative in "A Land of Rock and Thyme." In this story, Yusra tells of her family's flight from the besieged refugee camp of Tal al-Zaatar in Lebanon in 1982. During this flight, Yusra loses her dwelling and her family. In this landscape of loss, storytelling through memory becomes

Yusra's self-conscious task in the everyday of exile. Written in fragments out of necessity, "A Land of Rock and Thyme" begins with a fragment significantly entitled "The Picture," which opens on a dream wherein Yusra recalls the memory of Ahmed, her husband who was killed in an Israeli air raid:

> I dreamt tonight we were walking together. He always comes to me in my dreams. We were both walking a long [. . .] the Martyrs' cemetery, but I'd no sooner seen him that he went off. He leapt up, began to move among the graves [. . .] *I don't know where he went then* [. . .] *My mind's full of the picture* [. . .] I'd intended to go and put it on his grave [. . .] But the situation was tense; fighting had broken out again [. . .] I had a long argument with my sister Jamila, who finally took the large size picture from me and locked it away in the cupboard. I was pregnant, she reminded me, the baby was due at the end of the month and it would be difficult to run if there was sudden shelling. What should I do then? Wait? My whole life had been spent waiting and waiting—but I hadn't expected to marry a man who'd love me and want me, wait with me, then leave for ever and never come back. (3–4. Emphasis added)

Yusra's words draw the reader into the world of memory of personal loss and dislocation, a world of "reverie" in which the exiled subject, Yusra, seeks to recover place and space from past and present times. The repetition of Yusra's memory of the loss of Ahmed in the form of a dream "dictation"—ordinarily, this would be called an "interior monologue"—underscores the preoccupation of his loss with the problematics of her mind in present time.

To be sure, Yusra's memory of Ahmed's loss embodies a nostalgic return to a moment from the past when they were still together. "Walking," in combination with "together," suggests a peaceful stroll. Yusra's nostalgia is enforced by her questioning of life without Ahmed in the present: "What should I do then? Wait? [. . .]." This nostalgic memory, however, does not constitute a pure reversion to past times. Instead, what characterizes Yusra's nostalgic memory is a peculiar narrative mix in which her loss of Ahmed is juxtaposed with his presence, forming dual temporalities between past and present. This juxtaposition can be seen in the way Yusra explains her memory of loss through the metaphor of the picture, "my mind is full of the picture," between dreaming and awakening.

The word *picture*, like the stopping of the watch and the announced death in Abu Hussain's story, is key here. It is one of those concrete shapes, or imagings, through which the experience is made visible,

hence, understandable for others, the story's readers, in all its concrete horror. Whereas in her dream Yusra loses sight of Ahmed, "I don't know where he went," in her awakening, Ahmed's image is a "large size picture," one that she cannot avoid in terms of her bodily experience. When her sister Jamila finally takes Ahmed's picture and "locks it away in the cupboard," she immediately reminds Yusra that she cannot go to the cemetery because she is pregnant and "it would be difficult to run if there was sudden shelling." It is at this moment of "recognition" of the violence that besets her world that Yusra's nostalgic memory, her mental image of the loss of Ahmed in the dream, shifts in focus to the materiality (the physical image) of her pregnant body as the site at which Ahmed's loss repeats itself in reality.

For Yusra, then, the memory of losing Ahmed hangs around as a picture that both fills her mind and consumes her daily (bodily) existence. The evidentiary force of this picture attests to Yusra's loss not as a past happening but as a loss repeated in the everyday of exile. Narratologically, Yusra's dream in the story can be read as a "mirror-text," in which the image of loss contains a copy of itself in the present. Both Yusra's pregnant figure and her unborn baby support this reading, signifying that the sequence of loss recurs infinitely.[15]

Yusra's shift of vision of Ahmed's loss from the mental to the material image postulates her memory as a trope that signifies the interconnectedness of mind and body between past and present. At stake here is a mode of remembering in which Yusra uses her imaginative power of the past loss to realize a latent, abiding connection to the present loss in exile. At the heart of this mode is a shift from nostalgic memory to what I call a "critical memory of loss": experiential memories that construct the subject's meaning of loss of place in exile not only as metaphorical (in terms of thinking) but also as literal loss (bodily experienced) in the present. Through critical memory, Yusra in the story is caught in a vision of loss both against (dream) time and across it.[16]

Along with this narrative shift to critical memory in exile, the story's inscription of the psychic loss of Ahmed in Yusra's dream relies upon heightened tropes of mistaken Palestinian identity. This troping, in turn, implies an affirmation of this identity in terms of place. It can be observed in the introduction of Ahmed's character at the end of the dream fragment, "The Picture." Having been misled by Ahmed's nickname "the Indian," the name by which people in the refugee camp called him after returning from his studies in India, Yusra thinks he is an Indian: "When I first saw his swarthy features and black eyes, I thought he really was an Indian" (4). When they first meet and she

asks him whether he is Indian, Ahmed laughs at Yusra's question, "he laughed and laughed, till he almost fell over," and immediately answers: "Me? I am from the village of Jamaain near Nablus, Yusra" (4).

As I explain below, this encounter between Yusra and Ahmed lays bare a complex register of Palestinian identity on different levels. This implied function of the mistake seeks to repair the violation of identity wreaked upon Palestinians by exile, separation, and death. First, narratologically the mistake intimates that Ahmed becomes loss personified. This qualifies him as the link between the lost place and the place of exile. Hence, Yusra's husband, Ahmed, from the West Bank, carries the memories of Palestine that maintain the link between the homeland and exile, between the *Zaatar* (thyme) of the occupied home in Palestine and the place of exile in Lebanon bearing the name "Tal al-Zaatar".[17]

Second, culturally the episode articulates the issue of identity, and its loss to suggest this loss is itself an identity, in a vertiginous *mise-en-abyme*. Such an articulation can be seen in the way Ahmed's narrative voice corrects Yusra's (material) sight. In their encounter, while Yusra's vision of Ahmed's "swarthy features and black eyes" enforces her mistaken belief of his identity as an Indian, Ahmed's answer subverts the kind of vision by which specific information about his identity is disclosed. This is a narrative configuration of Palestinian identity, and its loss, not through the constellation of "idea—sight" but instead "idea—narrative." Within this constellation, the narrativization of Yusra's memory is carried over into the image of Ahmed with a spatialized and localized sense of identity as a "Palestinian." Significantly, in the narrative Ahmed does not identity himself by his name, but by a reference to his lost village (Jamaain) in Palestine.[18]

Hence, a third implication of the mistake merges narrative and cultural meaning. This, in turn, foregrounds the cultural signification of narrative as a mode of shaping cultural identity in exile. This narrative mode captures most adequately the Janus-faced obsession with cultural memory and identity and its loss in exile. This is so because Yusra's vision in the story enhances the mistake of Palestinian identity in exile but only to emphasize the condition of Palestinian exile as a mistake that needs to be corrected. Through this troping, Ahmed's articulation of his subjectivity in terms of his lost village can be read, then, as a synecdochical representation of that impossible location, the lost place. This representation achieves both similarity and contiguity at the same time: Ahmed comes from (contiguity) and becomes like (similarity) his village.

Thus, the mistake performs a powerful demonstration of how subjectivity in exile inhabits one place and projects the reality of another.

The subject in exile never quite "fits" where he or she is. This double orientation generates a temporal conflation that blurs the distinction between the refugee camp in Lebanon and the lost home in Palestine, between then and now. It also spatializes the tension between Yusra's loss in the dream and her actual loss in the everyday. The opening fragment of Yusra's story in "A Land of Rock and Thyme," then, proposes an epistemological mode that gives epistemic access to exile: it juxtaposes dual temporalities that reflect on the relationship between thinking loss in exile and experiencing it.

In continuity with this merging of narrative and cultural meaning, the representation of Yusra's mistake introduces a fourth implication: the mistake also provides insight into her psychological turmoil. This is why the story presents her imaging as a dream. This epistemological mode can be seen in the way Yusra's narrative moves into the here and now of exile's spatial temporality. The character describes her world (of death) as a dream. It is at this point in her narrative that metaphorization appears as an inadequate mode, and metaphor as an inadequate trope for constituting exile's loss. Metaphor is insufficient, both because of its retrospective orientation but also, and just as crucially, because the exiled subject's obsession in the story is not only with memory but also with forgetting.

Together, then, these four implications mentioned above suggest a literary, and thereby cultural function of memory that I have called "critical." Along with this intricate notion of a critical memory of loss, the narrative's inscription of the loss of Ahmed in Yusra's dream becomes a transformative space of imaging: a narrative space in which the everyday loss retrospectively takes the past and its losses in a new embrace. This imaging memory space is constructed for collective remembering. Through the concept of critical memory, I can explain how the story outlines a loss that is communal rather than isolated and individualized.

The Everyday of Exile: Murder in the Museum

In "A Land of Rock and Thyme," the transforming power of narrative is underscored by Yusra's storytelling of the following parts of her story. Immediately after the dream fragment, Yusra tells of her exodus from Tal al-Zaatar refugee camp. This episode makes the reader a fellow-exilee: as a consequence, the reader is exposed to a contextualized loss and destruction in the everyday of exile. The world Yusra describes in the rest of her narrative is a world wherein memory of loss of place

abounds, a world in which "there is no where else to go" (13). In the context of Yusra's exodus, death and destruction become inescapable events of her everyday life. Consider the following passage:

> Death had become familiar: there was nobody in al-Zaatar who didn't anticipate their own [...] Everyone expected death; no one in Tal al-Zaatar thought to live out their natural life. When father died the condolence people offered was the heartfelt wish that we ourselves should survive [...] You'd be standing next to someone—and an hour later, you'd hear he was dead! There was one young man, I remember, who said: "When I die, put me in this coffin". They made coffins from cupboard doors and there was a door ready. "I'll measure it against my body," the young man said. A moment later a splinter of shrapnel struck him in the back and killed him on the spot. So they did put him in the coffin he'd measured himself for. I'm amazed I've never been injured myself. It was like a dream. You'd talk to someone and an hour or two later you'd hear they were dead. (11)

The certainty of death is juxtaposed with the uncertainty of living which Palestinian subjects experience in their everyday of exile. Death becomes an integral part of life for the camp's residents to the extent that survival triggers amazement: "I'm amazed I've never been injured." Yusra's comment, "it was like a dream," is connected with her opening dream, it points out the commonality of death. The dream turns into a reality, a reality so horrific that it can only be likened to a dream.

Death is specifically and brutally linked to Palestinian cultural identity. Later on in the narrative, Yusra tells how, while escaping the camp after the Phalangists' raids, people had to walk along a highway lined with soldiers on either side. She recalls the story of a man walking next to her whom the soldiers grab by the shoulder. When the man begs them and says: "For God's sake," the soldiers reply: "which God?" (14) and shoot him instantly. A similar event of killing happens in the story of Yusra's teenager brother, Jamal. Before Yusra's family goes to visit their aunt who lives in *al-Awaazi*, they all warn each other that in case they are questioned by the soldiers on the road about their nationality, they must not answer that they are Palestinians, but rather "I'm Lebanese" (14). When he is questioned by the soldiers whether he is "Lebanese or Palestinian," Jamal ignores the warning and immediately answers: "Palestinian." As a result, "a bullet to the head, just like that" (14), Yusra remarks. On a narrative level, the story of Jamal's murder presents the reader with another episode of the nightmarish reality of Palestinian life in exile. His story also relates to the notion of the

affirmation of Palestinian identity. Just like Ahmed, Jamal identifies himself as a Palestinian regardless of the outcome: his certain death. The affirmation of Palestinian identity in exile as such becomes an act of belonging that resists the denial of this identity in the present.

Later on, the story becomes more tragic as Yusra describes countless scenes of death in the everyday of exile. A particularly disturbing scene occurs when Yusra is separated from her family during the flight, and together with her grandmother goes to look for them in the museum, which the people of the camp turned into a makeshift gathering place. It is in the museum that the "final slaughter" takes place:

> I rushed madly into the museum, looking for mother. I searched among the people there [. . .] I said to grandmother: "That's it. My mother and brothers and sisters must be dead." My hands beat helplessly against my cheeks, and I wept no longer knowing anything, except that the Phalangists were detaining people and settling old scores as they chose. Then: murder. The final slaughter happened in the museum. I looked and saw a room with a broad display windows; it was packed with young men imprisoned inside. There were a number of killing stations on the way, the last of these, apart from the final one, being the barracks near the Hotel Dieu. Only those destined for long life left there alive. (17)

Yusra's words evoke loss in exile as the violation of Palestinian subjectivities. The key image in her narrative is the "museum." The most obvious significance of the imaging of the museum is grounded in its "act of exposing."

To expose, however, does not only mean to publically present but also to demonstrate, so as to affect subjective understanding. In her book, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*, Mieke Bal makes this point and argues that "gestures of exposing" are events that "involve bringing out into the public domain the deepest held views and beliefs of a subject." Moreover, for Bal, "exposition is always also an argument" in which subjects, by publicizing their views, objectify and expose themselves as much as the object. This subjective grounding, in turn, makes exposition "an exposure of the self [. . .] an act of producing meaning, a performance" (1996: 2). Most significantly, according to Bal, gestures of exposing, as performances, connect two main aspects. While the first is the "Look!" aspect that "involves the visual availability of the exposed object," the second aspect is the "That's how it is," which "involves the authority of the person who knows: epistemic authority" (2).[19]

Yusra's narrative of loss in exile, I contend, embodies both aspects of the act of exposing. Through her imaging of the museum, not only

does Yusra guides us, the readers, into it, in which we see the murder of Palestinians, but she also offers a truth value of her act of seeing this murder in the present. In the narrative, this truth value does not emerge from the museum or its cultural dynamics of exposition, but from the character's focalization and narrative position in the story as a witness. This act of witnessing can be seen in the way her storytelling moves from the general overview into a much more detailed description. Yusra's depiction of the spatial arrangement when she says, "I looked and saw a room [. . .] ," and "there were a number of killing stations [. . .] near the Hotel Dieu [. . .] ," provides the reader not just of a vision of Palestinians' death that takes place inside the museum but equally of their death outside it.

Through Yusra's meticulous attention to spatial details of death both inside and outside, her critical memory becomes emphatically performative. Her memory performs an act that needs to be equally acted upon. This performative aspect of critical memory accordingly triggers a second reading of the imaging of the museum: namely, as a place of Palestinian cultural memory in the present. What is poignant about the imaging of the museum is that it is not a place where cultural artifacts are presented but rather where human beings are murdered. The "display room," together with the "killing stations on the way," signifies that Palestinians are being killed as people watch, just like the reality Palestinians live in today. Yusra's criticism of Arabs' lack of solidarity later on in the story substantiates such a reading. Immediately after she miraculously escapes death in the museum, Yusra describes how "the Arab Deterrent force [. . .] Saudis and Sudanese" were all around them but offered no help: "'Thank God you're safe', they were saying. I cursed them in my mind. 'God damn you', I thought. They kill people right under your noses, and you just stand there as if nothing's happened" (18). Through this lack of solidarity and failure to act, Palestinian cultural memory is focalized as an ongoing event of murder that has been repeated many times, yet that has not been acted upon. Yusra's critical memory of loss in exile, thus, not only performs an act but also the lack of it: her memory enacts the need for an act.

This focalization can be seen in the way Yusra's story raises the issue of Palestinian death in terms of generational loss in exile. A key scene in this context is her description of her father's death:

> He was forty-six when he died and he had some kind of premonition of it. I once heard him say to Mother: "My time's coming. I'm going to die." "Of course you're not!" said Mother hotly. "I'll die before you do!" He told her

> he'd die as his father had, and at the same age; and so it happened, according to his premonition. My grandfather had been killed by a stray bullet during the exodus from Palestine in 1948. He was forty-six years old. (19)

The familial dialectic that shapes the subject's loss in exile generates intensely relational forms of identity among the story's characters. Yusra, mother and father are all linked by a three-generation chain of loss that marks both bonding and violation of Palestinian identity. The multiplicity of narrative voices, mother, father, and Yusra, points out the characters' familial bonding. More importantly, it also signifies the interchangeability of their generational positions in terms of death in which their bonding is ultimately violated. As a Palestinian, Yusra's father both anticipates his death and he also *dies*—just like his father who was "killed with a stray bullet" during *al-Nakba*. Narratologically, Yusra's father, then, takes the narrative position of his own father, Yusra's grandfather. This narrative interchangeability triggers the reader's anticipation of Yusra as a third-generation Palestinian subject awaiting her own death in the chain of an ongoing loss of home as much as life.

What sustains this reading is that in Yusra's narrative no voice is given clear narrative authority over the others. This absence of the authoritative voice forces us (the readers) to fill in narrative gaps through critical memory. It also puts notions of "narrative authority" as well as "narrative gapping" into question so as to move away from the singular to the collective understanding of Palestinians' loss of place. In "A Land of Rock and Thyme," the collectivity of Palestinian exile takes place most dramatically in the three closing fragments of the story. In these fragments, respectively entitled "Ahmed," "And Then," and "Scenes," the mixing of narrative voices broadens Yusra's critical memory as well as her narrativity from a single "picture" to "scenes" of loss in exile.

Fragmented Imagings: Beyond Geography

Immediately after the scene of the death of Yusra's father, the story returns to Ahmed once again as he returns from India after five years of studying there. In the fragment entitled "Ahmed," Ahmed's narrative voice repeatedly alternates with that of Yusra as she remembers what he told her about his stay in India and what that time meant for him.

Significantly, Ahmed's voice is literally quoted, marked in the text as a quote:

> "Five years of India! I won't say five years of crushing loneliness and being away from home because I was a member of the resistance and the

> Students' Union. But I was convinced that all that had no kind of value while I was abroad. Did you know that, Yusra? I felt isolated, apart from the world. It was as if I was on one of the peaks of the great Himalayas. I was ill for a long time [. . .] India? What a place! Indian films are one thing, but the country's another!" (20)

Ahmed's time in India represents an experience of *ghurba*. The only reason why he would not refer directly to this experience as one of "crushing loneliness and being away from home" is because of his social involvement as "a member of the resistance and the Students' Union." For Ahmed, social involvement "while [. . .] abroad" eases the subject's feelings of loneliness and estrangement, and hence it affects his or her rhetorical language: it *lightens up* the description. This affective effect can be seen through Ahmed's use of the "indirect" rather than "direct speech" to describe his experience: "I won't say five years of crushing loneliness." However, while socialization in exile eases the subject's feelings of estrangement—feelings that affect language—it ultimately has "no kind of value." Ahmed is "convinced" of that, and the only thing that prevails is his feelings of being "isolated and apart from the world." For him, the experience of being "away from home" is like being abandoned in a harsh place where only disease manifests itself.

Indeed, Ahmed's imagings articulate the experience of *ghurba* in exile metaphorically. However, metaphorization is always given narrative specificity in Yusra's story by which the metaphorical configuration becomes both spatialized and specified in terms of Palestinian exile. Just as Ahmed's words problematize the notion of "representation" in terms of "reality" when he says, "Indian films are one thing, but the country's another!," Yusra's critical memory enters the story to problematize both the narrative's metaphorization and the way this metaphorization can be read in terms of the lived experience in exile.

Immediately after the end of Ahmed's quote, Yusra continues the narrative in which she repeats the "mistake" of Ahmed's nickname, "the Indian." In a repetitive scene of their first encounter, Yusra asks Ahmed: "Are you Indian?" (20). Mocking Yusra's question again, "He'd laughed and laughed at my question [. . .]" (20), Ahmed provides a different answer this time. Instead of referring to himself as a Palestinian who comes from the village of Jamaain near Nablus, Ahmed answers with what it means for him to be "away from home" in the present:

> "Yusra, do you know what it means to be away from home, there, in a remote part of the world? It is very real feeling. As real as I am now. Diaries. Look here, at the top of this page [. . .] I saw curving lines

> that he'd clearly drawn himself. It was a miniature map of Palestine. I read what he'd written by it: 'Remember. This must be turned into a reality'." (21)

For Ahmed, being "away from home" in India is a reality that is equal to his present existence, "As real as I am now," as a Palestinian exile in Lebanon away from his home village in Palestine. The map, together with his injunction "remember," signifies that Ahmed carries his lost home with him. Ahmed "draws" home in his diaries and simultaneously engraves it in his mind when he says, "Remember. This must be turned into a reality." With respect to Palestinian cultural memory, Ahmed's answer warns that if Palestinians do not remember, their dreams of the homeland will never become a reality. This is how remembering becomes a mode of resistance to the loss of homeland; a cultural responsibility that Palestinians must uphold in exile to be able keep alive the dream of returning home.

In this part of the story, the "mistake" is given a different connotation. Whereas in the dream fragment the mistake was evoked as part of an ongoing narrative juxtaposition of loss in Yusra's dream with her actual loss in the everyday, in this fragment, the mistake is evoked as a narrative mode of inscribing Palestinian subjectivity in exile *spatially*. Rather than directly articulating his Palestinian identity in terms of the lost homeland, Ahmed asserts his identity in terms of being out of this place in the present. At stake, then, is a narrative repetition of the mistake through which the inscription of Palestinian subjectivity is inextricably linked to the contexts (both inside and outside) of making the self as a knowing subject. Accomplishing recognition in exile, thus, means that the subject is capable of recognizing the narrative repertoire of the memory of "being at home" through the memory of "being away from it." Hence, in order to be recognized as a Palestinian subject, the self needs to cite the contextual (and narratological) conventions of its contemporary condition. Ahmed's inscription of his Palestinian identity in terms of the metaphor of "being away from home" not only specifies his subjectivity—Ahmed becomes a Palestinian subject in exile as opposed to "a refugee"—but also the lost home and the place of exile (or the not-home) are configured temporally and spatially as imagined places of Palestinian identity.

My argument of the lost home and the place of exile as imagined places of Palestinian identity is inspired by Ernst van Alphen's conceptualization of the term "imagined place" in relation to diasporic memory and subjective identification with the homeland. In his article,

"Imagined Homelands: Re-mapping Cultural Identity" (2002), Van Alphen outlines the interplay between "imaginative" and "imagined" aspects of place in relation to issues of mapping cultures and identities onto places. According to Van Alphen, in travelling contexts such as diaspora and exile, the effects of migrancy, whether virtual or not, establish a particular relationship between place and culture that is often characterized by "disconnection, displacement and incommensurability" (55).

Moreover, for Van Alphen, this relationship in migratory contexts signifies "the erosion" of natural connections between subject and place. This erosion, however, neither means that the cultural identity of the travelling subject becomes redundant, nor that place becomes an irrelevant category. Instead, for Van Alphen, through both migrancy and memory, the erosion of natural connections between people and places leads to a different articulation of place itself: mainly that we are no longer talking about place in the same sense of the word; not about the geographical (real) place, but about "imagined place." This "imagined place," as Van Alphen explains, is not the same as "imaginary":

> "Imagined" places are not fairytale places, they are not just fantasy [. . .] Imagined places do have a connection with a place that exists geographically. However, the mode in which this geographic place is *experienced* is ontologically different: geographic place is experienced not through real interaction, but rather through the imagination [. . .] [A]n imagined place is product of an act of imagination. (56, Emphasis in text)

In contrast to what has been taken for granted in recent discussions of exile in critical theory, Van Alphen's view puts forward a distinctively different conceptual understanding of place with respect to subjective memory and identification with the homeland. His view introduces place in relation to a travelling subject whose identity "was not carried along wholesale from homeland to destination" (56), but rather actively (re)constructed in the act of identification in the present. Significantly, Van Alphen's understanding of "imagined place" articulates the relationship between the subject's (imagined) identity and place as not only an identificatory relation to an originating place but also as a relationship that is predicated on time, hence, on history. In other words, the act of imagining homeland identity is not just always framed by the historical dimensions of place and the diaspora that started from that place, but also by those acts of imagining that produce cultural identity in the present (54–58).[20]

For the politically exiled, the understanding of the lost home as well as not-home (exile) as imagined places of Palestinian identity manifests itself in the fact that the narrative of the consciousness of the exiled subject does not begin "at home" but rather with his or her departure from home: "being away from home." The audiovisual details of this configuration between exilic space and Palestinian identity through memorial storytelling will be central to my analysis of Saleh's film *Al-Makhdu'un* in the next chapter. Seen in this light, through Yusra's critical memory of loss in exile, Ahmed's metaphorization of the experience of *ghurba* can be read as fragmented imagings of place. These imagings deviate from a single possible interpretation and meaning and at the same time generate new avenues of meaning of place. Hence, reading the "lost home" as a metaphor of exile becomes a reading of the *otherness* of this metaphor *in* exile: the subject's experience of being not at home. At the heart of this reading is something that is both inside and outside exilic narratives and that affects our conceptions and interpretive practices in the present.

What characterizes Ahmed's articulation of loss of place in exile in this part of "A Land of Rock and Thyme" is that he makes a distinction between the meanings of "home" and "homeland." According to Ahmed, the difference between the two places is that "home" is a home because of its people; it is a place that embodies the subject's familial relations and communal bonding. Ahmed's memories of his lost home in the West Bank are grounded in his thoughts not on the basis of the geography of the place, but of *the* people who inhibit this geography: his father, mother, brothers, and sisters (22). While his memories of the geographical place slip away from his mind—for example, he cannot "remember exactly" which tree he had in his home, "Almond or mulberry"—he exactly remembers his family "constantly and kept coming back to [them] [. . .] He hoped to go back" (22). Thus, for Ahmed, the loss of home in exile is both a matter of losing geography as well as the human relations that flesh out that geography, a reality that he is denied in the present and to which all he wants is to return back.

Ahmed's conceptualization of loss of place in exile through his distinction between home and homeland relates to Yusra's articulation of this loss in the narrative. Whereas in the previous fragments of her "dream" and "exodus from the camp," Yusra evokes the loss in Palestinian exile as a violent murder *beyond* our imagination, Ahmed's answer in this fragment transports this loss back into the realm of the imagination. While Yusra presents the reader with horrific episodes of death in the everyday such as in the slaughter in the museum, Ahmed's

articulation of familial and communal aspects personalizes this loss. Thus, through Ahmed's answer, the loss of home in exile moves from the impossibility of imagination back into the realm of the possibility of subjective memory.

This understanding situates the subject's loss of home as a loss that encompasses both the metaphorical and literal meanings all at once. Thus, the theoretical concept of the "loss of home" links up with the subject's lived experience of "being away from home" in exile. This theoretical-experiential configuration of the subject's loss of home helps us transfigure the abstraction of the metaphorical through and within the political (and its subjective experience). It also enables us to think loss of place rather than merely representing it to the degree that we actively transcend what is objectified; the subject of this loss in the present. Hence, reading the metaphorization of loss of home in Palestinian exile becomes a way of thinking through as well as a practice: a critical engagement with this exile as an interactive process. At the heart of exile as an interactive process is a particular understanding of its narratives' storytelling in terms of critical memory as a narrative building up through fragmentation. This understanding of "exilic narrativity," a notion I further discuss in the next chapter, not only leads to compassion (and identification) with the story of the past *Nakba* but it also positions and activates Palestinian memory of loss of homeland in a specific context—the catastrophic present of exile.

Our Mothers Mourn in Black

In "A Land of Rock and Thyme," exile's interactivity is reflected in Yusra's relationship with Ahmed as her teacher. This learning relationship can be observed both structurally through repetitions and textual quoting, and in the way Yusra interiorizes Ahmed's loss, memories and words as her own. Immediately after Ahmed's description of what the lost home means to him, Yusra tells how they got married and lived together for a short time, only for "ten days" (23), before he was killed.

In this part of the story, Yusra does what Ahmed taught her: namely, "to remember" (21). A pertinent example of Yusra's mastering of remembering is the way she recalls the precise moment of Ahmed's death:

> Finally, one Thursday, two days before he was due home [...] he was killed in an Israeli air raid, from a wound to the head [...] This happened during the day on Thursday, January 29, 1981. In the first month of the year. At two o'clock in the afternoon. (24)

Unlike the other incidents of death of which Yusra does not give specific times and dates, Ahmed's death burns itself into her consciousness; from then on, Yusra takes on the responsibility of remembering. In one sense, Yusra's detailed remembering can be read in relation to *al-Nakba* and the generational transmission of loss of place. Yusra's role as a remembering subject in the narrative, together with her memory of the precise moment of Ahmed's death, frames his death as her *Nakba*. Given that Yusra's character in the story stands out as a Palestinian subject from the third generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, her catastrophe does not appear as grounded in the events of 1948. Rather, Yusra's catastrophe is constituted in the event of Ahmed's death that takes place "on Thursday, January 29, 1981."

In another sense, Yusra's detailed memory evokes Ahmed's loss as an extreme loss, the memory of which she *refuses* to forget. This refusal appears in the way Yusra mourns Ahmed's loss in the fragment entitled "And Then." In this scene, we see Yusra utterly broken and in tears. She cannot believe that Ahmed is dead: "the martyr's wife [. . .] shaken by fits of weeping so intense that they took away her strength. 'How?' she shouted. 'Why'?" (25) Surrounded by her family, Yusra refuses to eat and drink. When her mother pleads with her that she needs to go on with her life, "It was enough that she, Yusra, had got out of Tal al-Zaatar and was still alive. [She] need[s] to go on with the living of her life" (26), Yusra immediately dismisses her mother's plea and screams repeatedly: "Don't talk to me about forgetting" (26). However, the moment when her mother reminds her of the unborn child, "Yusra, you're going to have a child. The child! What ha[s] he done wrong?"(25), Yusra "quickly, decisively" reconsiders the matter and accepts food and drink.

Just as in Yusra's imaging in her opening dream, the image of the unborn child is repeated as a moment of bodily recognition of loss. However, unlike in the dream fragment wherein the child's image affects the shift of Yusra's memory in narrative from the nostalgic past to critical memory of loss in the present, his image here emerges as a sign that situates Yusra's memory of loss on a different temporal level: this time between present and future. Yusra's critical memory of loss in the narrative becomes forward looking, a future-oriented memory.

This effect can be seen in the way Yusra articulates the child's image both as a bodily sign of the repetition of the loss of Ahmed and as a sign of hope to overcome this loss in the future, as an affirmation and rebirth of Palestinian identity in exile. For Yusra, even though the child would not be born in Palestine, he or she would still be a Palestinian.

Immediately after becoming aware of the presence of the child inside her, Yusra says:

> Three months in the womb. Six more to complete the pregnancy. Another person would be born. It would be a Palestinian, from its first moment in the world. (25)

The shift of Yusra's narrative vision, caused by her recognition of the child, leads to a shift of meaning from what was lost to the ways we mourn that loss in exile. On one level, through Yusra's acceptance of food and drink for the sake of her baby, Ahmed's loss becomes focalized as a part of her: she interiorizes his loss from which the possibility of an impossible bereavement emerges. On another, through proclaiming that the baby would be "a Palestinian from its first moment in the world," Yusra seems to suggest that the only possible way for her to mourn Ahmed's loss is to be unable to do so in the present.

Yusra's imaging of the unborn child is crucial particularly if we read Ahmed's loss in terms of his spatial symbolism: Ahmed as the representative of the link between the lost village in Palestine and the place of exile. Read in these terms, the loss of home in exile becomes almost an aborted interiorization by which the subject's genuine alterity is completely embedded and equally embodied. In other words, through accepting the food and by bringing a new life into the world, Yusra seems to find a way to circumvent Ahmed's loss; she accepts his physical absence in reality. However, by specifying the child as a Palestinian, Yusra seems to refuse to forget what Ahmed stands for: the memory of the lost home. Thus, by transmitting the memories and hope to a new generation, Yusra is helping to turn around Ahmed's vision of a Palestinian homeland and return home into a reality in the future.

This future vision emerges in the final fragment entitled "Scenes," in which the voices of Yusra and Ahmed merge in the narrative once again. In this section, Yusra's narrative juxtaposes two pictures: one of a dream and another of a reality. While in the dream picture, Yusra sees Ahmed and feels "happy and rejoiced" (28), in the other picture of reality, "I woke up, and knew it had all been a dream" (28), she sees herself as a pregnant woman mourning in black: "The woman's pregnant and dressed in black. I am that woman in black" (28). For Yusra, the loss of Ahmed represents an extreme loss because of which she feels that her life ended and "that everything had come to a stop at once and there was nothing left in the world" (28).

At the end of the narrative, however, Yusra expresses hope when she repeats that she will "try to live [. . .] I'll try, but it is not easy at all. But I'll try" (29). While her memory of Ahmed's loss causes her to weep, the moment Yusra opens "the album" (29) and sees his photographs she comes upon the sentence that he has written inside:

> "These pictures make me feel I've become a professional—an expert photographer. I've taken them to embody phases of a life: phases of darkness, and phases of light. There are times of bitterness and there will be times of beauty and tenderness and light. Those times will come." (29)

Ahmed's words evoke hope in the everyday of exile. The certainty expressed in the last sentences repeats Ahmed's vision of the affirmation of Palestinian identity. This certainty also turns Yusra's vision, through her remembering, into a belief: the hope of the possibility of realizing the lost home in the future. The shift from "Picture" to "Scenes" in this closing fragment not only broadens Yusra's narrative vision beyond the singular image but it also signifies that her act of remembering itself is a narrative act of exposing loss, both inside and outside simultaneously. This narrative act is effective in that it enhances Yusra's imaging of loss of home in exile as an ongoing event constituted in the present but that ultimately concerns the future.

Moreover, Yusra's shift of vision to scenes of loss is also important in relation to the story's fragmented narrativity. This narrative fragmentation, as I mentioned above, takes place at the level of mixing narrative voices and of textual repetitions as well as in terms of the mixing of the memories of the two characters: at the end of the narrative Ahmed's memories become Yusra's own memories. This mixing of memories in the narrative, I contend, represents a move from voice to body in time, by which the exiled subject's identification with the lost homeland is enacted both bodily and mentally. This enactment can be seen in the fact that Yusra's imaging of Ahmed's loss is grounded in a specific act of looking wherein the "gaze" is not her own. In her act of looking at the pictures, it is not Yusra who gazes at Ahmed, but rather it is Ahmed who gazes at her: "He was gazing at her, smiling out of the photograph [. . .]" (26). This directional movement of the gaze in the narrative can be read in two ways.

In one sense, in order to cast the dead (Ahmed) as longing for us instead of the other way around, Yusra's narrative inscribes a reversal of not only narrative vision but also desire. This desire informs the subject's loss of home in exile on a deep level. Indeed, in imaging Ahmed

gazing at Yusra, the narrative reverses the usual direction of mourning in which the living mourns the dead. In another sense, the movement of the gaze from Ahmed to Yusra generates discursive tensions in terms of Yusra's identification with the loss of Ahmed. Subjected to Ahmed's gaze, Yusra's identification with his loss becomes, to borrow Kaja Silverman's term, a "heteropathic identification." This is an identification based on going outside of the self, as opposed to "idiopathic" identification, which absorbs and naturalizes the other.[21]

In "A Land of Rock and Thyme," Yusra's heteropathic identification enables her to narrate Ahmed's loss beyond the normative models of separation between body and mind. This is given shape in the final sentence with which Yusra's narrative ends: "All I remember apart from that is his smile" (29). This sentence points out the narrative shifting from Ahmed's voice and memories to that of Yusra. It also shows the way in which Yusra interiorizes, through the personification of his smile, his voice into her own body and mind. Through Yusra's heteropathic identification with Ahmed's loss, her fragmented narrative can be read, both textually and visually, as a mode of "narrative mobility." At the heart of this narrative mode is the notion that the mobility inside the narrative of exile, in voices and imagings, complicates the immobility that is outside it. In other words, narrative mobility, through fragmentation, becomes an eminent tool to put forward the immobility of the Palestinian condition of exile through imagining its subjective loss as a whole composed of multiple imagings of loss. Each of these imagings exposes the complexity of the subject's being in exile and at the same time problematizes this whole being itself in the present.

To further sustain the case for narrative fragmentation, I want to turn now to the other two short stories that make up Badr's collection: "A Balcony Over the Fakihani," and "The Canary and the Sea." I will show how the everyday experience of the main characters, Su'ad and Abu Hussain, as Palestinian subjects in exile is determined not so much by movement and mobility but rather by a struggle for mobility against the immobility of exile.

Fragmented Imagings, Fragmented Lives

"A Balcony over the Fakihani" is the story of Su'ad, a Palestinian exile, who narrates her loss of home and displacement across different places. Su'ad's story centers on the struggle she undergoes as a result of being continuously shuffled from one place to another. Similar to Yusra's narrative, Su'ad's imagings of her forced travels portray the experience of

Palestinian exile in terms of familial disconnection, estrangement, and the impossibility of dwelling in place.

Set in war-torn Beirut, Su'ad's story is told in fragments and a range of voices, Su'ad, her husband Umar, and her friend Jinan, alternate in its telling. Each fragment provides the reader with an insight into the mental repercussions that result from the characters' forced travels in exile. In the first fragment entitled "Su'ad," we see Su'ad leaving her house in Amman for Beirut to marry Umar, who is a member of the Palestinian resistance movement. Later on, together with Umar, Su'ad has to move to Damascus to travel back, finally, to Beirut. The story opens with Su'ad describing a carpet plant growing on the balcony of her apartment in Beirut:

> Why did my heart become troubled when the carpet plant grew so big? It grew. It branched and grew tall till that day dawned. The little cutting my neighbour gave me flourished. Its heart-shaped leaves fanned out over the trellis, and on their green surface were red spots the colour of blood, which spread like the memory of the nightmare I had: white dust and smoke, and stretched out on the ground, a dead man I didn't know, his body gashed and spattered with blood. The plant grew bigger, spreading out in front of me, then, after a while, it turned to the colour of wine. I laughed at my fears, heaved a deep sigh and grew calm. (34)

Su'ad's words set the tone of the whole story, and they demonstrate both her inability to separate beauty from tragedy and the insecurity of her life in exile. Through her reaction to the plant's rapid growth and colouring, Su'ad shows the effects of life in exile as a distortion of normal interpretations of natural beauty. As such, the carpet plant becomes symbolic of Palestinians in exile as if to indicate that their growing number around the world is troubling to Su'ad.

Importantly, this opening passage also exposes Su'ad's anticipation of death in exile. Her description of the leaves as having a "green surface with red spots the colour of blood," together with her memory of the nightmare, "white dust and smoke [. . .]," evoke a gruesome scene of death. Su'ad's anticipation of death is connected with her husband Umar. This can be seen at the end of the first fragment of the story where we see Su'ad standing on the balcony waving good bye to Umar as he leaves for work. At that moment, she remembers the carpet plant and the dream: "Then he set off [. . .] When I turned to go back inside, my eyes lit on the dark leaves of the carpet plant, which was now the colour of lilac; but my mind went back to the dream" (36). While the

change of the natural colouring of the plant catches her eyes, Su'ad's mind nonetheless remains preoccupied with the dream.

Like Yusra in "A Land of Rock and Thyme," Su'ad emphasizes that the Palestinian subject in exile needs to preserve his or her memory of loss of place. However, unlike Yusra, Su'ad has no reservation about remembering her original lost home in Palestine. Instead, the focus of Su'ad's remembering shifts to her other dwellings in exile. For example, together with her friend Jinan, Su'ad would sit on the balcony of her apartment in Beirut and reminisce about Amman, her previous dwelling which she had to flee after the *Black September* massacre:

> The balcony [...] was on the corner of the block, right opposite the Rahmeh Building. Jinan and I would sit there [...]. We'd remember Amman, losing ourselves in our recollections; we hadn't been back there for many years, since Black September. We recalled my mother, friends, her family and relations, and Hajjeh Salimeh, whose death we learned of only from a brief letter. Umar would join us to drink lightly sweetened coffee, and we would discuss our daily affairs with concealed bitterness and sarcastic comments [...]. Acquaintances or neighbours would drop in, and I'd bring chairs out from inside [...] when the place had filled up. (34)

Su'ad's memories of her past dwelling in Amman are grounded in the thoughts about her family. Her loss of family and communal relations appears as the defining moment of her loss of home. Moreover, Su'ad's description of the communal setting in her balcony turns this balcony into a symbol for collective existence in exile. Thus, it offers the characters a sense of familiarity, "as though the place was a piece of home" (47). I shall shortly return and discuss the significations of this symbolism of the balcony.

Having situated her loss of home in exile as a loss of familial relations, in the next fragment, Su'ad narrates the daily hardships she experiences in her new dwellings in Lebanon and Syria. For Su'ad, life in exile gradually becomes unbearable. Just as what she had experienced in Jordan, her new life in Beirut begins with a delight and ends with a nightmare. Speaking of her new house there, Su'ad says:

> The first day I was delighted; I've got a home at last, I said, and enthusiastically set about cleaning and tidying and dusting it. But as time went on—the next day, and the day after that, and the day after that—life became a nightmare. (42)

Su'ad's nightmarish life manifests itself in poor housing conditions, "The place was like an oven [. . .]" (42), and in her bodily existence. Besides being constantly harassed by the security services who at night would "burst in and search the place inch by inch" (43), Su'ad experiences a miscarriage: "I do have a vivid memory of coming home with a feeling of defeat [. . .] It wasn't just a matter of losing the baby, it was anemia too, and I was told I needed fresh air" (43).

The most poignant example of the nightmarish reality in exile can be seen in Su'ad's description of life under siege in the Shatila refugee camp. While she is feeding her baby child, Su'ad notices a white hair on the baby's head:

> The Lebanese army tanks came [. . .] and began to shell the camps; the building shook, and the constant din was like the noise of an earthquake [. . .]. Next morning, as I was giving Ruba some milk, I noticed a white hair in the middle of her head. I couldn't believe a baby's hair could turn white. (46)

The simplicity of this image, through inflecting the act of fear on the most basic of human relationships of a "mother-baby," adds charge to its intensity. It reveals that even the youngest of Palestinians cannot escape shock and pain in exile. Moreover, Su'ad's narration highlights her confinement as an exiled subject within a collective trajectory of forced flight, or what can be called "immobility within mobility." Her travels from one place to another are constantly haunted by enclosure and by the threat of imprisonment. Su'ad's narrative dislodges the trope of home in exile by evoking it as a "disrupted home." Her home in exile, supposedly a shelter from danger, is more often a site fraught with violence, pain, and insecurity. She is constantly forced on the move in search for the ultimate yet unattainable refuge in exile. While a narrative of relocating to a new place frames the formation of her Palestinian subjectivity, this narrative does not posit the place of exile as the point of permanent settlement, as, for example, in the case of immigration.

This becomes clear in Su'ad's description of life in the refugee camps, where the Palestinians who lived there for some time refuse to accept the camps' permanence:

> People would greet one another in the morning and evening and would talk without any kind of ceremony or introduction, in a Palestinian accent as authentic as if they'd arrived in Beirut just the day before; and

> their homes were fitted out in a makeshift way, as if they were going to set off again the next morning. (44)

This description presents the reader with an image of the daily lives of Palestinians in refugee camps. These camps were originally designed to be temporary shelters. For Palestinians, the experience of the camp asserts both varied adaptation and a deep sense of "homelessness" that become significant constructs of what constitutes their exilic identity in the present. In her article "A House Is Not a Home: Permanent Impermanence of Habitat for Palestinian Expellees in Lebanon," Rosemary Sayigh brings up similar notions of Palestinians' experiences of refugee camps in Lebanon. According to Sayigh, Palestinians view the experience of the camp as an "abnormal state" of being to which varied temporary adaptations are formed. Moreover, this experience has often stiffened Palestinians' determination to return to their original homes from which they were displaced in Palestine (2005: 17–39).[22]

Such abnormality of Palestinian exile is exposed immediately after the attack on the camp in Lebanon, as a result of which Su'ad and Umar are forced to move once again, this time to Damascus. In this part, Su'ad describes her life in the Yarmouk refugee camp in similar terms as her life in Beirut:

> Time! I was never aware of time there; it used to repeat itself in the same way everyday, from morning to evening. I was busy looking for the children, except for those few fleeting moments you capture before falling asleep, when I'd think of my mother and father, and of my sister who, I heard, had been married, but whose wedding I couldn't attend because of problems with the Jordanian secret police. (46)

For Su'ad, time in exile is dull, as it "repeats itself in the same way everyday." The juxtaposition between her daily life activities and her memories, "those fleeting moments," points out the preoccupation of Su'ad's mind with her family whom she was denied to visit because of her "problems with the Jordanian secret police." Once more, Su'ad's understanding of loss of home in exile appears firmly grounded in her being denied access to her familial and communal relations.

Immediately after this scene, Su'ad's husband, Umar, suddenly falls ill. The doctors in Lebanon could not find out what was wrong with him, and so they advised him to go for treatment abroad. At this point, the story shifts from Su'ad's narrative voice to that of Umar, which complements her imagings of the predicament of Palestinian exile.

In the fragment entitled "Umar," we see how he had to go abroad, to an unnamed but seemingly European country, for treatment of an unknown illness. Umar's story mirrors the attempts of Palestinian refugees in the camp to deal with their reality of exile and the difficulty of creating a temporary alternate existence away from home. During his stay at the hospital abroad, and after running numerous tests on him, his doctor concludes that she could find nothing wrong with him, except that he has an "unknown infection" that Europeans do not have in their lands: "She told me the results of the test, saying that the type of infection discovered in the laboratory was unknown in their country" (56). Umar sarcastically responds that he was from the Middle East and that should explain his unknown disease: "I was from the Middle East, I told her jokingly, and that explained everything" (56). Umar's unknown disease, together with his sarcasm, hints at the "disease" of Palestinians caused by their forced displacement and victimization in exile. Moreover, the fact that doctors abroad do not recognize his disease illustrates the general public ignorance of the Palestinian plight. This reading of Umar's disease becomes plausible through the following parts of his narrative.

From the beginning of his story, Umar describes his experience at the hospital abroad as an experience of "imprisonment and exile" (54–57). Moreover, while abroad, Umar's mind is constantly preoccupied with memories of his family and friends:

> [M]y mind was full of the memories of my friends, Jamal, Zuhdi, Abu Antun, Hamid, François [. . .] I could not recall their features in detail, but I saw them at the back of my mind as I tossed and turned in the furnace of my bed. (54)

Umar's description of his experience at the hospital, through his memories, reveals a nostalgia to his family and friends in Beirut: "[A] glow of nostalgia for all the things I longed for" (57). Umar's nostalgia, however, is complicated by another experience which he undergoes while at the hospital. During his stay there, Umar falls in love with his doctor, Louisa. He describes his relationship with Louisa and the time he spent with her as blissfully happy: "It was Louisa as well; it was her, and the warmth of our friendship" (57). As a result of this experience, Umar is torn between two lives. He is constantly tempted to create a temporary escape from the trouble that awaits him back in Beirut. Soon in the narrative, however, this temptation is dismissed, as it is Louisa herself

who helps Umar to overcome the dilemma of the choice between the two worlds:

> A lot of people, she kept saying to me, are revolutionaries to start with, but then they get bored and find they can't keep it up. You're different from them, she said. You've still kept the vision that sees things afresh. The flower hasn't lost its fragrance. (57)

Precisely through realizing his revolutionary "vision that sees things afresh," through Louisa's words, Umar resolves the tension between the new and the old places. In the next scene, we see him returning to Beirut. Once back in Beirut, Umar is jolted into the hard reality of exile as he discovers that his friend Jamal was killed. This event triggers in Umar a determination to continue the struggle against exile. In response to Jamal's killing, Umar asks: "What have we really gained when we give up the struggle and bow our heads?" (62) His questioning of the need for struggle brings about an internal struggle between the story's characters about whether to take action against oppression in exile. This brings both the characters as well as the story to their end.

This can be seen in the final fragment of the narrative entitled "Jinan," in which the story returns to Su'ad's balcony in Beirut. We see Su'ad, Umar, Jinan and their neighbour Salwa sitting on the balcony and discussing the issue of the struggle, which Umar brought up through his questioning of Jamal's death. During their conversation, Salwa expresses her disdain for Palestinians who abandon their struggle and forget their past. Salwa problematizes both the nonaction of Palestinians and the lack of Arab solidarity with their cause. She tells Su'ad and Umar about her recent trip to the Gulf, where she met Palestinians and other Arabs living there, whose only concern is with luxuries: "All people seemed to look forward over there [...] was a pay raise and their annual leave" (67). Su'ad reacts to this position by stating that, ironically, the Palestinians who complain about the resistance movement "will be the first ones to skip back to Palestine when it's liberated." Immediately after, Umar complements Su'ad's words and says: "We're here, we're still here! The world hasn't come to an end yet!" (70)

This scene on the balcony is key, both culturally and narratively. Culturally, the characters put forward a specific vision of the need for resistance and struggle in Palestinian exile. Narratologically, this scene also recalls my reading of the balcony as a symbol of the place

for communal gathering in exile. In "A Balcony Over the Fakihani," the reader encounters images of the exiled subject's constant search for a (peaceful) shelter. Through the spatial setting of the characters' gathering, the balcony becomes this shelter. However, such a reading collapses at the end of the characters' conversation scene in terms of what happens to this place in reality. This is so because their conversation is suddenly interrupted by a loud bombing through which their balcony is destroyed. We see Su'ad talking to Salwa, asking her about her baby daughter, Jumana. The moment Su'ad finishes her sentence, the following description commences:

> The noise! Something extraordinary.
> Suddenly,
> It shrieks into the sky, whizzes around us.
> Salwa comes running. Her face is pale.
> I calm her. The sound barrier broken perhaps,
> It's happened before.
> Then,
> Boom!
> The Earth shakes as if the building
> Will cave in on us. A cloud of black smoke.
> The Fakihani quarter. Coming from Fakihani.
> A huge mushroom.
> Up it goes, and up.
> Then,
> Boom! Another tearing earthquake.
> Planes.
> The Israeli airforce.
> Rushing footsteps on the staircase of the block,
> Everything confused. People, cries of terror.
> The shelter. Gusts of hot air
> sweep down in a series of tremors.
> I've begun to think. My first thought,
> they're running.
> My knees hurt. An icy shiver
> from my shoulders, down my back.
> They're running [. . .]
> Yes, I saw it,
> blood pouring down faces [. . .]
> I lose the faces I know.
> Is it? No, perhaps no.
> Feeling crushed, desperate, I remember her.
> She and Jumana.

Then
All hell is loose,
A raid, four raids.
Who can . . . ? (71–72)

This description of the moment of shelling is revealing in different ways. First, it is separated from the rest of the main body of the text by spacing; it almost comes from nowhere. Second, in terms of narrative voice, it is not immediately clear who is speaking, which one of the people on the balcony. The only indication of who is speaking arrives later in the references to Salwa and her daughter Jumana, "Salwa comes running" (71) and "She and Jumana" (72), so that Su'ad emerges as the most likely speaking voice of these lines. This lack of clarity signifies the sudden nature of the attack itself.

Moreover, the simultaneity of the events in the description, marked by short sentences and abrupt one-line phrases, suggest a fragmented narration. This fragmentation, both in words and images, not only corresponds to the speaker's, Su'ad, disconnected pattern of thought at the moment of the attack, but also, I contend, articulates the insecurity that Palestinians experience in their everyday lives in exile. This insecurity manifests itself in the notion that sudden events can forever alter their lives. The story suggests that even when the exiled subject seems to find a communal place in exile, in this case the balcony, this place often becomes a place of death. I shall discuss in detail this utilization of Palestinian exilic space as a "deadly place" in my analysis of Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un* in the next chapter. The Palestinian subject in exile appears to be in a state of double refusal: this subject is denied both the lost home in the past and a shelter in the present of exile.

As a result of the shelling, Su'ad's balcony is destroyed, and she also discovers that Umar has been killed. At the end, Umar is immortalized as a martyr for the Palestinian cause. Only then does his identity change from a "Palestinian refugee" in exile to a Palestinian: only when Umar dies is he allowed to return to his homeland (81). After Umar's death, nothing is left for Su'ad except pain: "there was nothing around us but rubble and hurrying feet and the pain of the ordeal that everyone was trying to keep under control" (78). She becomes aware of the looming presence of loss in her life in exile so that she finally recognizes the man who appeared in her dream of the carpet plant—this time not in a dream but in reality. Su'ad "was able to recognize Umar from his military shoes. He was lying on his stomach, and when she approached him she saw that other man; the man of the dream. And the white dust of Fakihani" (81).

The Canary and the Sea: Othering in Exile

I am very aware, as I write this, of the degree to which I have so far "visualized" the loss of home in Palestinian exile in my reading of Badr's short stories. This reflects my effort to account for two aspects that underlie my investigation of the cultural memory of *al-Nakba* throughout this study. The first, and most obvious, aspect is the public visibility of the urgent reality of Palestinian loss of home and the ways this loss has been experienced by different generations in exile on a daily basis since 1948. The second aspect entails my personal and analytical situatedness. By "situatedness," I mean any emotional or existential relationship on my part, both in aspect as a cultural analyst and in location as a Palestinian in exile, with the narratives of *al-Nakba* and exile as my subject of study. This second aspect will be particularly central to my discussion of audiovisual storytelling and the antilinear temporality of memorization in Palestinian exile in the third and fourth chapters.

Given these two interrelated aspects, the argument I wish to put forward in the remainder of this chapter is that a visual reading of literary narratives such as Badr's short stories, highlights the implications of the texts for alternative imagings, and thus for epistemic understandings. My contention is that just as much as images of reality "out there" can be read as narratives, so can narratives, their textual troping and metaphorization, be read in visual terms as "cultural imagings." Such a conceptualization of (literary) narratives is extracted from a specific practice of narratology, one that embraces visuality as an important dimension of any narrative. I am referring to what Bal theorizes in her book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* as "visual narratology." For Bal, the point of visual narratology is that its practice enriches the analysis of literary narratives, through its attention to visuality, to become a cultural analysis (1997: 160–167).

With respect to *al-Nakba*, my reading of the metaphorization of the loss of home in Badr's short stories thus far enforces a certain kind of understanding: exile as a historical experience that is imaged in the lived reality of Palestinians in the present. Most importantly, such a way of reading offers a cultural envisioning that calls on collective memory. In this equation, reading the metaphorization of loss of home in exile, through memory images, becomes not so much a reading of an object but rather of a subject of knowledge that is specific and, at the same time, *specified* in time and space. As a result, metaphorizations of loss of home in the stories become cultural imagings of how to resist affectively

the destructive forces of life in exile, of how to develop empowered rather than destructive Palestinian subjectivities.

Such cultural imagings of Palestinian subjectivity in exile can be appreciated in the final short story of Badr's collection, Abu Hussain's story "The Canary and the Sea." In this story, the reader is presented with other aspects of the experience of exile and the denial of home in the present: namely, social injustice, discrimination, and political oppression. These experiences lead Abu Hussain to join the resistance movement. This causes him severe repercussions, both physical and mental, to which his experience of the inaccessibility to home is ultimately exposed.

Similarly to Yusra's and Su'ad's narratives, Abu Hussain's narrative is fragmented. His story is divided into two main parts, each of which is divided into smaller fragments. In the opening fragment, Abu Hussain describes the loss of his village, Shuwaika, in Palestine. Although Abu Hussain was born in Shuwaika, he indicates that he has been there only twice in his life:

> My name is Abu Hussain al-Shuwaiki. I'm a child of Shuwaika, yet I've only been there twice in my life, once in 1963 when it was full of people, and once in 1970 when most of the people had been taken off to prison or gone away in search of work [. . .]. Shuwaika, my home village, is an expanse of green at the end of a mountain range, with lemon and orange groves and silver sunbeams on the olive leaves, and if you stand on the roof of our house you can see the sea and the Natanya district—alas for Natanya, which I can no longer visit, and the sea stretching out to the far horizon! But you may ask, isn't Shuwaika still Shuwaika, even though they took it in 1967? What is there left that they haven't taken? Before 1967 it was a border village, and the trees, which were right on the frontier itself, were each divided into two halves. One half belonged to the people and the Israelis picked the fruit on the other side. (90)

Abu Hussain's words evoke an idealized image of his lost home. This idealization of the lost place, however, is interrupted by the thought of the "Natanya district" that Abu Hussain is forbidden to visit because of the dividing lines that Israel has established.

The motive of the border runs through the entire story. These dividing lines and borders are not cast as imaginary lines. Rather, borders, following Inge Boer's theorization, function as "concrete, physical spaces."[23] In Abu Hussain's description, borders eventually lead to total loss of land. This loss of land can be seen in the comparison of the village's situation before 1967, and after it. While the Israelis before 1967

"picked the fruit on the other side" of the dividing line, after 1967 they took the whole village. Moreover, borders not only lead to loss of land but they also destructively separate familial and communal relations. This can be seen in the next fragments wherein Abu Hussain tells different stories, all of which signify the border's function as a tool of oppression that keeps families apart. For example, Abu Hussain tells of how his uncle was separated for eleven years from his mother, and how she failed to recognize him when they were finally allowed to see each other from the other side of the frontier line (91). Abu Hussain also tells of a similar experience of his grandmother, who died in exile without seeing her son in Palestine (92).

Immediately after this fragment, the narrative shifts from the past loss of home in Palestine to the everyday of exile in Lebanon. Abu Hussain exposes the discrimination which Palestinians experience in exile. He describes how as a boy he was expelled with his family from Palestine to Lebanon in 1948. His life in Lebanon is characterized by both political oppression and social discrimination. As a Palestinian, he is constantly harassed by the authorities and also undergoes social othering as "a foreigner." This can be seen, for example, when Abu Hussain describes his marriage proposal to a Lebanese girl whose family initially turns him down because he is a Palestinian. Later on, however, the family accepts his proposal after they discover a distant relationship with his family (93)

In his comment on the prejudices behind the family's refusal to his proposal, Abu Hussain exposes the larger significance of what being a Palestinian in Lebanon means:

> We lived in Sunaubara in Ras Beirut, and I soon came to feel that the word Palestinian had a different meaning in Lebanon, conjuring up, immediately, the army, authority and the secret police. I had relatives living in temporary tents in the camps, and the police would come and say; 'Move those away from here' [. . .] Prison lay in wait for anyone who dared attach tinplating to the roof of the tent, or hammered nails in the wooden tent poles. And if a woman spilt water outside the tent, she was liable to a fine of 25 Lebanese pounds; for how could a woman, any woman, be permitted to soil the fair, verdant face of Lebanon by spilling filthy washing water on it? (95)

The word "Palestinian" in exile evokes the political apparatus and oppression. Abu Hussain also describes other aspects of social discrimination. For example, he faces harassment and unequal treatment at work. While working in an East Beirut factory, Abu Hussain recalls

what his boss used to say to him: "You're refugees, and yet you try and tell us how to do things. This is our country. You shouldn't be here at all" (96). The boss's statement reveals that Palestinians in Lebanon are seen as a nuisance that infringes on his rights in his own country. These examples are illustrative of the current reality that Palestinians experience in Lebanon where they are not permitted to practice 76 kinds of jobs.[24] Being discriminated against, Abu Hussain feels compelled to fight to defend the existence of the Palestinian people. Justifying his role in the resistance movement against the Lebanese Phalangists and the Israeli army, Abu Hussain says: "For them the clashes sprang from a desire to dominate, for us it spelt defense of our existence" (97). For Abu Hussain, the Palestinian struggle is a just cause, as a struggle against oppression.

In the final part of his narrative, Abu Hussain tells of his experience as a prisoner of war. During the fighting, Abu Hussain is shot once in the head and twice in the hand, and later he is captured by the Israeli army. He has to contend with brutality as a result of his identity as a Palestinian. Describing the moment when he was injured and captured by the Israeli army, Abu Hussain says:

> The pain deepened my exhaustion. The blood wouldn't stop draining away, and I felt my heart pounding violently. I urinated without feeling it, and vomited, then vomited again. Blood flowed out of my mouth, and I lost consciousness; then I came to again, sweating profusely and gripped by an intense cold. I retched, but nothing would come up. I woke to find myself in a military vehicle like a personnel transporter, and asked one of the men on it to put the blanket on my head. He trod on my head with his soldier's boot, insulted my sister and called me a pimp. "Our heads weren't made to be trampled on," I said. (117)

As this encounter with the Israeli soldier, Abu Hussain defiantly responds with this last sentence to the insult of the soldier despite being fatally injured. Abu Hussain's response expresses a commitment to fight for the Palestinian cause and to resist oppression at all costs.

Moreover, Abu Hussain's description portrays Israeli soldiers as brutal and callous. This description is repeated in the interrogation scene at the hospital. While in the hospital, the doctors gather around Abu Hussain and ask him: "Do you like the Jews?" Abu Hussain immediately answers that he does not hate the Jews simply because they are Jewish, but rather he hates the fact that they are occupying his country against his will: "All right then, so you're all from different countries. Palestine's our country. And you're occupying it against our will" (118).

Abu Hussain's statement shatters the common mistaken assumptions that Palestinians harbor an intrinsic hatred toward the Jews.[25] His statement also challenges official stereotyping of Palestinian loss of homeland as a matter of the past: it concretely places the state of Israel in an analogous position to the subject's condition of forced exile. Abu Hussain's relationship to exile as a colonialist institution of forced travel embodies, in a microcosm, a specifically colonial facet of Palestinian cultural memory.[26] This argument is my focal point for reading Bakri's film, *1948*, in the fourth chapter of this book. In response to Abu Hussain's statement, one of the doctors gets up and punches him. At the end, after he is released from the hospital, Abu Hussain is taken to Israel for another interrogation, but only to be finally deported with the other prisoners out of Palestine to their collective exile in Lebanon and later on to Tunisia (124–125).

This final exile of the Palestinian subject brings me to my conclusion. My reading of Badr's *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* shows how, through the shift from nostalgic to critical memory, the resistance to loss of homeland itself and the resistance to the denial of home in exile, symbolized by a resistance to the political designation of "refugees," are central cultural imagings of the Palestinian memory of their ongoing exile. In the three short stories, the combination and integration of the subject's resistance with critical memory, a combination I use here as an analytical concept, is a starting point to understand the ambivalence of the terminology of "Palestinian refugees" and to expose their modes of existence in exile. At the heart of this narrative exposition is the notion of Palestinian exile as an emphatically contemporary condition of a past subjective loss of home and also crucially of an everyday denial of access. Within this condition, the subject is constantly denied of his or her cultural space of selfhood.

I have argued that this condition of the Palestinian "denial of access to selfhood" manifests itself in the ways in which the fragmented mode of storytelling in Badr's collection exposes specific spatial and temporal connections between space and memory. This fragmented mode, through critical memory in exile, constantly guides the reader, as well as the practice of reading itself, to the understanding that the connections between time and place in the past and contemporary struggle for liberation and the return to Palestine should not swerve our attention from the everyday condition of exile itself; indeed, this condition of physical and real *ghurba* evinces a clear connection between space, memory, and Palestinian cultural identity. The condition of Palestinian exile is presented to us through concrete narrative fragments and imagings as

an affective construct of loss that prompts the subject's meanings of the (lost) homeland, not vice versa. To fully grasp this, the visual dimension of reading is indispensable.

Palestinian exile is a brutal condition of being; this exile is not simply metaphorical but rather physical and actual. In this condition, the metaphoricity of the subjects' storytelling is uttered through mobile and multiple narrative voices. This results in a fragmented narrative discourse. This narrative discourse is invoked by and directed, yet utterly opposed to, forced travel in exile outside the narrative, even where the *exilee* keeps moving. In the prison of exile, the Palestinian subject is constantly denied his or her place. Forced travel and movement represent the pillars that sustain such a condition, denying the Palestinians of their homeland, and, thus, keep them "out of home." The conclusion I draw from Badr's short stories is as simple as it is devastating. Movement is the prison of the exiled; it leads to the intensification and overdetermination of his or her sense of placelessness.

This is also the case in the next chapter where I supplement my reading of Badr's short stories with a different one of a cinematic representation that shows the discursive effects of loss of place and forced travel on the Palestinian subject within the journey of exile: Saleh's film *Al-Makhdu'un*. In my analysis, I discuss the ways in which *Al-Makhdu'un*'s audiovisual storytelling activates and mobilizes Palestinian cultural memory through specific imagings, which expose a geopolitical continuity of exilic place and the subject's everyday. As I will attempt to show, the film helps show loss of homeland and quest for it in a single "anti-linear sound-image."

CHAPTER 3

Exilic Narrativity: Audiovisual Storytelling and Memory

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" [. . .] It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger [. . .].
>
> —Walter Benjamin (1977: 257)

We engage in history not only as agents or actors, but also as storytellers or narrators. In this chapter, I take this idea as my starting point. This activity of storytelling is fragmented in a case of historical disaster. Above, I cite the brief extract from Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" to emphasize the fragmented sense of storytelling (or fragmented narrativity) of the Palestinian loss of homeland as a subjective mode of cultural remembrance *in* exile.[1] This mode, I argue, does not strive toward articulating the historical past as self-identical, "the way it really was," rather, Palestinians' memories of *al-Nakba* encompass first and foremost a configuration formed out of past as well as present images in the context of their everyday practices and lives at the time of remembrance. Within these narrative memories, the catastrophic event in the past is constantly modified. Those transformations occur because memories of the place are unleashed, to borrow Benjamin's phrase, "at a moment of danger." In the Palestinian case, the moments of danger, as I attempt to show below, represent moments of collective annihilation in the present: 64 years after *al-Nakba*, exiled Palestinians still exist under a daily threat of being nullified as a people. The text through which I will demonstrate how such fragmented storytelling functions is this time a film, which deals with the Palestinians' loss of homeland by Egyptian director Tawfiq Saleh.[2]

In the previous chapter, my analysis of Badr's collection of short stories already laid the ground for reading fragmented narrativity in Palestinian exile, both culturally and narratologically. Culturally, my analysis of the short stories revealed how, through the shift from nostalgic to critical memory, Palestinian exile constitutes an entangled spatiotemporal condition of forced travel and undesired movement. Narratologically, this condition, I argued there, is presented to us, the readers, through a fragmented first-person narrative discourse. Multiple narrative voices and instances of personal memories are conjured up repeatedly as concrete (verbal) imagings of forced displacement. Each of these literalizes, retrospectively, conceptual metaphors of "travel," "movement," and "mobility" in Palestinian exile.

In what follows, I will pursue this argument further but shift the focus to an examination of the relationship between Palestinian identity and the exilic space itself. This shift of focus is best explained in theoretical terms as my attempt to bring "imaginative geographies" to bear on Palestinian exile. To be sure, that concept has evolved out of Edward Said's renowned critique of the historical and political configurations of Orientalism, particularly the ways in which they simultaneously inform and regulate cross-cultural encounters between East and West. Here, the geographies are drawn not by Western Orientalists but by the people affected by the loss of their land. I use the word "imaginative" here not to mean "false" or "made-up" but to highlight the geopolitical contestation of space as culturally perceived and articulated.[3]

A pertinent critique that traces the contested meanings of imaginative geographies in the contemporary political-cultural landscape of Palestine, and the Middle East at large, can be found in the work of geographer Derek Gregory. In his book, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (2004), Gregory discusses the colonial past and its impact on the colonial present and future. Specifically, he analyzes the intercultural connections between geographies of the Middle East and the political, military, and economic modalities of Western colonial power represented both by the long history of intervention of the United Kingdom and United States in the region, and by their current political roles in the context of the so-called "war on terror" in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Exposing the tattered formation of the modern state of Afghanistan, the violent expansion of Israel as a "colonial-settler state" in Palestine, and the American and British military occupation of Iraq, Gregory makes an excellent argument that the war on terror is an articulation of the colonial present (13).[4] With

respect to Palestine, Gregory's analysis demonstrates that the war on terror is used as a pretext for a renewed Zionist strategy to dispossess the Palestinians of land and property.

In making these arguments, Gregory outlines three aspects that summarize the geopolitical configurations of world politics today. First, American, British, and Israeli military campaigns launched respectively against Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine are all connected. Second, these campaigns have defined these countries as outsiders. Third, the extension of global order coincides with the colonial past into what seems to be developing as the colonial present (25-28). According to Gregory, these aspects of present-day politics project the ways in which Western colonialism, which he describes as "constantly territorializing" (253), is rehabilitated into our own present through "torsions of time and space" (251). As a result, the colonial promise of Western modernity is skewed by a geopolitical structure that differentiates between "us" and/versus "them"; in this case the "them" in the East are labeled as "terrorists." This division also implies values: it *locates* by reducing humanly occupied sites to points in a grid, it *opposes* by dividing the world starkly into West and East, and it *casts out* by excluding everyone but the Western "us" from the benefits of modern humanity. At stake is a vindictive colonial process of "othering" based on an inferior representation of the non-Western subject, while at the same time vilifying him or her as essentially violent. Such is the material of "evil." The United States, as Gregory tersely puts it, has internalized a geopolitical identity of the value of "the protector of the world," through which the identity of "us" in the West was based on "the privileged site of universal values" (23). This distinction has blurred the distinction between *just* and *unjust*.

The key to understanding Gregory's analysis is the point he makes concerning imaginative geographies. For Gregory, imaginative geographies are not just accumulations of time and successive histories but also include performances of space. For him, space is not only a domain but also a "doing" (19). It is this conceptualization of "space as doing" that I wish to mobilize in my discussion of the relationship between Palestinian identity and exilic space. Rather than raising questions concerning how narratives of loss of homeland assert cultural notions of a denied subjectivity in exile, I inquire how these narratives perform space through collective images and discourses of the historical uprootedness of 1948 within the geopolitical continuity of exile. The question how this geopolitical continuity affects our understanding of the daily exile of subsequent generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians as an

ongoing catastrophe will be central to my discussion of oral narratives of *al-Nakba* in the final chapter of this book.

In this chapter, and also in the following one, I focus on audiovisual storytelling of *al-Nakba*, a Palestinian aesthetic domain that remains to be fully illuminated. My analysis reflects on Palestinian identity in its spatiotemporal negotiation of the rigorous boundaries between "home" and "not home" (or exile) in two related ways. First, I develop a specific vision on the connection between audiovisual storytelling and memory, what I will call "exilic narrativity," as a spatially charged and fragmented narrativity that has the potential to take the literary "imaging" of exile in the literary narratives I analyzed in this book to its visual version: the image evoked in language can be shown in the film. Second, I examine the ways in which exilic narrativity is put to use in a post-*Nakba* culture where Palestinian identity, but in different ways also Israeli identity, is addressed, and potentially influenced by audiovisual narratives of *al-Nakba*. This is what I will refer to in the next chapter as "performative narrativity." This fragmented mode is a special case of exilic narrativity that has the performativity effect to transform, slowly and through iteration, the formation of identity of the viewer. The audiovisual image, I will argue, is as important as the verbal image as a cultural space for reflection on the narrative transpositions of personal and public memory of political catastrophe as well as the stimuli of spectatorial interactions with spaces of imagination within contemporary Palestinian culture in exile.

Through *Al-Makhdu'un*, I make the deregulations of exilic space, or the Palestinian subject's experience of its environment, central to my discussion because the filmic narrative reactivates, through memory, collective flows of reterritorialization against continuing deterritorialization. I mean to set forth Saleh's film as a different cultural object from the literary narratives I analyzed in the previous chapters, yet at the same time to emphasize that this film is based on fragmented narrativity as an aesthetic device through which its narrative is exposed. A complex sense of such a fragmentation resonates in *Al-Makhdu'un*'s audiovisual storytelling through multiple fictional voices and archival images, which invokes both the historical loss of Palestine in 1948 and the shared plight of Palestinians in the present. As a sequel to where I left off my discussion of Badr's short stories, the questions that the film's narrative addresses are the following: once denied access to his or her home in Palestine, what is the destiny of the Palestinian subject in exile? In his or her quest for home, can this exiled subject find an "alternative home"? In its attempt to answer these questions, *Al-Makhdu'un*

stages the struggle that Palestinians conduct in their arduous attempt to escape their impoverished lives in refugee camps and to build their national future while they are being torn apart by forced displacement.

Saleh's film is an adaptation of Ghassan Kanafani's masterful novella *Rijal Fi A-Shams* (1962), which was translated into English as *Men in the Sun* in 1978. In his fiction, Kanafani often elaborates a rigorous critique, on the basis of class and ethnicity, of Palestinian and Arab contemporary conditions, especially their distorted relationship to power and political struggle. Kanafani was the first to apply the term "resistance" to imbue Palestinian narratives before 1967 with significance as a new approach to Palestinian literature in general. Although he was politically involved as the spokesman for the Marxist political organization *The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (PFLP) and the editor of its journal *Al-Hadaf*, Kanafani was never an ideologue. His literary works show that he was a highly conscious writer whose commitment to the Palestinian cause did not exceed his aesthetic commitment to his art. As Roger Allen accurately comments, Kanafani's modernist narrative techniques and storytelling methods mark "a distinctive advance in Arabic fiction" (1990: 2).[5]

As is the case with the majority of his works, Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* has been read as a narrative of Palestinian calamity. The novel's stark description of the hardships and insecurities of Palestinian refugee life and its political and psychological subtext, especially its critique of corruption, political passivity, and defeatism, had a strong impact on Arab cultural-political debate of the time. In her introduction to the novel, Hillary Kilpatrick describes *Men in the Sun* as "an exposé of the Palestinian national paralysis after *al-Nakba*" (1983: 3). In her seminal *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, Salma K. Jayyusi concurs with this interpretation and points out that Kanafani's narrative ironically emphasizes the miserable experience of Palestinians after 1948:

> The desperate quest for survival, the unified tragedy of men from all walks of life, and, above all, the stifled spirit of Palestinians who have already experienced such devastating rejection and such exacting conditions within the larger Arab world that, numbed by fear and desperately eager to fulfill their dream in Kuwait, they let precious time slip through their hands." (1992: 29)

In his adaptation of *Men in the Sun*, Saleh chooses to follow Kanafani's narrative structure faithfully. In my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un,* I do not directly address the differences between the filmic adaptation and

the novel. I will only refer to those differences when I feel they challenge or add something to my reading of Saleh's film. Using as a setting Palestinian national paralysis in the immediate aftermath of *al-Nakba* in 1950s and 1960s, *Al-Makhdu'un* recounts the travails of the three main characters of Kanafani's novel, the elderly man Abu Qais, the young man Assad, and the teenager Marwan. These characters represent three different generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians. To seek their salvation, the three men embark on a journey to the oil-rich, gulf state of Kuwait, where they hope to work and have a decent living. The characters' search for material security in exile is alluring but brings them to their destruction. The three men suffocate in the empty water-tank truck in which they are smuggled from Basra in Iraq to Kuwait as their driver, an effete Palestinian smuggler called Abu Al-Khaizaran, is delayed at the borders by guards. In the closing scene of *Al-Makhdu'un*, we see Abu Al-Khaizaran as he leaves the three men's dead bodies on the side of the road. Both the story, the journey the film narrates, and the characters' lives end up on the garbage heap.

Indeed, both the epic theme and the cataclysmic ambiance of the narrative's ending, condensed into this film of 107 minutes, seem congruous with Palestinian political history since 1948. By taking on this film, I probe the narrative pressures and challenges generated by its audiovisual experimentation with the multiple voices and fragmented sequence of storytelling of the three narratives of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan, especially the ways they transmit exilic reality. In the first section, I reflect on what I mean by the film's "exilic narrativity." Then, I analyze the first story of the film, Abu Qais's story. As I attempt to show, *Al-Makhdu'un*'s fragmented narrativity reaches beyond the conventions of realism into the realms of memory and the imagined, to return eventually to the subject's everyday life. I argue that this fragmentation, which takes place through multiple fictional voices and archival images and between personal and historical memory, shows Palestinian exilic space as a void wherein subjectivity is split. Subsequently, I will analyze the stories of Assad and Marwan and show how the film's exilic narrativity transforms the void of exile into a geopolitical discontinuity. At the heart of this transformation is an audiovisual shift from individual to collective loss of homeland. In the final section, I discuss the characters' journey in exile, the closing part of the film. I argue that the film's exilic narrativity stages an apocalyptic climax, which collapses past, present, and future of the Palestinian loss of place, and it does so, more importantly, in a single antilinear sound-image. This sound-image instantiates the simultaneity of space and time in Palestinian

exile. Hence, the subject's home in Palestine is specified neither as an essentialized sense of identity, nor is the exilic space, the "not-home," emptied of its political content.

Exile Beyond Fiction and Documentary Divide

Although it is still difficult to speak of a Palestinian cinematic industry, in the past two decades, this sector has become a rich medium to convey varying experiences of loss of homeland and exile. As one of the first Arab films to address the Palestinian predicament, Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un* remains a landmark audiovisual narrative of *al-Nakba*.[6] And as a black-and-white production, the film also remains a difficult one to watch. This difficulty stems from the way in which it links personal experience to collective memory. On the level of our cinematic encounter with the film, *Al-Makhdu'un* presents us with images of forced displacement, uprooting, and destruction so bright that we wish to close our eyes or look away, and with exiled voices so tormented that we wish to close our ears, but we always fail to fulfill either wish.

Al-Makhdu'un takes the personal stories of three ordinary exiled men and brings these together to reenact the collective vertigo of the Palestinian people in their quest for home. These stories range from Abu Qais's memories of the home he left behind in Palestine and of his family who lives in a refugee camp and cannot find subsistence, to Assad who desperately wants to get a start in life but whose political involvement in the resistance movement limits his possibilities and finally makes him submit to the tribal values he abhors, to Marwan who sets off on a hazardous journey into the unknown in order to support his mother and five brothers after both his father and eldest brother have abandoned them. In its presentation of these stories, the film undertakes a memorial storytelling that captures the disorientation of the characters' journey in exile through multiple fictional voices and archival images.

The interplay between fiction and archive brings the film within the boundaries of the main cinematic genres, fiction and documentary at the same time. My analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un* departs from a narratological rather than generic point of view. What underlies my choice of narratology as an analytical tool is a specific understanding of the cinematic image and its narrative intertemporality in relation to montage.[7]

In his book *The Image* (1997), Jacques Aumont offers a lucid account of this relationship around five main questions: What does it mean to see an image? Who watches the image? How is the relationship between

viewer and image regulated? How does the image represent the real world? And why do we classify some images as art? As Aumont succinctly explains:

> All films are edited even though some films have few shots, and even though the function of editing may differ in each film. Leaving aside all narrative and expressive functions of editing, it is first and foremost the ordering of units of time, units between which there are implicit temporal connections [. . .] In order to understand a film in the way that the cinematic apparatus structures it to be understood, one must know that a change of shot represents temporal discontinuity during shooting—that the camera filming the scene was not suddenly moved to another place, but that between the filming and the projection this process called editing has taken place [. . . .] In cinema, montage (editing, sequential ordering) constructs a completely artificial, synthetic temporal relations between units of time, which in reality may be discontinuous. This synthetic time (which a photograph cannot easily or "so" naturally achieve) is without a doubt one of the factors that pushed cinema toward narrativity and fiction. On the other hand, it is also possible to see this sequential ordering of units of time as an original documentary-type production. In the 1950s, Eric Rohmer put forward the idea that a film is also and always documentary about its own production. In other words, whatever a film's fictional story may be, it always links together the pieces that were filmed separately and thus it necessarily must give an image or representation of the production process, although this image may have an odd temporality of its own. (125–26)[8]

Seen from this perspective, the generic distinction between fiction and documentary cinema becomes moot; it loses its relevance. More relevant to my analysis is the intersection between *Al-Makhdu'un*'s narrative, the ideological meanings of its audiovisual imaging, and the historic-cultural process of loss of place. My interest in this film is not so much with the "truthfulness" of its imagings of *al-Nakba* as items of information about historical reality, but more with the cultural "recognizability" of such imagings, through memory, as properties of the contexts of ongoing exile. I seek to disentangle some of the images of the dilemmas and contradictions of the Palestinian subject's life in exile and to assess their political implications in relation to his or her cultural identity in the present. Hence, the narratological approach to the film enables me to make claims for alternative readings that are markedly different from those made in the strict sense of cinema criticism.

In my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un*, I focus on the relationship between the stories that are told and the ways of telling them within the film.

This mode of telling is specific to the situation in which events evolve. In this case, this mode becomes what I call "exilic narrativity." This term refers to the film's fragmented narration in terms of memory, space, self, and other through a plurality of voices. I use the word "plurality" à la Bakhtin.[9] As a result of this fragmentation, a drifting mode of storytelling takes shape. Audiovisually, this mode can be seen in *Al-Makhdu'un*'s mixing of fictional voices and archival images, as well as in its constant shifting between the past of the lost homeland and the present of exile. This drifting mode, I argue below, allows the three stories to transmit personal memories and historical details, which revive Palestinian cultural memory. The melodramatic aspects of the stories give voice to the voiceless exiles, both individually and collectively. Individually, because these aspects construct a plausible place out of the nonplace (exile) as we will see in a moment, wherein each one of the three men could exist (live and die) as an individual. And collectively, they do so by means of thematic nexus of the stories and their storytellers as particular narratives told by Palestinian subjects in exile. The formal narrative and geographical drifting of the three men lends to the mode of storytelling I call "exilic."

Conceptualizing the exilic narrativity this film deploys enables me to read (audiovisual) narratives of *al-Nakba* within a mode that systematically accounts for their multiple voices and imagings in terms of memory and its temporality against linear time. This mode derives its coherence from a basis in affect. I use the word "affect" following Mieke Bal's account of the term "affective reading" as a way of "position[ing] the act of reading in the present, as self-reflexive, and as based on a 'deictic' relationship between reader and text" (1999c: 139). Incidentally in Bal's use, the term "deictic" demonstrates the way cultural analysis borrows concepts from other fields. For example, after acknowledging that Roland Barthes uses the term to underscore that interpretation is exposition, Bal turns to Gregory Nagy's discussion of the Greek verb from which "deictic" derives, compresses his linguistically complex exploration and reapplies it to her own methodological and theoretical agenda. I pursue a similar interdisciplinary approach here. At work is the notion that the "affective reading" or interpretation of a text justifies the somewhat eclectic use of other disciplines in interpretive situations created by the analyst. On the affirmative side, this mode of reading emphasizes that the yawning chasm of history or philosophy or politics, which separates any specific cultural object and the analyst, can be temporarily bridged by means of sensitive attention to the details of the object and its context and acknowledgement of the analyst's own prejudices and worldview (1999c: 140–43).[10]

In my case, this acknowledgment entails the understanding that narratives of Palestinian loss are inherently narratives *of* and *about* being in extremes. Processes of reading these narratives in exile are, therefore, activities that emerge from and within complex nets of direct political pressures, committed interests, and cultural responsibilities. In practice, this means that my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un*, similarly to what I have done in the previous chapter with Badr's collection of short stories, concerns both the rhetorical style, themes, and cultural imagings of the audiovisual narrative itself as much as my own situatedness in a double role—in aspect as a cultural analyst and in location as a Palestinian in exile. At stake is a cultural analysis that rejects the boundaries between word and image and image and sound, while at the same time remaining attentive to the conditions that allow the analyst to bring the cultural artifact from the past, *Al-Makhdu'un* of 1972, to appear *in* and *as* the present. This self-reflexivity, conjuring up the specificity of the cultural object and the personal inflection of the analyst, is precisely what gives my reading of the film's exilic narrativity its affective impulses. The experience of forced displacement and uprooting necessarily intensifies the sensitivity to the temporal and the spatial complexities and contradictions in all attempts at representation.

Palestinian exilic narratives magnify and dramatize the distance between *what was* and *what is* in order to address the reclamation of the lost home as a cultural space of selfhood, against the constant denial of access to this place in the present. In exilic narrativity, time and space are set adrift to mirror an experiential truth beyond the fiction-documentary divide. In the next chapter, in my analysis of *1948*'s performative narrativity, I shall discuss in detail how notions of "self" and "other" can be read affectively in audiovisual narratives of *al-Nakba*. Here, I examine the notions of "memory" and "space" that intersect in *Al-Makhdu'un*, and that have a structuring and representing role to play in its exilic narrativity, as the opening story in the film will make clear.

The Void of Exile: By Way of Showing

Al-Makhdu'un's intense drama is set in a highly charged and awkward space, shaped by the characters' death in the blistering desert. It is from this place that their stories emerge in the film, sinuous and winding, but always told for life and for remembering. In the opening shot of the film, the camera descends from the sky in the midday blazing sun to an empty desert. This image is accompanied by sentimental Arabic

flute music as the names of the film crew roll on the screen. While on the lower part of the screen we see what looks like human skeletal remains of someone who has died in this desert, on the upper side of the screen, the camera zooms in on a man who is coming from a distance. As the camera moves to receive him, the image of the skeletal remains slowly disappears and is replaced by the image of a seemingly exhausted man with a white scarf covering his head, carrying a small sack on his shoulder. From up close, we see the man as he looks up at the sky and raises his hand in front of his face to protect it from the blinding desert sun. Although we see the man's face, we cannot fully make sense of it. Immediatley after, the following lines pop up on the screen:

> And my father once said:
> A man without a homeland
> will have no grave in the earth
> and he forbade me to leave [travel].

The conjunction "and" with which the first sentence begins is more than a paratactic sign, a common style in Arabic language. It is also a sign that carries with it a temporal relationship with the sentence that precedes it and that which follows. What precedes this sentence, however, is absent and invisible.[11]

Narratologically, this invisibility reflects on the temporality of the larger story, and even on the film itself. What is invisible becomes a demarcation that situates the film at a specific moment in time that does not coincide with the beginning of the whole story. To put it differently, the beginning of the story is missing, drifting somewhere before the dangling "and." At the same time, the present of the story we will see in *Al-Makhdu'un* immediately starts after reading the words "my father once said [. . .]" Instead, it is the story of exiled men "without a homeland," who will have "no grave in the earth." In spite of their father's warning not to leave the homeland, they still take on the journey, and now we will see the story of how they perish in exile; a foretold destiny of doom precipitated by their ignoring of the father's vision.

But there is more in this opening scene, especially if we read its imaging in terms of two audiovisual details. The first and most obvious detail is that the man's image replaces that of the skeletal remains in the desert, and the second one is that his face remains invisible to the viewer. Read through the first detail, the film seems to depict exile as a place of death, and read through the second, this place also becomes a place wherein the subject's identity is invisible. As much as the desert's

sun blinds the man's eyes, it also blinds the viewer to who he is. In one sense, by beginning in this manner, the film renders the lost homeland in a way that allows it to stand as a privileged place in opposition to the deadly desert. Yet, in another sense, the film also complicates any straightforward relationship between space and time in Palestinian exile. The fact that the beginning of the film foregrounds the father's gloomy vision of exile allows for the imaging of its space as an empty desert, or as an "anti-place" to borrow Barbara McKean Parmenter's terminology, the void of the homeland that the characters leave behind.[12] I already pointed out a similar imaging of exilic space in the first chapter of my study. There, I argued that the infinite emptiness of this place causes the exile's feelings and thoughts to be caught in a nostalgic reminiscence that revolves on a specific place left behind. This also happens in *Al-Makhdu'un*.

The void of exile is constructed from a temporality of a before that predicts an after. Here, the dangling "and" conforms to this temporality. Such a temporality, however, does not entirely compose the film's narrative of this place. Instead, the film radically questions the father's vision of exile. It questions what is envisioned discursively in terms of how successful the travelling is of the characters in exile, and how endurable the environment is of the exilic place. To answer these questions, *Al-Makhdu'un* itself is compelled to take on a journey. It has to accompany the characters on their journey, and even become a traveler like them. This travelling, as I will attempt to show below, takes place through memory, foregrounding the film's exilic narrativity.

Following the opening scene, the camera begins to track sideways to bring into view an oasis wherein the exhausted figure travelling could rest. The moment the man enters this oasis, he takes the white scarf off his head, and throws himself into the shade of a tree with his face on the ground. The shade of the tree, however, does not relieve the man from his trip. Instead, it opens a gate through which he, as well as the film, continues travelling; this time backward into the past and the place left behind. In this recollection, we are exposed to the man's identity: he has a name, Abu Qais, and he comes from a specific place, Palestine. Thus the film intimates that only in his or her memory of the lost homeland does the exiled subject have a concrete identity.

While Abu Qais is facing the ground he hears the sound of his own heart beat. Immediately after, he begins to recollect a similar scene when he is laying down in the shade of the trees of his field in Palestine, chatting to his friend. When Abu Qais asks him about the source of the sound, his friend answers: "it is the sound of your heart. You can hear

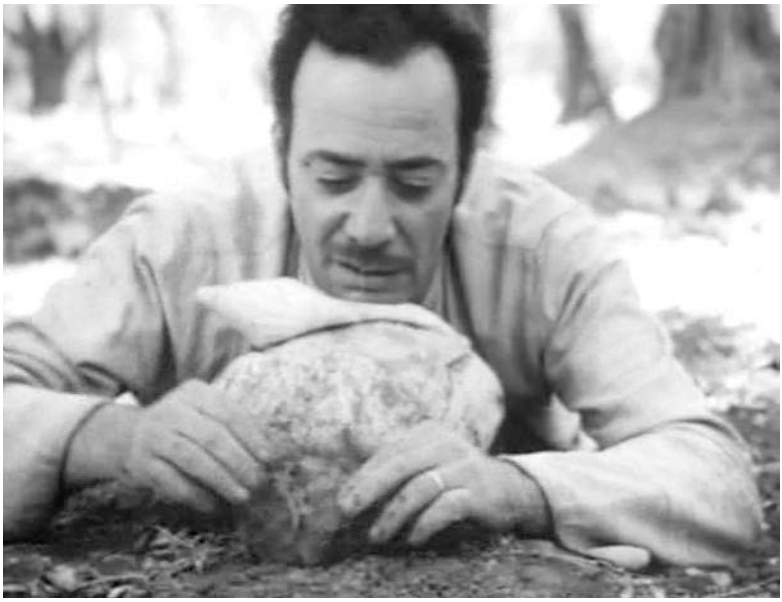

Figure 3.1 Abu Qais is facing the ground in the Oasis

it when you lay your chest close to the ground." Abu Qais shrugs off his friend's answer and challenges him with another question: "And the smell, then?" When his friend does not provide an answer, Abu Qais grabs some ground in his hand and begins to sniff it and says:

> Every time I sniff the ground, I seem to smell the scent of my wife's hair after a cold bath. The same smell. The same freshness. The same moisture. This moisture comes from yesterday's rain. But yesterday it did not rain. It could not have rained. Have you forgotten where you are?

As the earth and his body throb in unison, Abu Qais seems to become one with the earth. His identification with his homeland is shaped through a materialization of this place, his very being an extension of the homeland. This materialization emerges through the projection of the romanticized figure of his wife by means of the senses, hearing, smell, and touch. As a result, the homeland encompasses the substance of Abu Qais's life so that his identification with it becomes an unspoken existential bond. Moreover, the fact that this encounter happens between Abu Qais and his friend adds charge to the sociocultural component of

the land: it exposes its integral role in Palestinian society. This society, divided broadly between rural farming and town, lends Palestinians' understanding of the land—a more domesticated and quotidian tone—where the economic life of the community is intertwined with a husbandry of the land.[13]

Further, through the senses Abu Qais is brought back from his recollections into the present. Only when he smells the ground, a metonym for homeland, Abu Qais realizes that the "moisture comes from yesterday's rain" and that "it could not have rained [yesterday]." Therefore, he must be in the wrong place, in exile. The image on the screen corresponds to Abu Qais's realization in that, immediately after these words, we see him back in the oasis; this time not in the shade of the tree but in the blazing sun. Abu Qais's transfer from the past into the present and from the shade into the sun becomes symbolic of his transition from being a Palestinian peasant "with" a homeland into a Palestinian refugee in exile "without." It also shows Abu Qais as an exiled subject who embodies a memory that shifts between multiple places (homeland and exile) and multiple times (past and present). The voice that tells this is also a split. At the end of the monologue, Abu Qais changes from first-person to second-person discourse, "have you forgotten [. . .]." He can no longer be a unified person when the realization of exile hits him.

Abu Qais's realization leads him through a long recollection from the past through which his journey of dispersion is revealed. In the oasis, having momentarily regained consciousness and still holding the ground in his hands, Abu Qais's eyes begin cruising until they settle on a river. He suddenly recognizes this river as the *Shatt al-Arab* waterway in Iraq. This recognition also happens in recollection. Abu Qais learned this one day when he was sneaking from the window watching his son (Qais) in the class of Ustaz Salim, the teacher from Jaffa who taught in the village's school. The moment Abu Qais identifies the river, we hear Ustaz Salim's voice-over, and then we see him teaching the village's kids about the river. The audiovisual splitting between Ustaz Salim's voice-over and image from the past in this scene signifies that Abu Qais's memory of the homeland is instigated upon him: his past in Palestine constantly impinges on his present exile. This recollection of Ustaz Salim serves as a plausible explanation of Abu Qais's sudden recognition of the river. It also allows the viewer a glimpse of the lives of Palestinians before *al-Nakba* as simple peasants, who were apparently unaware of the tensions building up to it: Abu Qais's sudden recognition of the river emulates the sudden nature of the catastrophic event.

This becomes clear in the following scene in which we see the men of the village, including Abu Qais and Ustaz Salim, sitting in the headman's reception-room, smoking the water pipe and chatting. When one of the men asks Ustaz Salim if he is going to lead them in the Friday prayers, he immediately answers: "No, I am a teacher, not an Imam [a religious cleric]. I cannot lead the prayers." When the headman asks him for clarification, Ustaz Salim confesses that he does not know how to perform the rituals of prayer. The men of the village, puzzled by Ustaz Salim's confession, turn their eyes to the headman who bursts out: "what do you know then?" As Ustaz Salim is rising to leave the room, he says: "many things. I am a good shot, for example. When they [the Zionists] attack you, wake me. I know how to shoot. I can be of some use to you then." Again, as in the opening lines, a voice from the past proleptically evokes the future.

Immediately after this scene, the military attack on the village begins and thus confirms this prolepsis. We see Ustaz Salim defending the village together with another man who later appears in the film as Abu Al-Khaizaran, the driver who smuggles the three men through the desert. At the moment when Ustaz Salim is killed, we hear Abu Qais's voice-over saying:

> God rest your soul, Ustaz Salim. And may he bestow upon you his mercy. Undoubtedly, you must have been among God's favorites, when he made you give up the ghost before the Zionists occupy the land. God must have loved you—may his mercy be upon you. You stayed over there, Ustaz Salim. Is there any divine bounty more glorious?

For Abu Qais, the death of Ustaz Salim appears as a fortunate happening. His death took place "before the Zionists occupied the land," and so he was saved from living under military occupation and from enduring the humiliation of exile that Abu Qais, like all the other Palestinians who survived *al-Nakba*, is experiencing in the present. This statement is followed by a sequence of images, a mix of archival footage of *al-Nakba* combined with a single fictive image. In the archival footage, we see images of the Palestinians' forced dispersion from their villages and towns: departing trucks filled with people, their tents, their hunger, and dependence on the United Nations' aid, their settling in refugee camps. In the fictive image we see Abu Qais and his family, his wife and kids, as members of that group of Palestinians.

This part of the film is exclusively audiovisual: there are no words spoken and there is no voice-over. The fragments of the archival footage

are not so much telling but showing *al-Nakba*. This audiovisual mixing situates *Al-Makhdu'un* rigorously beyond the fiction-documentary divide. It also foregrounds the film's own discursivity as a traveler that I mentioned before. The film travels, by means of memory, between the historical event of *al-Nakba* and its fictional retelling in the present in order to reassemble the fragments of Palestinian collective memory. Like its character (Abu Qais) who is recollecting his memory of the past, *Al-Makhdu'un* also has a memory. The film's memory is composed of past images, preserved in archives, and is recalled by the insertion of this old filmic material. In conveying its memory, the film emphasizes a particular conception of memory; one whose functionality is foregrounded in terms of filmic archives as a historical witness. In the next chapter, I shall further discuss this historical witnessing in relation to Palestinian and Israeli conflicted discourses of *al-Nakba*. In this conception, memory functions in different ways: both as a resort and as a consequence in an interminable phase of flux. Memory appears as no more stationary in the limited space of filmic archives than in the labyrinth of our brains.

This is consistent with psychological theories of memory. In his book, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past* (1996), Daniel L. Schacter summarizes recent scientific findings in the controversial relationship between memory and the brain. Aided by numerous reproductions of contemporary paintings that evoke the subjective workings of memory, Schacter explores how we convert fragmentary remains of experience into autobiographical narratives. His central thesis is that memory is not a single faculty, as was long assumed, but instead depends on a variety of systems, each tied to a particular network of brain structures, all acting in concert so we recognize objects, acquire habits, hold information for brief periods, retain concepts, and recollect specific events. Moreover, our recollections are inextricably associated with the contexts in which memories are recalled, or what Schacter calls "cues for memory," and with the contexts in which those memories were previously formed (23–24).[14]

Memory not only appears as a specific imprint of the past to which we constantly resort when needed but also it can be conceived of as a consequence that is temporally constructed in the present and that is performed both in response and through the processing and incorporation of cues of memory (or its contexts). For the remembering subject, the emphasis is not so much on what he or she experienced but on the weaving of his or her memory in narrative, the work of recollection itself. Through such a cognitive-functional view of memory the

psychoanalytic notions of the (un)trustworthiness and (un)reliability of memory open up the possibility to consider memory as a useful and continuously accessible process of disruption rather than as an already distorting faculty. Notions of (un)trustworthiness and (un)reliability of memory are ultimately cognitive-functional notions themselves, which are first and foremost related to the subject's emotions and desires.[15]

In this perspective, the film's use of archival material suggests that the nature of memory changes over time so that its experience shifts from the mnemonic to the contextual wherein memory is generated, reduced, and conflated. Memory as such becomes a "good reader" that fills the temporal gap between past and present by marking the absences of the past's events. Rather than being a faculty that misappropriates (or misrepresents) the past, memory in and through historical archives of *al-Nakba* becomes a cultural process that regularly interrupts, and at the same time is itself interrupted, in order to compose the temporality of ongoing exile. The archival footage not only suspends the fictional story of Abu Qais within the film but it also interrupts the viewer's evanescent memory of this story. This interruption is facilitated by the historical information of *al-Nakba* so that the contexts within which Abu Qais's memory is formed, enshrined, and recalled can be unveiled; his memory of the present becomes contextualized. As a result, the viewer's understanding shifts from the fictional images of Abu Qais's story in the film to the reality of *al-Nakba* referenced as it happened outside but determining the narrative of the film.

This shift between inside and outside the narrative introduces another splitting of causality. The events "truthfully" presented in the images of the archival footage are both disconnected from the fictional story of Abu Qais by generic incompatibility, and simultaneously presented as the cause of his present state. Thus, the filmic archives as historical witness, which interrupts Abu Qais's story as told by the film, becomes also a bearer of its fictional referentiality; a reference itself that authenticates the latency of his personal story by exposing its narratological and historical contexts. Hence, within the film's exilic narrativity the temporal referentiality of the subject's story *of* and *in* exile is determined by the documented past of its historical event, *al-Nakba* of 1948. It must be so: this is how the chronology of Palestinian loss of homeland and exile begins and, more importantly, as I argue in this chapter and throughout this book, *does not end*.

With regard to memory and space, this temporal configuration highlights two specific aspects. The first shows how the film's exilic narrativity merges personal experience of exile with collective memory. This

merging is given audiovisual shape through the insertion of the fictive image of Abu Qais's family in the archival footage. At stake is a double integration of "truth" and "fiction" in audiovisual storytelling. While the film's employment of archival footage engenders "truth in fiction," the fictive image puts back "fiction in truth." Through this image, not only does Abu Qais becomes an allegorical figure standing for exiled Palestinians but more importantly, his memory becomes a synecdoche of the collective loss. The historical event of *al-Nakba* embodies his personal narrative, and vice versa, so that his daily experience in exile becomes personal, historical, and political all at once. This entanglement recurs in most of the narratives that I analyze in this book. It engenders Palestinian identity "in the act" of collective reenactment and cultural recall as an identity whose terms are not *at all* neutral. I shall return and elaborate on the absence, if not impossibility, of neutrality for Palestinian cultural identity, especially in terms of the "nonending" of loss of homeland, in my analysis of the characters' journey in exile in the final section of this chapter.

The second aspect concerns the utilization of the exilic space. Through the temporal configuration of the exiled subject's personal (or fictional) story in and through the historical past of *al-Nakba*, the desert of exile is transformed from a void into a geopolitical discontinuity. The difference between them, as I already explained in the first chapter of my book, is that the former is inert absence, and the latter is a disconnection that requires a connection. Palestinian exile is inexorably linked to the lost homeland and to the (im)possibility of return to this place. This transformation of the exilic space is given form through the film's shifting, both in voices and images, from the individual to the collective. Within this audiovisual shift, rather than a personal narrative the loss of place unfolds as a collective one, at the heart of which we are exposed to the severity of connection between exiled Palestinians and their homeland. This can be observed in the way the story of Abu Qais is opened up so that the stories of the two other characters, Assad and Marwan, can be introduced in the film. To do so, the film is compelled to travel back from the realm of historical memory of *al-Nakba* into the memory of its speaking subject in exile.

Loss as a Geopolitical Discontinuity: By Way of Telling

Al-Makhdu'un deploys its audiovisual medium to tell the experience of exile as well as showing it. Immediately after the scene with archival images of *al-Nakba*, we see Abu Qais walking between the olive and

the cactus trees; an image that, once more, enacts his transformation from being a Palestinian "with" a homeland into a Palestinian refugee in exile "without." While the olive tree denotes fertility and is a potent symbol of Palestinian nationalism and resistance, the cactus tree signifies barrenness and is a symbol of the ruins in sites where Palestinian homes and villages once stood before 1948.[16] At the end of this scene, Abu Qais emerges from behind the cactus trees and further elaborates on the death of Ustaz Salim:

> God rest your soul, Ustaz Salim. You stayed over there. And thereby, you saved yourself all that misery, and have spared your white hair that shame. If you had lived, Ustaz Salim, and if you were drowned in poverty, as I am, would you have done what I did?

In this address to the dead man from the past, Abu Qais reiterates that Ustaz Salim's death was a fortunate happening because it saved him the "misery" of becoming an exiled refugee. Abu Qais also reveals his reservations about his decision to go to Kuwait. He wonders if the impoverished lives of Palestinians after *al-Nakba* would have forced Ustaz Salim to act similarly to what he is doing now, leaving the homeland. The moment Abu Qais asks this question, we see him walking in the blazing sun in the desert where his mind drifts once again. In a relatively long scene, he recalls how Saad, his neighbor in the refugee camp who returned from Kuwait with a fortune, influenced his decision to undertake the journey. In this part, Abu Qais also narrates the Palestinian catastrophe in the context of Arab politics at large.

While Saad is describing his successful adventures to a group of men and women of the refugee camp, he turns to Abu Qais and asks him "why don't you go there, Abu Qais?" Confronted by Saad's question, Abu Qais does not answer with a series of other questions echo in his head:

> Why don't you go there? What are you waiting for? Are you still unaware that you lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your whole country? What did you expect? Talks [. . .] Talks arguing nonsense. They have sold you and bought you again [. . .] You have the Zionists before you and the traitors behind. You are in between [the hammer and the nail]. Haven't you got it yet that all this is useless? They want you to remain a beggar with a drooping head. They want to make sure that you never raise your voice. That you quarrel instead of striving together and claim your rights. It is a fact. Whoever survived the bullets of the Zionists dies in humiliation. And whoever survives both is a victim of the traitors and

> plotters. Wouldn't it have been better you had died like Ustaz Salim [. . .] Why don't you move on [. . .] What are you waiting for? That fortune should fall on you from the roof? But do you have a roof yet? No roof, no house. They brought you and told you to live here and you stayed. A year later, they said that room is too big for you. Let us have half of it. And you made a partition with blankets and jute. What are waiting for? Your baby, who is going to raise him? Who is going to feed him? Why don't you go and find work to recover what you have lost?

Set in a mode of split subjectivity infiltrated by "you" and "they," Abu Qais's questioning follows a temporal progression that shifts from individual to collective consciousness and back again. The loss of Palestine is presented as a loss that encompasses every aspect of life: "you lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your whole country." In the aftermath of this loss, Abu Qais's experience is nothing short of collective annihilation: "Whoever survived the bullets of the Zionists dies in humiliation. And whoever survives both is a victim of the traitors and plotters." Moreover, Abu Qais criticizes both the international community's and Arab regimes' passivity toward the Palestinians. Audiovisually, this criticism is supported by means of archival footage of discussions of the Palestinian predicament in the *League of Arab States* and *United Nations Security Council*, where we see images of Arab leaders such as King Hussain of Jordan and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. These images are composed of daily news footage in 1950s and 1960s, and they are juxtaposed with the images of Palestinian suffering after *al-Nakba* that we saw earlier in the film.

This juxtaposition once again foregrounds the temporal referentiality of the present (fictional) retelling of the subject's narrative of exile in and through the documented past of *al-Nakba*. The juxtaposition also signifies the continuity of the loss of place in the sense that the action taken in the aftermath of *al-Nakba* does not relieve the Palestinians. This continuity can be seen in the audiovisual splitting between Abu Qais's voice and his image between the cactus trees. At the moment when Abu Qais's voice reaches the question "what do you expect? ," his image among the cactus tree is replaced by the archival footage so that his voice becomes a voice-over. On the screen, the juxtaposition between the archival images of the political discussions and those of the aftermath of *al-Nakba* continues to the point when Abu Qais's voice-over reaches the question, "Wouldn't it have been better you died like Ustaz Salim [. . .]?" This question takes the form of a hopeless resolution and highlights a mismatch between Abu Qais's expectations of what should have been the response to the loss of Palestine and what

actually happened. At this point, Abu Qais's image between the cactus trees emerges once more on the screen, and his voice-over returns to direct voice. This return in voice and image signifies that Abu Qais's speaking position did not change in the aftermath of *al-Nakba*. It also generates the sense of unsuited response to the Palestinian catastrophe through which the discussions of Arab (and world) leaders become, like Saad's fictional exhortations of life in exile, "Talks [. . .] Talks arguing nonsense."[17]

Both this lack of response and the fact that his position did not change in the aftermath of *al-Nakba* determine Abu Qais's departure from the homeland. In the following scene, we see Abu Qais and his wife talking to Saad, who tells them that "just beyond the *Shatt* [*al-Arab*] lie all the things that are denied you." When Abu Qais consults his wife, she answers "whatever you say" and nods in a supportive manner. Only then we are brought back to Abu Qais as he leaves the oasis. The juxtaposition, both in terms of setting and of the act of seduction, between the two images of Abu Qais's movement inside the oasis and outside of it and the previous one with his wife and Saad evokes the Qur'anic imaging of Adam's fall from paradise, so that Abu Qais's loss of Palestine becomes emphatically "a loss of paradise."[18] This imaging is fitting in his case as a representative of the first generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, as we have seen in the first chapter of my study. Edward Said's concise comment on Abu Qais's character in *Men in the Sun* that "his own present is an amalgam of disjointed memory with the gathering force of his difficult situation now; he is a refugee with a family, forced to seek employment in a country whose blinding sun signifies the universal indifference to his fate" (1992: 151) seems to capture the essence of Abu Qais's dilemma at this point of *Al-Makhdu'un*.

Immediately after, we see Abu Qais negotiating the financial terms of the trip with an unnamed smuggler, speaking with an Iraqi accent, who warns him that the journey to Kuwait is not easy and that it will cost him 15 dinars. When Abu Qais proposes to pay him ten dinars instead, the smuggler refuses and turns to Abu Qais and says: "we don't force you to do it." Thus, he distances himself from Abu Qais's actions. At this point, and in a repetition of the same scene, the film interrupts the story of Abu Qais as we see the smuggler asking for the charge, the 15 dinars, from someone else, the young man Assad, who like Abu Qais also wants to be smuggled into Kuwait. After bargaining with the smuggler, Assad finally agrees to give him the fifteen dinars on the condition that the smuggler will only receive the money after the completion of the journey. The smuggler does not accept Assad's condition, and tells

him to "get out, and don't stop before you are on the main road." The moment Assad hears the words "the main road," his mind drifts back into the past as we see him lost on the road in the desert. I shall shortly return to the meanings and the signification of this scene.

Like Abu Qais, we see Assad as an exiled Palestinian who is victimized and whose situation forces him to leave the refugee camp in Jordan where his family settled after *al-Nakba*: his life simply cannot become any worse than it already is. Assad is involved in the resistance movement and persecuted by the Jordanian authorities. In order to evade both imprisonment and political maltreatment, Assad decides to escape and make a new start in Kuwait. Unlike Abu Qais who clings to the mirage of the trip to Kuwait, yet hesitates before taking on the journey, Assad is convinced that a new start in Kuwait is the best solution. This conviction leaves him with little choice but to escape. And for that there is a price to pay; Assad must accept the traditional marriage ideals he detests.

When Assad turns to his uncle to borrow the money he needs for the trip, his uncle turns him down and warns him that he should not be too optimistic about his trip to Kuwait because many have gone before him but "came back empty-handed." Soon after, however, Assad's uncle changes his mind and decides to give him the money:

> [uncle:] All the same, I will give you the 50 dinars. But remember, these are my last. [Assad:] Why give it to me since you are sure I'll never be able to refund it? [uncle] Do you know why? [Assad:] Why? [uncle:] Because I want you to start even in hell. So that you can marry my daughter.

The moment Assad hears his uncle's motivation for giving him the money he realizes that his uncle wants to buy him for his daughter, as Assad puts it, "just as one buys a bag of manure for one's field." The degrading agricultural metaphor signifies Assad's disapproval; it is also spatially expressive of the relationship between gender and land. The combination between the words "manure," in the sense of fertilizer, and the "field" elicits a gendered image, which bears out the feminine projections of the homeland in Palestinian lexicon as we saw earlier in Abu Qais's story. Later on, when Assad, agitated by his uncle's proposition, complains to his friend and asks him whether he should accept to marry his cousin "just because [their] fathers read *Al-Fatihah* when they were born [on] the same day?," his friend answers:

> No doubt he believes it is destiny [. . .] Why should you sell yourself? Why do you grab those 50 dinars in such a way? Stay here, Assad [. . .]

> Don't run away [. . .] Do you think of running at every difficult step? [. . .] Stay with us. Why should you sell yourself.

Despite his friend's appeal to him to stay and face his problems rather than run away from them, Assad is determined to make the journey even if it means to "sell" himself. Since he is wanted by the Jordanian authorities, Assad believes that escape is necessary. He accepts his uncle's proposal and takes the money.[19]

In the next scene, we see Assad's troubles in journeying from Jordan to Iraq. We see Assad as he strikes a deal with Abu Al-Abed, his neighbor in the refugee camp, who takes the money from him in advance and swears by his honor not to betray him while crossing the border. This is the scene of "the main road" I mentioned earlier. Its meanings are key to the film's narrative, especially to the ways Palestinians perceive both exilic space and that which fills it. Before reaching the Jordanian border, Abu Al-Abed tells Assad that all he needs to do is to walk around the sand dunes and to get to the highway where he will be waiting for him to continue their journey into Iraq. Yet, when Assad reaches the appointed place, he does not find Abu Al-Abed and realizes that he was betrayed and left alone in the desert. After waiting for a long time, Assad catches a ride from two tourists who are travelling to Iraq. During the trip, they chat about rats in the desert. "The desert is full of rats. What do they eat?" one of the tourists asks. "Rats smaller than them," the other tourist replies. In one sense, the "rats" here symbolize the Arabs who patrol the desert's borders and cause the death of the three smuggled men, the "smaller rats." In another sense, this comment follows on the film's audiovisual storytelling, wherein the narrative voice from the past proleptically forecasts the future. It offers a foreboding hint about the fatal outcome of the characters' journey from Iraq to Kuwait.

When Assad finally makes it to Basra in Iraq, he also encounters more rats in the only hotel he can afford. The rats indicate how Palestinians conceive of cities of exile. The city of exile in Palestinian literature, as Parmenter astutely observes, is "unrelenting in its ugliness. It is associated with crowds, strangers, vermin, corrupt bureaucrats, and hucksters" (1994: 60).[20] In our film, these negative imagings inflect the transformation of exilic space from a void into a geopolitical discontinuity. Assad's story accentuates the severity of connection between the Palestinian subject and his or her homeland as much as the complexity of this subject's choices in exile. Assad's motivation for taking the journey and his decision to escape, like Abu Qais and Marwan as we will see in a moment, are determined by a forced exile. This condition, as I

keep demonstrating throughout my study, is not a choice, nor a privilege, but something that Palestinians must live with in the aftermath of *al-Nakba*. The subject's choices in this condition are intrinsically generated by a lack of choice; hence, they are impositions.

Immediately after Assad's recollections, the film cuts back to the present where it left off, as we are brought again to the scene in which he was bargaining with the Iraqi smuggler. This return is not a ploy to continue with Assad, but a storytelling device. It serves to introduce the story of the teenager Marwan. Audiovisually, Marwan's introduction happens in the same way in which Assad previously replaced Abu Qais. On the screen, we see first the Iraqi smuggler asking for the charge of the journey, the 15 dinars, and then we see Marwan. The audiovisual repetition exposes an order of appearance, which mimics the generational order of the characters from old to young and from first to third generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, so as to underline the generational component of loss of place. This repetition also establishes a contiguous relationship between the exiled characters in the narrative as well as in life circumstances in exile, the result of which is a collectivization of their individual voices. This collectivization, through contiguity, can be observed in Marwan's story.

Marwan threatens the Iraqi smuggler that he will report him to the police if he does not accept the five dinars, which he can only afford. The smuggler becomes angry, slaps Marwan on the face and throws him out of the shop. As he runs away crying, Marwan meets Abu Al-Khaizaran; the man we saw earlier defending the village with Ustaz Salim in Abu Qais's recollections. Abu Al-Khaizaran tells Marwan that he is also a Palestinian like him, and that he agrees to smuggle him for the five dinars on the conditions that he should not tell anyone about it and help him find other people who want to go to Kuwait. When Marwan says that he knows someone who is staying with him in the hotel (Assad), Abu Al-Khaizaran says that he also knows someone who used to be his neighbor in the village in Palestine (Abu Qais). Only then do the different story lines come together in *Al-Makhdu'un*.

The encounter between Marwan and Abu Al-Khaizaran is crucial to understanding how the film's exilic narrativity brings the individual stories of the characters together to reenact the collective narrative of loss of homeland: namely, by constructing specific spatiotemporal relationships between them, alternatingly in relation to the lost homeland and the place of exile. All characters come from Palestine, and in exile they are hotel-roommates as in the case of Assad and Marwan, or guest/host as in the case of Abu Qais and Abu Al-Khaizaran. Narratologically,

the collectivity of loss of homeland is not so much determined by the original place, Palestine, but through the effectivity of the characters' relationships in exile. The film's use of multiple voices, notably the addition of Abu Al-Khaizaran's voice, bears out this effect. The audiovisual narrative makes his voice an integral part of the other characters' destiny and story. Abu Al-Khaizaran, as we will see below, turns out to be an escapee just like the other characters. But the point can still be made in the encounter I described above by the fact that Abu Al-Khaizaran is presented as the "second smuggler" in the film; Marwan and the other characters first try out the Arab one, the Iraqi smuggler. At stake here is more than a simple ordering of a character.

By presenting Abu Al-Khaizaran as the second smuggler, especially if we read his character as an allegory of Palestinian leadership, *Al-Makhdu'un* significantly differs from Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* wherein Abu Al-Khaizaran is the only smuggler in the narrative. *Al-Makhdu'un* emphasizes its incentive to both *involve* and *criticize* Arab politics. By making him second, the film takes away some of Abu Al-Khaizaran's political responsibility. As a result, *al-Nakba* is emphatically removed from its localized Palestinian realm into its wider Arab political significations: the loss of Palestine is not merely a Palestinian catastrophe but also constitutes a larger Arab one. More relevant to my point about storytelling, the moment when Marwan is thrown out of the Iraqi smuggler's shop crying is a moment that threatens narrative closure: so far, all we saw in the film is rejection and failure, even before beginning the real journey to Kuwait. Marwan's success in finding a smuggler is, therefore, imperative in order to prevent narrative closure. When Abu Al-Khaizaran emerges as *the* smuggler, he also emerges as a "savior," not so much of Marwan himself, but of the continuation of his story.

When the four men, Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan, and Abu Al-Khaizaran, meet and discuss the details of the journey, Abu Al-Khaizaran tells them that he has to go to Kuwait since he works there, and that he drives a truck in which he can smuggle them across the border. Abu Al-Khaizaran's motivation for taking the men along, as he says, is "to make some more money," and so he charges each one of them ten dinars, except for Marwan of course. He also assures them that the truck belongs to a rich Kuwaiti man so it does not get checked at the border. All they have to do, according to Abu Al-Khaizaran, is to hide inside the empty water-tank "for six or seven minutes" on the Iraqi border and a similar amount of time on the Kuwaiti side while he finishes his paperwork. Doubting their safety, Abu Qais is the only character who shows discontent, and

Figure 3.2 Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan, meet Abu Al-Khaizaran and discuss the journey

says: "this is a dangerous business. Maybe we die." In response, Abu Al-Khaizaran smiles to him and asks him not to worry since "[he is] the one who drives, the leader." This is how Abu Al-Khaizaran, unlike the Iraqi smuggler who distances himself from the characters, becomes part of their joint destiny. His role shifts from smuggler to "the leader" of the men; hence, he becomes one of them. When the men agree and strike the deal to depart the next day, Abu Al-Khaizaran turns to Marwan and asks him if he knows anyone in Kuwait. His question triggers Marwan's recollections of the past so that the viewer is exposed to his motivation. Marwan's story continues.

It recounts his predicament when both his brother and father abandon their familial responsibility. We see that Marwan's brother used to send money from Kuwait to help support the family in the refugee camp, but stopped sending it after he got married. As a result, Marwan's father could no longer support his wife and five children and leaves them for a new wife. He marries the rich handicapped Shafiqa who lost her leg during *al-Nakba* and who has difficulty finding a husband, but whose father offers money and a home to whoever would marry her. Marwan is forced to leave school and give up his lifetime dream of becoming a doctor, and has to go to Kuwait to find work to support his family. When Marwan visits his father and Shafiqa before embarking on his journey, his father tries to erase the culpability for his actions. He tells

Marwan that "a man wants to be able to settle down in his old age and not find himself obliged to feed half a dozen of open mouths" and gives him some money for the journey. Immediately after, the film returns to the scene of the deal with Abu Al-Khaizaran. Marwan, still unable to understand the actions of both his father and brother, naively asks: "But why do they do that? Why do they [. . .]?" Before Marwan finishes his question, Abu Al-Khaizaran interjects and tells him that "the first thing you will learn is that money comes first, and then morals."

Abu Al-Khaizaran's statement reveals who he is, and it highlights the problematic aspects of his character throughout the narrative: his preference for money over morals. I shall return to Abu Al-Khaizaran's character in the next section. Importantly, his statement supplies information that prepares the viewer for the events to follow. It maps the semantic field of the audiovisual narrative by stating the alternatives that the characters experience in their quest: financial security in exile versus commitment to the lost homeland, Palestine. This duality is not a simple opposition. Rather, it portrays the evolution of the characters' unawareness to awareness of how their bodies are locked into the spatiotemporal coordinates that define the geopolitics of exile; hence, it renews their existential relationship with the lost place, Palestine, as *the* homeland. In order to make this case, I will turn to the characters' journey to Kuwait, the closing part of *Al-Makhdu'un*. As I will attempt to show, the film's exilic narrativity shows the characters' awareness in a single "anti-linear sound-image." The antilinearity of this sound-image, which is read through memory fragments in the film's exilic narrative, allows the viewer to participate in the construction of its details and therefore in the construction of the audiovisual-narrative discourse.

Palestinian Time-Space Beyond Tragedy

At this stage of *Al-Makhdu'un*, the viewer is exposed to the three stories of Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan. Each of these, as we have seen, is told through filmic snapshots charting a series of analepses, which are all connected ultimately, albeit differently, to the same historical event, *al-Nakba*. In the closing part of the film, the three men's lives converge during their journey in the desert. The journey toward Kuwait is riveting and emotional, and it is presented through different short scenes, all of which lack synchrony except for the opening one: the beginning of the journey wherein we are exposed yet to another story within the film, that of Abu Al-Khaizaran.

As the journey commences, the characters agree to take turns on who sits next to the driver, Abu Al-Khaizaran, in the shade. Since they depart early in the morning, Assad goes first, while Abu Qais and Marwan climb the roof of the truck so as to save them later on from the blazing sun of the afternoon. Abu Al-Khaizaran is chatting to Assad and mockingly comparing the 150 kilometers of the journey to "the path which God promised his creatures they must cross before being directed either to paradise or to hell." The only difference, Abu Al-Khaizaran continues, is that "the angels here are the frontier guards." The "path" in the first sentence is a religious reference to the straight path, *A-Serata Al-Mustaqeem*, which according to the Qur'an people must cross in order to reach heaven.[21] Narratologically, Abu Al-Khaizaran's comparison offers, once more, a foreshadowing of the dreadful end of the characters' journey. It also discloses his attempt to relieve himself from his responsibility in determining the characters' destiny; the blame in the second sentence is not his but that of the Arab frontier guards. However, Assad's response to Abu Al-Khaizaran's comparison that they "entrusted him with leadership, and it is up to him to take them to heaven or hell" highlights his role as a "leader" and confirms the driver's responsibility in the matter.

Later, Assad asks Abu Al-Khaizaran whether he has "ever been married?" After shrugging off Assad's question with another question, "why do you ask?," Abu Al-Khaizaran begins to recollect the past. In this story, not only are we reminded of Ustaz Salim's death that we saw earlier in Abu Qais's recollections, but we also see a latent continuation of that story from the perspective of Abu Al-Khaizaran. His story can be summarized as follows. Shortly after the death of Ustaz Salim, Abu Al-Khaizaran is also injured while defending the homeland and as a result he is stripped of his manhood. In one of the scenes, we see Abu Al-Khaizaran on the operation table and screaming that he "[does not] want to [. . .]." When one of the doctors tells him that "losing one's manhood is better than dying," Abu Al-Khaizaran continues screaming and says: "No. It's better to be dead."

This statement connects Abu Al-Khaizaran's perspective on the loss of the homeland with that of Abu Qais, who also sees the death of Ustaz Salim as a fortunate happening that saved him from living on without a homeland. Abu Al-Khaizaran's preference of death over life "without manhood" becomes a synecdoche for Abu Qais's preference of death over life "without a homeland." Kamal Abdel-Malek notes in his essay, "Living on Border Lines: War and Exile in Selected Works by Ghassan Kanafani, Fawaz Turki and Mahmoud Darwish," that Abu Al-Khaizaran

is "destined to live with the physical scars of the war in whose aftermath he lost both home and manhood" (1999: 181). Moreover, according to Abdel-Malek, the impotence of Abu Al-Khaizaran symbolizes a larger collective political one in that "much like Abu Al-Khaizaran, Arab and Palestinian leadership became impotent in 1948 and after, and yet kept pretending to be aroused by the desire to do battle with Israel" (181). At the heart of this sexual symbolism is the cultural notion of loss of Palestine as a loss of the subject's dignity: *al-Nakba* is bodily experienced as a castration.[22]

At this point of Abu Al-Khaizaran's story, the viewer sees him as an exiled Palestinian who, like Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan, deserves sympathy. However, the viewer's sympathy with Abu Al-Khaizaran remains partial. The following scenes of the journey reveal the negative aspects of this character. Through his words and actions, we do not see him as a man who sacrificed his manhood for the homeland, but more as a man who lost the "morals of manhood." For example, Abu Al-Khaizaran keeps describing himself as someone whose goal in life is to collect money: "All I want is money, and when I have money I want more and more." After Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan have crossed the Iraqi border, the three men are resting in the shade of the truck, barely having survived their ride inside the hot and airless water-tank. Abu Al-Khaizaran grabs the water skin attached to the truck and starts pouring it into his mouth. He then washes his head and body without offering water to the dying men. Such selfish actions not only prompt the viewer's withdrawal of sympathy with Abu Al-Khaizaran but they also facilitate the well-established allegorization of his character as a careless émigré Palestinian. With regard to the duality of financial security in exile versus commitment to the lost homeland I mentioned earlier, his character embodies the first side of this duality: Abu Al-Khaizaran is one of those Palestinians who, rather than staying in the homeland, prefers material security in exile.

Immediately after the exposition of Abu Al-Khaizaran's story, we return to the characters' journey in the desert. As I suggested above, the remaining scenes of the journey lack synchrony. As Bal succinctly puts it in her book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, "when a scene lacks synchrony, ellipsis often becomes prominent" (1997: 105). In *Al-Makhdu'un*, time is compressed. Unlike in the opening scene of the journey and the first part of the film in general, where all the characters are given time to return to their past in the lost homeland, in the closing part of the film ellipsis occurs in the characters' present to signify that there is no time to go back to the past. A

good example can be observed in the scene just before the characters' first ride to the Iraqi border.

In this part, Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan repress both what they have given up by having to live in exile and the suffering they are experiencing, and focus instead on what they might gain from the trip. The three men are now contemplating their exilic selves by reflecting on how they have dealt with the limited choices afforded them. Abu Qais, for example, reminds himself that with the money he will earn in Kuwait, he will be able to feed his family, send his son to school, and buy olive shoots in Palestine. Assad, in turn, accepts his imprisonment by traditional marriage and the consequences of his political involvement by telling himself that his uncle has good intentions for him, since, "otherwise he would never have collected 50 dinars in his whole life." Finally, Marwan deals with his inability to pursue his schooling and becoming a doctor by reassuring himself of what his eldest brother told him before, that he will instead receive a better education from the experience of life itself: "School teaches nothing. It only teaches laziness. So leave it and plunge into the frying-pan with the rest of humanity." Throughout this scene, instead of the characters going back into their past by means of recollections, the past erupts in their present as we hear voices in the characters' minds and see images of their past pop up on the screen. Narratologically, this audiovisual blending between past and present voices and images reveals the characters' hopes for the future. This blending, moreover, interrupts the progression of Abu Al-Khaizaran's story: we only see how he lost his manhood, but we do not see how he travelled into exile like the other characters. Also, the journey itself is presented in an accelerated manner as if the film's narrative runs toward its ending. At stake here is the notion that to live in exile is to exist in an embattled relationship with time.

Those dissonances with the temporal in exile become most visible in the film's closing scenes. Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan, barely able to stand up, go into the empty water-tank for the second, and final time, doubting that they will come out of it alive. This realization is given shape as Marwan goes last into the water-tank and declares: "We all lost it." This statement reflects the characters' initial awareness of how their bodily existence is locked into the spatial coordinates of exile. As we will see in a moment, the characters' comprehensive bodily awareness explodes in the film after they die; awareness happens after the fact. Before closing the opening of the water-tank, Abu Al-Khaizaran tells them to set their watches and that it would not take him more than "seven minutes" to finish his paperwork. While Abu Al-Khaizaran is

rushing into the empty border checkpoint, the frontier guards begin teasing him about his alleged escapades with women in Basra. This engenders a stark ironic encounter since we already know that he is impotent. Temporally, this encounter frustrates the viewer, focused on what will happen to the three men, as the discussion exhausts the small and precious window of time in which the men in the truck can survive. This encounter also offers us a glimpse on how Abu Al-Khaizaran is surviving his exile: by showing how good he is at lying. At stake here is a case of mistaken identity through which pretending to be someone else is the only thing that saves Abu Al-Khaizaran from the guards.

In the officials' room, the more Abu Al-Khaizaran pleads for time by repeatedly shouting "I am in a hurry" and denies his alleged relationship with women in Iraq, the more the guards delay his paperwork and insist on knowing who his secret mistress is. In the meantime, the camera keeps shifting between the inside of the room where Abu Al-Khaizaran is being held and the outside where the truck with the men is standing. In one of these shifting shots, the camera zooms in on the truck as we, the viewers, hear the men inside the water-tank knocking. The men's cries for help, however, do not reach the other characters in the officials' room. In this same image, the camera zooms once again, but this time away from the truck and instead cuts to the noisy air conditioners attached to the officials' room. The audiovisual juxtaposition between the sound of the men's knocking and the noise of the air conditioners shows how the noise of the air conditioners, a metonym for Arab modernity, drown out the men's cries for help. At the heart of this image is a political critique through which the death of the exiled Palestinians emphatically appears as a moral failure of Arab politics. Moreover, the fact that the viewer is the only person who hears the sound of knocking foregrounds his or her participation in the construction of the audiovisual discourse. By making us hear, the film makes us culturally responsible and calls on our active engagement in the narrative. This moment of engaging the viewer epitomizes the audiovisual artifact's ability of critical process; it is also the performative moment of spectatorial interaction with cinematic representations of *al-Nakba,* which I will attempt to develop as a special case of exilic narrativity, namely as performative narrativity, in my discussion of Bakri's *1948* in the next chapter.

Immediately after the image and the sound of the air conditioners, we return to the inside of the officials' room wherein we see Abu Al-Khaizaran consulting his watch, which indicates that he already lost four minutes. At this moment, the camera zooms on Abu Al-Khaizaran's face and we see a change in his facial expressions. He now realizes that

the only way to escape the guards is to play along with them and to stop denying his relationship with women in Iraq: he now plays the role of a "playboy." This transformation from being "impotent" to "playboy" is what I meant by Abu Al-Khaizaran's mistaken identity. This role-playing, however, consumes more time. As Abu Al-Khaizaran finally finishes his paperwork, and after he promises to introduce the guards to his imaginary mistresses, he consults his watch again to ascertain that he is indeed late and that it took him more than seven minutes; this time his watch indicates 15 minutes. Driving away from the border, Abu Al-Khaizaran stops the truck after a while, and goes to check on the men. When he opens the blazing hot water-tank, he finds the three of them dead.

Narratologically, the use of watches, like the camera's shifting shots between the inside and outside of the official's room, adds to the temporal charge of this scene: they remind the viewer of both the scarcity of time and the desperate need for it. These watches give access to exilic time by indicating that time in exile is moving rapidly, from four to fifteen minutes, and at the same time that the suffering is endless. The watches also suggest that there is time in exile, yet it is never enough. Such a vision of exilic time becomes exemplary of the men's short lives in exile. For Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan, life can possibly begin in exile, but it is a life that is not to be lived, nor to be continued; a life that is planted in an airless environment under the blazing desert's sun. This sun brands the three men with pain as it acts as a "decoy" implanted in time; one that can make a day in their lives seem like a year, yet also one which shortens the time they have to live. This is precisely how Palestinian exile becomes a spatiotemporal moment of danger of collective annihilation in the present.

At this point of *Al-Makhdu'un*, it would be tempting to conclude that the film approaches the loss of homeland and exile at a rhetorical level in that the catastrophe from which Palestinians suffered most seems a result of moral failure. This moral failure manifests itself through both the impotence and egocentrism of Abu Al-Khaizaran, and the missing vitality and lack of support of the Arabs. However, there are two related problems that complicate this conclusion. First, it puts so much emphasis on the moral aspect so that, rather than resolving the duality between financial security in exile and commitment to the lost homeland, it enforces the binary opposition between the two sides. The second, and more important problem is that, in relying on the tragic imaging of the men's suffocation at the border, it seems to exclude the narrative perspective of the protagonists, Abu Qais, Assad,

Figure 3.3 Abu Al-Khaizaran finds out that the three men have died

and Marwan. It represents these exiled Palestinians as passive victims so that they are fatally turned into hapless refugees and economic migrants seeking menial labor in Kuwait. This representation would be only plausible had the film indeed ended with the scene of the characters' suffocation inside the water-tank that we saw above. But it does not. In *Al-Makhdu'un*, Palestinian death is not the end. This is where the antilinear sound-image takes shape.

Immediately after Abu Al-Khaizaran finds out that Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan have died, he returns to his truck and continues the journey in total silence. Without uttering a word, he stops on the outskirts of Kuwait city, carries the three dead bodies off his truck and abandons them on the garbage heap.

This image is accompanied by the same sentimental music with which the film began. On the screen, while we see Abu Al-Khaizaran walking back to his truck and driving away from sight, the camera returns to the three bodies laying on the garbage heap and begins scanning them and moving forward. The camera's movement takes the following order: it first scans Marwan's body, then Assad's, and finally Abu Qais's until it reaches his hand in the shape of someone who is holding his fingers as if

Figure 3.4 The three dead bodies on the garbage heap, with Abu Qais holding his fingers as if on the trigger

on the trigger. Only then do the same lines with which the film began pop up on the screen:

> And my father once said:
> A man without a homeland
> will have no grave in the earth
> and he forbade me to leave [travel].

The antilinearity of this sound-image is best explained through a three-fold juxtaposition between the textual repetition of the "father's vision of exile," the scanning order of the men's bodies from Marwan to Assad to Abu Qais and the camera's movement forward. Audiovisually, each of these engenders different temporal effects in which past and present losses of place ultimately come together so that the future can be envisioned. This envisioning campaign takes place, first, in the textual repetition of the father's vision. This repetition evokes the past loss of homeland in the present of exile. Second, the scanning order reverses both the sequence of storytelling and generational order of the characters: instead of first to third generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, we have third to first generations. This reversal connects the present of exile to the past context of *al-Nakba*. Finally, the camera's movement forward envisions a future, symbolized by Abu Qais's hand gesture of the trigger. I will elaborate on the

significations of this symbolism in a moment. Circularity and movement stand for an endless repetition and retrovision so that this antilinear sound-image shows the Palestinians' loss of homeland and their quest for it *together*.

In order to understand how this happens, I will read both this sound-image and the previous scene of the characters' suffocation inside the water-tank in relation to the ending of the literary narrative that Saleh's film adapts, Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*. With regard to exilic narrativity, reading the two endings will also help me reflect on the potential of the audiovisual artifact to take the literary "imaging" of exile to its visual version. Like *Al-Makhdu'un*, Kanafani's novella also ends with the suffocation of Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan inside the water-tank. In the last lines of the narrative, after he finds out that the men have died, Abu Al-Khaizaran repeatedly asks the question: "Why didn't you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn't you bang the sides of the tank? Why? Why? Why?" (1999:74). Thus, Kanafani's ending critiques Palestinian national paralysis after *al-Nakba* by intensifying it: the narrative emphatically calls on Palestinians to take action and urges them to carry arms.

The ending of *Al-Makhdu'un*, as we saw above through the scene of the characters' suffocation and the antilinear sound-image, departs from the literary text in two audiovisual details: the characters' knocking on the walls of the water-tank, and Abu Al-Khaizaran's silence. When asked why he changed Kanafani's ending, Saleh explained that "the novel was written in 1963, but by the early 1970s the Palestinians had become engaged in armed struggle and were hijacking airplanes, actions for which the knocking on the walls of the tank could serve as a metaphor."[23] Thus, Saleh's changing of the ending in the film is both temporally and spatially motivated; it takes little away from Kanafani's thematic project. This is so because the three characters, despite their knocking, do suffocate. Temporally, then, the film's exilic narrativity shows how Palestinians died in 1963, but also how, despite their actions, they die in the 1970s. To put it differently, *Al-Makhdu'un* shows Palestinian national paralysis after *al-Nakba* but also how this paralysis continues. In this sense, the film takes the literary imaging of exile to its visual version and alters its temporality from past to present.

This unfolding of the image of exile in time is put at the service of space. This can be observed in the second difference with Kanafani's ending, the silence of Abu Al-Khaizaran. Narratologically, in silencing Abu Al-Khaizaran, the film gives voice to the dead men, the protagonists of the narrative. In so doing, the film seems to suggest that the absence

of life in their exiled bodies does not equal the complete absence of their bodies in exilic space. In this sense, exilic space becomes an index, a cipher for both the characters' bodies and stories that have brushed up against it. The territorial designs of this space transform the men's geopolitical realities, from being Palestinians "with a homeland" into Palestinian refugees "without." These designs also transform their life experiences on the ground. Both the textual repetition of the father's vision of exile and Abu Qais's hand gesture as if on the trigger perform this transformation.

Between the first and the second quotation of the father's vision, the film has travelled to discover its meaning. Through the image of the characters' dead bodies on the garbage heap, the film seems to suggest that it has understood the meaning of "have no grave in the earth" and therefore it subliminally evokes the image of the trigger, symbolizing the choice of staying in the homeland to work in the resistance instead of existing the desert of exile. This gesture reminds us of the characters' death, and marks the exilic space. This is precisely how the antilinear sound-image transforms the "moment of danger" of Palestinian exile, which consumes the lives of the characters, into a moment of bodily awareness. This moment is emphatically connected to the *unpredictability* of the characters' travel in Palestinian exile so that it subverts the tragic vision of their suffocation inside the water-tank, which is inherently static, into a more dynamic and active vision. At the heart of this vision is a specific audiovisual discourse that strongly exemplifies the quintessence of Palestinian cultural identity as "exilic"; that is, an identity *shaped* in exile and *defined* by its spatiotemporal forced condition around the questions of whether to submit or to resist? Such a discourse, further, bears on the "nonneutrality" of Palestinian identity so that the exilic space emerges as a decisive geopolitical site of subjection and resistance. The experience of the exilic space as a geopolitical discontinuity transforms the Palestinian refugee into a subject with a political consciousness, with nothing to loose but his "refugeeism," which is not much of a possession. In exile, the Palestinian subject can be defeated but not destroyed.

In my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un*, I discussed the multiple ways in which the film's audiovisual storytelling activates Palestinian cultural memory, both narratively and aesthetically, in relation to exilic space as inherently lived, albeit deadly, space that shapes collective imaginaries of the lost homeland. The geopolitics of exilic space transforms cultural realities as much as life experiences on the ground. The details of the relationship between exile and the Palestinian subject vary from

narrative to narrative, but the ways in which these details alternate and effect topographies of Palestinian identity in the present is a critical question in those narratives. With regard to the relationship between Palestinian identity and exilic space, *Al-Makhdu'un*'s exilic narrativity connects spatial representations to the exercise of political power. It exposes a transformation of the construction of Palestinian identity, from catastrophe and victimization to ideology and political movements. What are the details of this construction? And how does it take shape in audiovisual narratives of *al-Nakba*, especially in relation to the notions of Palestinian "self" and Israeli "other" and their conflicted discourses of memory? These two questions are the focus of my discussion of the performative narrativity of Bakri's film *1948* in the next chapter.

Unlike *Al-Makhdu'un,* which presents Palestinian exilic time and space by means of a fragmented mode of memorial storytelling as an experiential truth beyond the fiction-documentary divide, *1948* enacts this truth in terms of role-playing beyond another divide, that between performance and documentary. The employment of bodily engagement of exile through role-playing, as we will see, foregrounds the film's performative narrativity. This facilitates the probing of narratives of *al-Nakba* and exile beyond their linear limits so that audiovisual storytelling deconstructs the assumed generic predominance of "truthful" documentary over performed subjectivity. *1948* conveys a strong political argument about contemporary Palestinian identity. Palestinian exilic identity emerges through unconventional aesthetic strategies, various modes of storytelling, and the performance of remembrance. *1948* does not primarily unveil the catastrophic past so much as it transmits its present. The underlying message is that catastrophe and exile are destined to continue in the future, so long as institutionalized regimes of denial and dehumanization remain unchallenged.

CHAPTER 4

The Performance of Catastrophe and Palestinian Identity

> I have advised you my heart, and why did not you take my advice? We became an intoxicated people who go to sleep and wake up in the love of their homeland. Oh [. . .] you, my body that is torn into two halves, a living one and another that lived, and the living half is left for pain and suffering.
>
> —Shafiq Kabha, *Mawaal* (1989)[1]

I have begun with this Palestinian melody because it resonates beyond the boundaries set by history and geography. Sung at weddings and other festive occasions, this melody, with its emphatic sighing for the lost homeland, "oh [. . .]," serves as a testimony of a remembering that reclaims the experience of another time and another place. The loss of the homeland torments the soul and splits the body "into two halves [. . .],," existing between a loved but dead past and a living but agonized present. At the same time, these words point out that the past and the present cannot be simply separated from one another.

Firmly anchored in the present, these words suggest that remembering events and experiences from the Palestinian past remains an effective means of releasing their stories of forced uprooting and struggle for freedom and independence from "official Zionist history." The temporal and spatial distance, between the remembered object (Palestine) and the Palestinian subject doing the remembering, functions as a conceptual metaphor for the more unsettling distance between this subject and him or herself in exile. This metaphor, as I will argue below, is most visible in the remembrance of *al-Nakba*.

In this chapter, I continue to probe the audiovisual storytelling of *al-Nakba* through analyzing denied exilic narratives, particularly those

of Palestinians living inside Israel, often referred to in willfully vague terms such as "Israeli-Arabs."[2] I will perform this analysis on Mohammed Bakri's documentary *1948*, which commemorates the Palestinians' loss of their homeland in that year and articulates the "deep narratives" of their denial of home in ongoing exile. I use the term "deep narratives" to refer to those narratives that are inherently grounded in *al-Nakba* of 1948 yet continuously (re)surface in contemporary reconstructions and retellings of the story of that catastrophe in exile.

Made in 1998 within the context of Palestinian commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of *al-Nakba*, though never "officially" labeled as such, the thrust of Bakri's *1948* is to express the carping ambiance of present-day Palestinians in exile, in which an interminable sense of catastrophe persists. In view of this grave subject, it is surprising that the set, so to speak, is the theater. *1948* begins as a theatrical performance, with a story that has been told before. Theater and storytelling: these are the two cultural modes in which the film is cast. Both modes are anchored in fiction, and both are literally displayed in performance.

Behind the narrative of Bakri's film hides another storyteller, the late Emile Habibi (1921–1996), to whom the film is dedicated. Habibi was one of the most accomplished Palestinian intellectuals: he was both a writer and a politician who served as a member in the Israeli Parliament (*Knesset*) for 19 years as the head of *Rakah Party* (The Israeli Communist Party). Habibi's satirical novel, *al-Mutasha'il: al-waq'i al-ghariba fi ikhtifaa' Said abi al-nahs al-Mutasha'il*, serves as the starting point of Bakri's film. Originally published in Arabic in 1974, *al-Mutasha'il* was translated into English in 1982 by Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor Le Gassick under the title: *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*. The term *al-Mutasha'il* (The Pessoptimist) in the title of the novel is unique in its linguistic construction as it is made up of two Arabic adjectives: *al-mutasha'im* (the pessimist) and *al-mutafa'il* (optimist). Since its first appearance, serialized in three parts in the daily *Al-Jadid* in Haifa between 1972 and 1974, Habibi's novel has evoked countless scholarly studies and literary criticism. For example, in his comment on *al-Mutasha'il*, Edward Said points out that the novel embodies the Kafkaesque elements, especially the alternation between being and not being in place, by which its narrative sketches a complete picture of Palestinian identity. As Said puts it, *al-Mutasha'il* is an "epistolary novel [. . .], unique in Arabic tradition in that it is consistently ironic, exploring a marvelously controlled energetic style to depict the peculiarly 'outstanding' *and* 'invisible' condition of Palestinians inside Israel" (1992: 83). Said's perception of Habibi's novel

has found its fitting sequel in Angelika Neuwirth's postmodern reading of Arabic literature. According to Neuwirth, "Habibi's work, one of the most powerful effects of which is the continuous subversion and problematizing of the collective obsession with remembering and forgetting that is inscribed in the hegemonic Israeli narrative, thus dramatizes the concept of a life led in 'exile inside the homeland'" (2010: 217).[3]

In *1948*, Bakri uses footage from his own stage performance of Habibi's *al-Mutasha'il*. This self-reflective device allows me to discuss the film's narrative as an act of remembrance of *al-Nakba*, which not only articulates the past catastrophe but also enacts the "catastrophic" in the present of the exilic subject—here, Bakri himself as a theater director. This situation where a theater performance is recycled as a cinematic performance, and I will argue, through this double performance as an act of storytelling, offers a good starting point for my analysis. This double use of performance helps me to reflect on what I will call in this chapter a "performative narrativity." This notion refers to dialectic between enactment and showing images from another time.

Central to this discussion is the question how the identity of the Palestinian subject is performatively constructed and narrativized at the same time—staged and remembered. The connection between performance and memory, by means of storytelling, is foregrounded in Bakri's film *1948*. Composed of a mix of theatrical performance, archival footage, and personal interviews of both Palestinians and Israelis, Bakri's film, as Haim Bresheeth succinctly puts it in his article "Telling the Stories of Heim and Heimat, Home and Exile," tells the narratives of the Palestinians in Israel, their subsequent marginalization, oppression and mistreatment, and their aspirations for freedom, equality, and development, all dashed by the harsh realities of their exile while living in a Zionist entity that utterly negates their rights (2003: 27–28). In its presentation of these narratives, *1948* appeals to the concepts of "performance" and "performativity." These concepts have constituted a paradigm shift in the humanities.[4]

In her book, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Mieke Bal probes performativity in performance. She does so by both articulating the unstable distinction between performance and performativity and arguing instead for a "conceptual messiness" between these concepts. At stake in this "conceptual messiness" is Bal's contention that while the two concepts are seemingly distinguishable from each other—performance as being determined in a preexisting script and performativity as an event in the present—both are in fact interconnected through memory, but "without merging" (2002: 176).

This, I contend, is what Bakri's opening sequence does; as I will try to show below. Bakri's recycling of a stage performance suggests a creative theorizing of this relationship, the emphatic reuse of theater—in a film that pursues performativity effects—to change our ways of seeing—offers a great insight into the cultural production of performativity.

According to Bal, such a connection between performance and performativity—primarily informed by Derrida's theorization of the citationality of speech acts—facilitates the analysis of:

> [T]he always potentially performative utterances into aspects. This move from categorization to analysis of each term is representative of the move from a scientific to an analytical approach to culture. (2002: 178)

This shift in approach brings Bakri's film, as an audiovisual artifact, within the orbit of cultural analysis. What animates the interconnection between "performance" and "performativity," then, is the understanding of performance as an act of theatrical enactment that has at the same time the performative power to trigger new signifiers and meanings beyond the present act itself and through these, a change of identity. To this effect, following Bal's argument of the performative (2002: 176–78) and in an attempt to extend its analytical domain, in my analysis of *1948,* I bring the concepts of performance and performativity in their dialectic interaction to bear on the film's audiovisual storytelling of *al-Nakba* and exile. In so doing, I assume that both the modes and strategies through which acts of remembrance are (audiovisually) narrativized in a particular cultural setting reflect specific conceptions of political history and cultural memory of the past and turn these reflections into agents of performativity in the present. Hence, they set up the necessary grounds within which a different future can be envisioned.[5]

But *1948* is a film *with* a story to tell. In order to account for the narrative sequence within and through which performativity takes effect, I will employ the concept of "performance" to articulate what happens in a theatrical setting with a narratological device of, what Bal calls in her book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, "focalization" (1997: 142–60). Through focalization, stories of the everyday of Palestinian exile can be enacted and brought to the fore, as focalized, that is, perceived and interpreted rather than happening on the spur of the moment. I will show how *1948* is engaged in refocalizing the everyday experiences of Palestinian exile. The filmic narrative not only shows but also enacts those experiences. Thus, to delineate my itinerary,

I make an analytical move from the "aestheticism" of performance—as theater—to the performativity of aesthetics—as political activism in relation to the audiovisual storytelling of Palestinian exile—as the remembrance needed for the activism. Such a move is able to connect the aesthetic representation of *al-Nakba* with the ways this event continues to be lived in the present and makes an impact on the lives, identity, and agency of Palestinians. This helps us to understand what performance, in its connection to performativity, may add to the storytelling of Palestinian memory of the *al-Nakba* of 1948 in relation to its *mankoub* in the present. The term *mankoub* refers to the "catastrophed" subject. The question of how the stories of this catastrophed subject can be read as cultural imaginings in the everyday of exile will be the focus of my discussion in the final chapter of this book.

In what follows, I will discuss how *1948*'s audiovisual storytelling of *al-Nakba* and exile articulates Palestinian identity and cultural memory in terms of performance and performativity. In the first section, I will analyze the opening sequence of the film (the theatrical performance), and also reflect on what I mean by "performative narrativity." As I will attempt to show, the combinational construct of this specific mode of narrativity, between theatrical performance and the archival footage, produces narratological fragments both in images and voices that facilitate the construction of a present-oriented story of Palestinian loss of homeland. In this story, the historical enterprise of the catastrophic event (*al-Nakba*) rejects a dissociation of cause and effect. I will then move to the next parts of Bakri's film where Palestinian and Israeli voices join the storytelling. In my analysis of these parts, I argue that Bakri's film advances the idea that Palestinian loss of homeland and exile is inherently about what people, the Israelis, do to other people, the Palestinians. At stake here is the notion that *al-Nakba* is a thoroughly political event that has responsible agents behind it, not uncontrollable forces of nature, nor the effects of our uncontrollable aggressive and territorial genes.

Performative Narrativity: Exposing the Betrayal of Time

That we make ourselves intelligible to others through performative acts is hardly a novel argument. What needs to be underscored, however, is how our acts can narrate and account for catastrophic events and traumatic experiences such as that of the Palestinians' loss of homeland and exile. In this respect, what is remarkable about Bakri's *1948* is that it is primarily linked to *al-Nakba* through theatrical performance.

Unexpectedly, the film begins its storytelling of this catastrophe as a comedic play. Yet, *1948* is a documentary film.

The opening part of the film shows a theatrical play that was performed many times in Arabic and Hebrew to packed audiences over a number of years. In this performance, Bakri plays the role of the main character of Habibi's novel, Saeed Abi al-Nahs (*al-Mutasha'il*, The Pessoptimist), the unfortunate fool who after *al-Nakba* becomes a citizen of Israel. Saeed's story evokes the victimization and ensuing struggle of the Palestinians in Israel by means of a mix of fact and fantasy, tragedy and comedy. His is a story composed of fragments of loss and fortitude, aggression and resistance and affinity. In a series of tragic-comic episodes that reiterate the enactment of who he is, Saeed's stupidity, sincerity, and fear transform him gradually from an unfortunate and naive informer into a simple Palestinian man, who is victimized but determined to survive. Through the performative transformation of Saeed's identity, the film manages to make a trivial comedy stand in for catastrophic events.

At least for this viewer, the employment of comical performance in a documentary dedicated to catastrophic events solicited perplexity and attraction; both affects are in need of analysis. To make sense of Bakri's adaptation of comical performance in documentary cinema it is worth considering *1948*, similarly to Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un,* which I analyzed in the previous chapter, as an instance of audiovisual storytelling within a recent Palestinian cinematic tradition. This tradition reiterates, transfigures, and vindicates the multiple narratives of *al-Nakba* and the predicament of present exile. These cinematic instances often resort to various forms of narrative representation, including "open-endedness" as a technique of narrative closure that mimics the "ongoingness" (or the nonending) of Palestinian loss of homeland. Examples of this Palestinian cinematic tradition include other films such as Bakri's documentary film *Jenin, Jenin* (2002), Rashid Masharawi's *Curfew* (1994), Elia Suleiman's *Chronicle of Disappearance* (1996), Nizar Hassan's *Ostura* (1998), and Hani Abu Assad's *Ford Transit* (2002).[6]

In distinction from these films that are classically narrative, in *1948* narrative representation takes the form of a stage performance. This is particularly preeminent in the opening scene, in which the story of Saeed, *al-Mutasha'il*, is presented as a folk tale. In the opening shot of the film, while we see four images of Palestinian families during *al-Nakba* gradually filling up the screen, Saeed, on stage, begins recounting the story:

> Every folk tale begins: "once upon a time, long time ago [. . .]" Shall I tell the story, or go to sleep? I am Saeed (happy) Abi al-Nahs (the father

> of misfortune), *al-Mutasha'il* [The Pessoptimist], ID card No. 2222222. I was born during the days of the British. In other words, my father and Churchill were very close friends. But [when] Papa knew that Churchill did not intend to stay here [in Palestine] very long, Papa befriended Yaakove Safsarchik. Before he died, Papa told me: "If life is bad, Saeed, Safsarchik will fix things." So he fixed me.

Like a folk tale, Saeed's story is told many times over. It is as if Bakri sought to insist on the iterative nature of identity as well as on the narrative nature of performance. It is a story composed of a combination of optimism and pessimism: an episode of human suffering, survival, and hope, which cannot avoid contradiction. Such a contradiction is bound to identity as early the character's name, which jams happiness "Saeed" and misfortune "Nahs." The combination of contradictory elements is precisely what makes him *al-Mutasha'il*.

Besides his name, Saeed identifies himself by an identity card number given to him by the state of Israel. In order to explain how he was given this number after *al-Nakba*, Saeed recounts the past in terms of its "official" history, consisting of documented historical facts. In the film, this can be seen in the audiovisual shift from the present of the performance to the past of archival footage. The moment Saeed begins recounting "the days of the British," we see archival footage of the British forces during their mandate in Palestine. At the point that the voice reaches "Yaakove Safsarchik"—based on the Hebrew word *Safsar*, for "illegal peddler" or "black marketer"—we see archival footage of Ben Gurion and his wife on the occasion of the transfer of power from the British mandatory forces to the Zionist movement in Palestine. This scene ends with the British flag lowered, and the Israeli flag being hoisted on the same pole. This is precisely how the Zionist "Yaakove Safsarchik" betrayed Saeed in the past, and "fixed" him with an insignificant number. The insignificance of this number, "2222222," can be interpreted in its senseless repetition of the number "2," suggesting second-class citizenry.[7]

At one level, the film's straightforward approach to history through its use of archival material has the benefit of allowing the viewer to understand the story of the speaking subject, Saeed, as the fable of the betrayed Palestinian whose father trusted the false promises of the British and the Zionists. This approach, however, does not suffice when it comes to explaining the complexity of the betrayal that Palestinians endure beyond the historical event of *al-Nakba*. The archival footage of *al-Nakba* does not provide information about the effects of that event

on the Palestinians in terms of their subjectivity. This is why there is a need to supplement the shift that the film takes from performance (present) to history (past) with another shift back to performance.

That shift can be seen in the following scene, in which the viewer is drawn back to the stage performance. The moment the flag of Israel is hoisted on the pole, Saeed's voice reenters the stage to continue the recounting of the story:

> My life in Israel began with a miracle. During the incidents [...] of 1947, I travelled to Acre with my father, by donkey. That is our national Mercedes. When we reached the railroad tracks, boom! We heard shots. Papa was hit and killed. I got off the donkey and hid behind it. The donkey was shot dead and I was saved. I owe my life in Israel to a donkey.

The shift to stage performance is primarily audiovisual but also conceptual and temporal in that it enables the viewer to see the catastrophe of Palestinians from a different angle than in the archival film footage in two ways. First, what is most notable in Saeed's performance of *al-Nakba* is his description of this event not as *al-Nakba* of 1948, but as "the incidents [...] of 1947." For Saeed, *al-Nakba* is not so much a singular event but rather a series of fragmented incidents that occupy different temporal moments. Saeed's catastrophe is grounded in that incident he experienced while traveling with his father in 1947. For Saeed, there are many *Nakbas*, temporal variations of "the" event. As such, the concept of *al-Nakba* does not appear as limited neatly to the year 1948. This may seem like a minor point, but it is relevant for the issue of the singularity of (catastrophic) events in relation to subjective experiences and cultural enactments of these events—when do you exactly mark *al-Nakba*? On the one hand, there seems to be a vaguely collective date (May 15, 1948), which demarcates the establishment of Israel, but that fixed date is utterly dependent on the Israeli/Zionist timeline and narrative. According to Saeed's performance, actual commemorations of *al-Nakba* also happen at different moments and dates. This conceptualization not only repudiates the singularity of the catastrophic event, but also reflects and delineates different collectives or subcollectives of memory. For example, a particular village commemorates "its" *Nakba* on the day on which the inhabitants experienced the fall of their own village.

The second way in which the temporal shift is conceptual touches on performance in the strict sense. Whereas the archival footage only represents *al-Nakba* on the political level—the transfer of power in Palestine to a single ethnic minority while depriving the ethnic

majority—on stage, Saeed performs the catastrophe as a violent event that entails death and victimization. Hence, logically, he should be dead. Therefore, Saeed describes his existence in Israel after *al-Nakba* as a "miracle." Saeed's use of "miracle" is important in relation to his survival. While "miracle" signifies an event that is inexplicable by the laws of nature and held to be the result of a supernatural act that therefore generates wonder, in Saeed's case the miracle of surviving *al-Nakba* and living in Israel is attributed to a donkey. By attributing his survival to a donkey, Saeed not only fuses his survival of the catastrophe with the intervention of an insignificant power, but also reduces the value of his life in Israel after *al-Nakba* as similarly insignificant, just like his savior the donkey. This is an instance of performative narrativity. In the storytelling of his miraculous survival, Saeed performs his second-class identity.

As a performance with a performativity effect, Saeed's description of his survival and life in Israel after *al-Nakba* engenders a feeling, not of wonder, but of amusement. This sense of humor, however, is problematic because of its connection to a tragic memory, the death of his father. The result of such a tragicomic composition is that humor in the film does finally arrive, but always a little too late. In the above scene, for example, we hear the audiences of the stage performance in the film laughing at Saeed's description of the donkey as "our national Mercedes." Yet, the laughter equally expected at Saeed's description of the donkey as a savior is not heard and remains absent. Presumably, the idea follows on the heels of the story of his father's death in a chronology that is not comical at all. Humor in *1948* not only serves as a trigger of laughter but also of the impossibility of laughter. Through its contradictory effects, humor is, then, put at the service of the present reality of exile: it adheres to the everyday life of the exiled subject, yet also puts forward a vision of an alternative reality. In order for that alternative vision to materialize, however, the viewer is required to pay attention to the fragmented narrativity drifting between role-playing (performance) and archival footage (official history). This is what I will be referring to in this chapter as "performative narrativity."

In the previous chapter, in my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un*, I called that film's storytelling "exilic narrativity." Exilic narrativity, as I argued there, presents a fragmented narrative sequence in terms of place, memory, self and other through a plurality of voices. Moreover, this narrativity articulates Palestinian exilic space and time as an experiential "truth" by means of a mode of audiovisual storytelling that drifts between fictional and documentary images and voices. The affective results of this

drifting storytelling destabilize the binary opposition between "fiction" and "documentary" with regard to "truthful" representation. Accordingly, this type of storytelling facilitates the travelling of the narrative between the present of the (re)telling of the (fictional) stories of *al-Nakba* and the (documented) past happening of the event itself.

Here, I focus on the relationship such exilic narrativity establishes with performance in order to promote the performativity that allows change to occur. Exilic narrativity not only signifies the storytelling of catastrophe that conforms with the mental workings of memory and its temporality against linear time, but, if it manages to be performative, also enacts and triggers the cultural shift, which the narrative itself seeks to achieve: from "official history" to a theorization of catastrophe and exile that we can "live" and understand at the same time. The exilic narrativity of *al-Nakba* consists of the telling of a story wherein the historical past (archives) collides with its present (fictional) retelling in exile up to the point where it can affect the identity of "we."

Bakri's film is emblematic for this potential because it presents a mode of audiovisual storytelling, which drifts between performance and archival footage. "Performative narrativity," as particularly powerful mode of exilic narrativity, deploys a fragmentary narrative composed from a plurality of narrative voices. However, the specificity of performative narrativity, as a form of exilic narrativity, I contend, is determined by a specific, complex sense of temporality. The employment of bodily engagement in *1948*'s audiovisual storytelling through explicit role-playing engenders Palestinian narratives of *al-Nakba* as acts of "re-reading." I use the term "re-reading" as discussed by Inge Boer. In her book, *Disorienting Vision*, Boer argues that "re-reading" is a temporal process of discovery, which is itself "part and parcel of the act of reflecting on the relation that operate between a reader and a text or a viewer and an image. This process runs parallel to strategies of interpreting context" (2004a: 19). In other words, re-reading is an interactive process that is explicit about both the practice of interpretation and its political pertinence in the context of the present. In *1948*, the acts of re-reading are triggered by the performance of the storytelling on stage. Since this telling takes the form of a folk tale, it harks back to unspecified ancient times. Narrating a subjective *Nakba* event, it also brings in the historical past. On the stage, the audience is interpellated with a humor that cuts off the laughter it triggers. In the movie theater, finally, the viewers, who are, likely to have seen or heard of the successful stage performance, are confronted with these three temporalities and the strong tragic-comic confusion in the present.

By focusing on the temporality of storytelling between theatrical performance and archival footage in *1948*, I am practicing a re-reading of the film in this sense. Through this re-reading, I seek to demonstrate an important specificity in relation to exilic narrativity. There, the temporal referentiality of the fictional story is determined by the documented past of its event. In performative narrativity, due to the drifting between performance and archive, the referential scope of narrative broadens beyond the film's temporal limits. As a result, it reenacts the *mankoub* subject that characterizes the catastrophed subject in ongoing exile. This reenactment involves the viewer affectively.

This affect does not emerge from theatrical performance as a vehicle of representation as such. Rather, it emerges from that performance's ability to influence our sensory and perceptional concept of the systems "archive." Through performativity, the archival footage in the narrative becomes iterable: repeated and changed in a different frame. This performativity sharpens our notions of memory. Thus, the ontological status of cultural events in terms of their past happening and of the way they are experienced and memorized in the present is at stake in performative narrativity. Hence, the performativity of theatrical performance in *1948* not only lies in its mode of being, as Bal succinctly puts it, as "something that hovers between thing and event," but in the fact that it performs an act that produces a new event (2002: 176).

In our case, *1948* produces a narrative event in which the proliferation of the audiovisual invades the perceptual field of the viewer. Like the figure of Saeed, the viewer is caught by contradictions. When confronted with impossible laughter, the viewer is just perplexed: unable to deal with a laughter that is contextualized—it is felt and has all the required elements for it to come about—yet remains disembodied; that is, laughter does not manifest itself bodily. On one level, in its presentation of a contextualized yet disembodied humor, the film seems to conform with Henri Bergson's conceptualization of laughter based on the principle of "exploitation and utilization" (1956: 180). In accordance with this principle, and distinct from Freud, for example, who believes that laughter and jokes are "fundamentally cathartic: a release, not stimulant," Bergson decisively argues that "laughter is, above all, a corrective, and a means of correction" (1956: 185).[8] As such, beyond its effect of relaxation and amusement, laughter, for Bergson, carries with it a need to correct a situation of missing the mark.

The impossible laughter in *1948*, I wish to argue is "corrective." The laughter is no longer the known laughter, the sign of humor, when detached from its bodily manifestation. This disembodiment of

laughter, through its absence in the film, generates a sense of alienation through which the viewer's question shifts. From how images of the film tell a predetermined folk tale, the viewer now wonders what story the filmic representation produces. Thus, the viewer's attention moves away from the internal audiovisual structures of the known story of *al-Nakba* to its narrative pragmatics; hence, opening up the temporal and contextual realms of the story and the event it recounts. Seen in this light, the impossibility of laughter in the film triggers a thought: a primary step made by the viewer toward the awareness and preparedness to deal with a different and more serious exilic reality. At the heart of this thought, impossible laughter emerges as an adequate marker of the problematic relationship between official history and the ways in which this is performed and experienced in the present by the people whose identity is at stake in the act of viewing.

Audiovisually, the film corresponds to this performative narrativity when, at the moment Saeed utters the words "I owe my life [. . .] to a donkey," once more the viewer observes archival material of the war of 1948. While the title of the film *1948* pops up on the screen in the shape of a burning flame, images of the fighting in the year of 1948 are presented in the background. This return to archival historicism connects Saeed's performance in the film, through the impossibility of its laughter, with the alternative to humor—historical evidence. This connection turns Saeed's performance into a method of decoding the historicity of the event (the betrayal that *al-Nakba* was), while at the same time encoding its (tragic) memory in and through the present betrayal of that past. In Saeed's performance, the viewer is constantly teased into laughter, only to realize that this laughter is a shield behind which tragedy lurks.

The shift from history to performance and back that the film undertakes enables us to see not only how performance keeps alive the memory of catastrophe but also how this memory dwells in the present of the exiled subject. This effect emerges from the fact that what is enacted in Saeed's performance is not the event of *al-Nakba* itself; rather, it is the subject's experience of this event. In this sense, the film's approach to *al-Nakba* becomes emphatically subjective. Through this approach we are lured into the history of *al-Nakba*, but we are also positioned as the subjects of that exile itself. Confronted with the impossibility of our laughter, together with Saeed (*al-Mutasha'il*, The Pessoptimist), we come to live *al-Nakba* in our reality.

What characterizes *1948*, then, is a mode of audiovisual storytelling in which the past happening of *al-Nakba* and the present experience of its subjects, through memory, become locked together. The viewer may

desire to break loose but is unable to do so at the moment as a consequence of enactment. In this sense, performative narrativity, drifting between performance and archives, becomes bound up with a temporal movement that displaces the narrative of *al-Nakba* from its historical past of 1948 in order to reframe it in today's experience of Palestinian exile: 50 years later in 1998; more, at the moment of cinematic viewing later, in this case 64 years later in 2012. This narrative and reframing, wherein the past and the present of the event are conjoined in the same ontological domain, causes the viewer to be caught in a feeling of "ontological vertigo" by which his or her temporal distinction between the "real" and the imaginative become disordered.[9] As a result, narrative events do occur; they are constantly evoked by the fragments of performance and archival images and voices through which the verisimilitude of the narrative itself becomes inextricably connected with the language of the past and its memory, as externally enacted by the body in the present. Hence, a performative mode of audiovisual storytelling occurs, wherein showing and enactment interlock and thus produce the referentiality of the narrative of Palestinian catastrophe. This referentiality is determined, not by the historical past, but by the political-cultural actuality of its exilic subjects.

In *1948*, this happens by marking off time, then setting up relations through the impossibility of laughter between archival footage and Saeed's act. Thereby the film uncovers meaningful designs of temporal series through which the past event and the experience of the Palestinian subject can be connected in exile, but without merging. This is how the film's performative narrativity becomes a reenactment wherein the movements of mind and body affiliate. As a result, the viewer of the film becomes conscious not only of what was and is no more but also of what was and is living on. In this sense, to reenact what is living through performance becomes a narratological strategy that does not aim at unveiling the past but rather at performing and transmitting the present. In other words, performance in the film both keeps alive the memory of *al-Nakba*, but also turns the event itself into an index that stands in a causal relationship with the presence of Palestinian exile.

Through such indexicality, both *al-Nakba* and its present exiled subject are utilized in the film as drifting between mediums—between the stage and the archive. This drifting, as a result, produces narratological fragments that compose a present-oriented story—not only of where we were, but also where we are now. The beginning of this story in *1948*, however, does not attend to a shadow world: it is not alluding to comical tragedies in the vein of dark humor. Instead, the employment of tragic-comic episodes in *1948* represents a beginning that is deliberately insensitive.

In relation to *al-Nakba*, the performative aspects of re-reading this narratological insensitivity establish a relation between the conceptualization of the catastrophe (as an event both in time and space) and the conceptualization of Palestinian subjectivity as an actuality constructed in the past of a subjectively lived *Nakba*, yet ultimately performed and lived in the present of exile. Performative narrativity, then, conjugates *al-Nakba* to the experience of the *mankoub* subject.

In the opening scenes of *1948*, the combinational construct of performative narrativity between performance and archival footage appears to authorize the historical enterprise of the catastrophic event itself in all its forms; as meaningful representations of a fragmented Palestinian subjectivity in the present. Precisely through this historical authorization, the catastrophic event—regardless of the form of its representation in the narrative (here, performance and archives)—rejects a dissociation of cause and effect. In *1948* the telling of *al-Nakba* as a folk tale "every folk tale begins [. . .]" offers a perfect example of this conceptualization. On the one hand, the folk tale suggests the inevitability of narrativization—more than half a century later, *al-Nakba* has already become a story. On the other, the tale ironically warns against the risk that the catastrophe becomes temporally distant as the contents of a folk or fairy tale. Hence, it strives to *prevent* recent political history of Palestinian exile from becoming irrelevant history; just another fable among many.

At work here is not a trivialization of folk tales, but instead a narrative movement from *legend* set in a historical setting to *folk tale* as a story not told as true, but told as pedagogy. While the miracle and the donkey are part of the genre of folk tale, precise dating, "1947," and the "national Mercedes" are not. Through Saeed's theatrical performance, especially in its progression through several repetitive acts, this story of *al-Nakba*, then, is a recent, in fact contemporary, ongoing story. It is a story that works through the problem of becoming a Palestinian subject; a desire gone wrong in the past that needs to be corrected in the present. This story of *al-Nakba*, however, is not a unified whole. Instead, like the memory of its catastrophed subjects, it is a fragmented narrative consisting of multiple personal stories. This can be seen later on in the scenes following the opening of *1948* wherein audiovisual storytelling of *al-Nakba* drifts yet again once more: this time between personal (oral) narratives and theatrical performance.

Exile of Body and Mind

Unlike the opening of *1948*, most of the scenes later on in the film are personal interviews conducted in 1998. Story after story is recounted,

interrupted by Bakri (the performer) on stage, who interprets and comments on the tales. The interviewees represent the first and second generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians. Their stories are arranged in a temporal sequence that takes the viewer on a journey covering the period between 1948 and 1998. The dominant characteristic of these stories is the emphasis on the violent nature of the event of *al-Nakba* and on the exile that followed 1948 and continues to exist in the present. Massacres, forced expulsion, and loss of home are the main issues of these stories, particularly the *massacre of Deir Yassin*. This massacre refers to the killing of scores of Palestinian peasants in the village of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, during the British Mandate of Palestine by Jewish military forces, Irgun and Stern groups, between April 9–11, 1948.[10]

The following sequence of stories is a typical example of the alternation of interviews, archival images and the performance on the stage. As the archival images of the fighting of 1948 fade away, the camera moves from the flag of Israel to an elderly woman crying, identified on the screen as Um Saleh from Deir Yassin. Together with her grandson, she is standing on a hill overlooking a house on which the flag of Israel hangs. Looking at the house, Um Saleh begins to lament what used to be her house by chanting:

> I kept calling [. . .] O Papa, until my head spun. There was no sound, no response. They were deaf and couldn't hear me. One of the floor's tiles answered me: "Go, light of my life. Destiny is thy bridegroom and absence will be long."

Both the traditional form of lamentation and the presence of the grandson give Um Saleh's chanting a theatrical feel. She seems to put up a performance: an act of singing. This is reinforced by the grandson's position as audience. Yet, Um Saleh's act is specifically "theatrical" as well. She also "plays," putting on an act of loss and belonging. This act manifests immediately after the singing as Um Saleh recounts the story of how she lost 30 members of her family during the *massacre of Deir Yassin*. With the flag of Israel hanging on her lost house as the backdrop, the decor on the stage, serving as a historical remainder, Um Saleh describes how her grandson feels sorry for her whenever she cries:

> [This] child starts pampering me when he sees me crying [. . .] Thirty of my relatives fell in Deir Yassin. Thirty people! My grandfather [. . .] was the Mukhtar [head of the village]. When he saw them killing his children, he slapped a Jew who said: "We are not slaughtering you. The British are." We Arabs, masters of our fate, became subservient to the

> Jews. After the injustice of Deir Yassin, 400 villages were erased. Had ten people came to our aid, Deir Yassin would have been saved.

Since the boy is both the audience of the performance and the object of the story, the temporal merging of past and present is enacted in the merging of play and story. Moreover, Um Saleh's story, and numerous ones like it, set up the historical and political framework of *al-Nakba*. The old women thus performs the intergenerational transmission of its narrative to the child, hence the present. This transmission inflects the position of the grandson as an audience into that of a new generation who "inherits" the grief and the loss of place.[11] On a historical level, Um Saleh's story emphatically lays the political responsibility for the loss of Palestine with the British, whose intention of doing justice to the world's Jewry in the aftermath of the Holocaust brought injustice and victimization on the Palestinians, so that the Palestinians became "victims" of the "victims": they "became subservient to the Jews."

For my purposes, it is more important to understand how Um Saleh works this historical claim from past fact to enduring state. Um Saleh's conception of *al-Nakba*, similarly to Saeed's in the theatrical performance in the opening of *1948*, is localized: her catastrophe is the loss of her home and family during the Deir Yassin Massacre. Um Saleh's loss is tempered with a longing for solidarity that does not come, "kept calling [. . .] They were deaf [. . .]" and "Had ten people came to our aid [. . .]." It is also performed as subjective, since the song enacts a tormented experience of exile wherein a long absence is constantly reproduced, "destiny is thy bridegroom and absence will be long." The personification of absence as the offspring of a personal relationship (marriage) between the subject and her destiny ("bridegroom") gives shape to this subjective slant of her focalization. It weaves a symbolic net that not only allows for the interpretation of the absence of, and from, home as a dispossession aimed at both body and mind, but it also connects the expulsion of Um Saleh in the past to her living experience in the present. Only on that condition of that mixed temporality can she affect the grandson with that subjectivity. The theatricality stands for this temporality.

Hence, the presence of the grandson in the scene performs this connection between the past and the present. As a listener to the story, his presence not only signifies the iterability of the act and the cultural dynamics of transmission through oral narratives but also the generational distance between Um Saleh's actual experience of the event and her act of telling. As a result, the temporal structure of Um Saleh's story

Figure 4.1 Um Saleh, together with her grandson, laments her house on which the flag of Israel hangs

blends its reenactment in the present of the film. The grandmother and the child are both involved in the act that produces the illocutionary force of telling. The acceptance of their mutual roles facilitates the felicity of the act: the grandmother tells and cries, and the grandson pampers her in agreement. The question of narrative duration in *1948* as such becomes moot at this point. Instead, the blend allows for a narrative focalization of the way *al-Nakba* is lived in the body and mind of its subjects. Through this focalization, the expulsion and separation of, and from home, become geographical, historical, and personal all at once. And all this, presumably, for the film's viewer, who is offered the position of the child for partial identification.

This can be observed at the end of Um Saleh's account when the scope of the narrative widens to the outside of the subjective realm, only to return to it again. As Um Saleh's crying voice slowly fades away, images of popular demonstrations held in commemoration of *al-Nakba* enter the screen. The demonstrators' voices overtake hers as they shout repeatedly: "Calamity day: through our resolve, the right of return will not die [. . .]." The "right of return" that the demonstrators call for

represents the main political demand of the Palestinian people for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This narrative movement to the exterior of Um Saleh's personal narrative transforms the private event of her loss of home into a public one. This move from private to public gives political relevance to the notion of "returning," but also forces a questioning of what it means to "return." What or who returns? To where and when?

To answer these questions, the film audiovisually *returns* to the personal narratives. The next story is that of Taha Ali Mohammed. Taha speaks of what the loss of his village (Saffouria) and "return" to it means to him:

> Saffouria is a mysterious symbol. My longing for it is not a yearning for stone and paths alone, but for a mysterious blend of feelings, relatives, peoples, animals, birds, brooks, stories, and deeds [...] When I visit Saffouria I become excited and burst into crying, but when I think about Saffouria the picture that forms in my mind is virtually imaginary, mysterious, hard to explain [...].

Taha's words present a classical case of nostalgic yearning for the remainder of a destroyed place. As I argued in Chapter 1, in Palestinian exile nostalgia does not necessarily appear as sentimental or escapist. Instead, as a productive concept, nostalgia functions as a cultural response to the loss of homeland in exile and, thus, facilitates detailing notions of Palestinian cultural memory and identification with Palestine as their homeland.

In Taha's narrative, this productive impulse of nostalgia can be seen in the fact that his longing for the past and for what has been lost does not represent a return to an idealized past: "my longing is not a yearning for stone [...]." For Taha, what was lost were not just houses, stones, and paths, but a whole life: the country, the people, and their entire existence. The return to the lost home is constituted in the difference between "visiting" the place and "thinking" it. While his visit to the material site (the ruins of his village) evokes an emotional flux and tears, Taha's thinking of Saffouria engenders a "mysterious" picture in his mind. Thus, Taha's cultural identification and belonging appear grounded in the difference between "seeing" the place and interiorizing it, through which the material image of the lost home is transformed into a mental one.

This mental image is inexplicable: "hard to explain [...]." On the one hand, Taha's failure to articulate this mental image is the

performative moment in the narrative at which his tragedy of loss of home is qualified as larger than the individual, hence collective and for that reason, not "fitting" in his individual mind. On the other hand, through the inexplicability of the mental image, Taha's belonging to the lost place does not appear as a material belonging—not as a matter of "having and having not." Rather, Taha's belonging to his lost home appears as an enigma: a very personal sense that gives off an awareness of a specific knowledge of the self that cannot be expressed discursively, like an exotic and unnamable scent. The subjectivity of the enduring loss (of place) is again foregrounded. For Taha, this narrative confirms Palestinians' collective conceptions of the "right of return" as a return to a whole life, not just to a place. In a later scene of the film, when asked by Bakri whether he would accept a compensatory return to his lost village (Saffouria), Taha immediately answers: "No. Who told you I want to return to Saffouria? Saffouria is a symbol for me."

In this part of *1948*, the movement of storytelling from the interior psyche (Um Saleh's story) to the public exterior (demonstrations) and back again (Taha's story) performs the process of becoming—in other words, of a dynamic identity—in terms of cultural memory. This wavering narrativity not only puts forward a political statement about the Palestinian loss of homeland and their "right of return" as the self demanding a return to itself, but also, I contend, exemplifies the idea of cultural memory, to borrow Bal's conceptualization of the term, as an act of citationality that "establishes memorial links beyond personal contiguity" (1999a: 218).[12] Through the resulting intertemporality of memory, becoming can be viewed as a process based on interaction between the individual subject and collective, cultural, and politic milieu, including that milieu's history.

This process enables the discovery of a unique and irreplaceable position, a topographical one, with respect to exile. This movement inside and outside personal narratives not only frames Um Saleh's and Taha's narratives within contemporary political context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but also exposes Palestinian cultural memory and identity as contextually embedded within a past loss of homeland that invariably interferes in the present of exile. As such, the storytelling of *1948* not only deals with the temporality of the past within the present but also with the spatial and the generational distance between the lost home and the exilic subject in the sense of the "there" in, and for, the "here." At the heart of this figuration of Palestinian identity in *1948* is, then, a topographical position that maintains the notion that "there is no travel without a return" by which the past narrative of *al-Nakba* is

cognitively and spatially grounded in the present of the exilic subject. This figuration is performed in the storytelling acts of Um Saleh and Taha. In *1948*, however, this topographical positioning does constitute a point of arrival for Bakri's film, but also a point of departure for another kind of journey, a return trip to the subjective realm of narrative not of the Palestinian self but of its Israeli "other."

Performing Palestinian and Israeli "We" in the "Aftermath"

As I already indicated, Bakri's theatrical play was performed many times in Arabic and Hebrew to packed audiences (Palestinians and Israelis) over a number of years. In keeping up with this mixing, *1948* brings in Israeli narratives of this event. In the next scene, as the camera slowly moves away from Taha standing near the ruins of his destroyed village, a voice over comes in saying: "Saffouria endangered the Israeli army, the IDF [. . .]." Slowly, the face of an elderly man, identified as Dov Yirmiya, sitting with his grandson in the courtyard of his house, enters on the screen. Speaking Arabic with an Israeli accent, Dov tells the story of how he was responsible for conquering Taha's village (Saffouria) as IDF officer: "One battalion went to Illout and I led my platoon to Saffouria. I was ordered to conquer it and I did [. . .]."

Audiovisually, Dov's story is connected to the stories of Um Saleh and Taha. The setting of Dov with his grandson inside his house is symbolically charged. It echoes the scene of Um Saleh and her grandson standing outside her house, in exile from it. This not only reminds the viewer of the generational distance and the oral dynamic of narrative transmission, but it also sharply contrasts their respective positions: Um Saleh in nonplace (not-home or exile), Dov in place (in Um Saleh's home). Narratively and historically, through his confession of conquering Saffouria—"I did [it]"—Dov becomes the perpetrator of Taha's catastrophe. As the perpetrator, Dov's presence in the film concretizes Taha's loss as well as his allegorical "return" to the lost home. Through Dov's confession, Taha's loss of place and the "right of return" are given a specific historical context: the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 as the origin of Palestinian exile in the film's present. Most importantly, on a political level, Dov's narrative relates to the issue of negation of *al-Nakba*. His confession of conquering Saffouria emphatically deviates from official Zionist history that denies that *al-Nakba* took place.[13]

Through the employment of multiple personal narratives of both self and other, the movement of audiovisual storytelling in *1948*, brings

together different visions and voices playing off against each other without the need to reconcile them but to hold them together—the "Palestinian self" as victimized and the "Israeli other" as a perpetrator. They need each other as in a Hegelian dialectic.[14] Additionally, the film practices a narrativity that runs through the singular form according to the convention that several voices must at different moments claim the position of the main character in the narrative of *al-Nakba*. In the first and second chapters of this study, I pointed out a similar narrative strategy that takes place in the narratives of first and second generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians in exile. In *1948*, this feature facilitates a polyvocal storytelling of the catastrophe that expresses feelings and aspirations of several people, in order to suggest that the voices of the Palestinian self and the Israeli other are each answerable to the other. This answerability can be seen to be performed in the audiovisual shift the film makes from the realm of personal memories to the theatrical and the public stage where self and other are brought, not into opposition, but into dialogue. In *1948*, this dialogic relationship is grounded in specific conflicted, yet inherently *uneven*, discourses of memory, in which Palestinian and Israeli voices speak *of* and *in* "the aftermath" of *al-Nakba*. I shall return to the "unevenness" of Palestinian and Israeli discourses of memory in the next section of this chapter.

After Dov's story, the viewer encounters one more personal narrative. Her eyes looking straight into the camera, as if talking not to the interviewer but to the viewer, an elderly woman, identified as Zahariya Assad from Deir Yassin, begins her story with the words: "One thing made me cry the day we left our village, never allowed to return [. . .]." The emphasis in Zahariya's story is on exile occurring in a nonplace. Her story can be summarized as follows; then Zahariya was 15 years old, the wife of her elder brother was killed during the *massacre of Deir Yassin*, leaving behind two baby girls. Zahariya takes care of the babies. After fleeing her village during the massacre, carrying with her the two baby girls, she ends up in an empty and strange place, without knowing how to support the girls. Following directly on Dov's confession, the significance of this story lies primarily in its focalization of the catastrophic moment not in Dov's act itself (his conquering as a contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel), but in the aftermath of this act: being stranded in a nonplace (exile). What makes Zahariya cry is not that she must care for two babies with no means of survival, but, as she put it, that she is "never allowed to return to her home."

The aftermath—it is this retroactive recall of the past that causes tears. This "preposterous temporality" of the catastrophic moment,

the aftermath of *al-Nakba*, serves as the starting point for a renewed (theatrical) dialogue between the voices of self and other.[15] After Zahariya's story, the screen, in the form of a book page, opens the theatrical stage. On stage, Saeed Abi al-Nahs, as if entering from afar, appears once more to complete his story, left off in the opening scenes:

> I swear that when this great misfortune befell us in 1948, my family was scattered throughout Arab countries, bordering Israel that Israel had not yet conquered. But the day will come. When my father and the donkey were shot dead [. . .], I set sail for Acre, by sea. The great sea, whose foamy waves are like mountains. Its shores are bullets and treachery, with refugee boats to the end of the horizon. The sea is great and treacherous and our cousins too, including infants, are drowning, drowning.

Saeed describes *al-Nakba* as the "great misfortune" of 1948. In contrast to the opening scenes wherein the catastrophic moment is specified as "the incidents of 1947," Saeed's expression here follows the public dating of the event. In so doing, *al-Nakba* becomes no longer the private catastrophe of the individual subject, but the larger collective one: the scattering of his family and his people in exile. Many small incidents in 1947 together add up to the collective catastrophe of 1948. *Al-Nakba*, thus, appears as both utterly individual—it happened to each village or Palestinian—and collective—it targeted the Palestinians as a people and a nation—at the same time.

With respect to the notions of "self" and "other," Saeed's swearing gives his performative act a sense of sincerity.[16] But since the act takes place in public as well as expands to others, it transforms his performance into an act of testimony.[17] Saeed's performance reiterates a story of loss and dispersal that is similar to the ones we already saw. Hence, Saeed takes responsibility for the film's subjects through his retelling of their losses. Like in a courtroom, Saeed's act on stage embodies the aesthetic capacity both to reiterate the personal narratives and to "take their stand." The similarity among the experiences of loss, expressed at the beginning of his statement "I swear [. . .]," threatens the binary division of the self as victimized and the other as perpetrator. Yet, Saeed's description of the "great and treacherous" sea prevents this categorization. In the sea both the exilic (victimized) self and its (perpetrator) other perish equally: "the sea is great and our cousins too, including infants, are drowning, drowning." In this sentence, the term "our cousins" is key. Palestinians commonly use this phrase in reference to the Jews. The term signifies the Biblical relationship between both

peoples as descendants from Isaac and Ishmael (the two half brothers), the sons of Abraham.[18] For Saeed, "our cousins" are drowning with us in the sea of conflict. His description, through referring to the Israel/Jewish other as "cousins," moves away from oppositional politics and constitutes both self and other as a relationship between relatives. This is a performative politics of "we."

On the level of narrative language, this conceptualization of self and other is effective in that it makes place for personal memories that confound official history and at the same time return to that history what often escapes it—the catastrophic in the present. Thus, the narrativity of *al-Nakba* between personal memories and historical performance in *1948* establishes an equitable and dialogic relationship between the Palestinian self and its Israeli/Jewish other that is based on the unraveling of official Zionist history. This corrective stipulates that official history is bad, not in its essence—which would be a tautology—but rather in its application. In her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that the reexamination of colonial discourse does not necessitate discarding previous versions of history or truth but challenges the notion that anyone is privileged to have access to the truth (1999: 21–25). In light of Spivak's critique, I wish to argue that in *1948* the distrust in official history's capacity to express the memories of *al-Nakba* leads to a retelling of the past that challenges the notion that anyone has privileged access to historical truth. As I pointed out in my analysis of *1948* thus far, this challenge most clearly manifests itself in Dov's confession of conquering Saffouria, which sharply contradicts official Zionist historicity of *al-Nakba*.

The performative narrativity of the film, then, constructs an alternative knowledge of the loss of homeland. This alternative knowledge both activates the referentiality of the narrative of *al-Nakba* as present-oriented, and politicizes its aesthetic experience. Thus, the film's narrative becomes a political performance that appeals to the audience to acknowledge and experience the actuality of Palestinians' loss of homeland and exile as ongoing. The appeal also extends the audience to include victims and perpetrators as co-dependent—as "cousins." What animates this appeal is not just a disagreement about what happened in the past, but also the issue of whether the catastrophe is really over, or continues in the present, albeit in different form. In the closing part of the film, the movement of audiovisual storytelling bears this out. Immediately after Saeed's performance of the metaphor of the sea, the viewer encounters more personal stories of both self and other, but from a more recent point of view. Thus, the performative narrativity of the

film is a mode of telling that, as I will attempt to show in the remainder of this chapter, explores the causes and effects of the narrative, but also attempts to bring this narrative closer to resolution.

The Everyday: Self, Others, and Exile

The final sequence of Bakri's *1948* performs the conflicted, yet co-dependent "we" most directly. It opens with a close-up of Bakri outside the theatrical stage: we see him interviewing, listening to stories, and wondering between the ruins and the cactus trees. In one of these scenes, Bakri interviews a man, identified as Abu Adel from Dawaima. Abu Adel describes how the people from his village fled their homes during the Israeli army's invasion in 1948 in which "400–500 men, women, and children were killed then." The moment Abu Adel utters these words, a voiceover in Hebrew says: "It was a slaughter planned by IDF." In the next shot, the speaker—a man sitting in his garden—is identified as Amos Keinan. Amos continues the story and says:

> It was not the Irgun, Stern Group or the Hagana. It was the army. You won't find this in the official [Israeli] history books. But those who have to, know it. I, for one, have to know. I knew it back in 1948 [. . .].

Amos's narrative exposes the violent nature of the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948. His narrative also harks back to Dov's narrative in that it lays the responsibility for *al-Nakba* on the Israeli army (IDF). Most importantly, his narrative emphatically shows the gaps of official Zionist history of *al-Nakba*: "you won't find it in official history books." This congruity between Amos's and Dov's narratives further coalesces the idea of a co-dependent self and other. Through this consistency of their narratives, both Amos and Dov are focalized as Israeli/Jewish voices who confirm the stories of Palestinians and at the same time accept responsibility for *al-Nakba*.

However, the conceptualization of a "responsible other" appears problematic as soon as Amos finishes his narrative. In the following scene we see Abu Adel leading Bakri to the place where his lost village (Dawaima) once stood. While both men wander among the ruins, they come across a Jewish house where they meet a man and his son who is carrying a gun on his waist.

When Bakri asks the father—identified as David, a resident of Moshav Zecharia—"You live in an Arab village. Today, it's a Jewish locality. Are you comfortable living in a house that was not yours?" David, taken by the question and after some hesitation, answers with

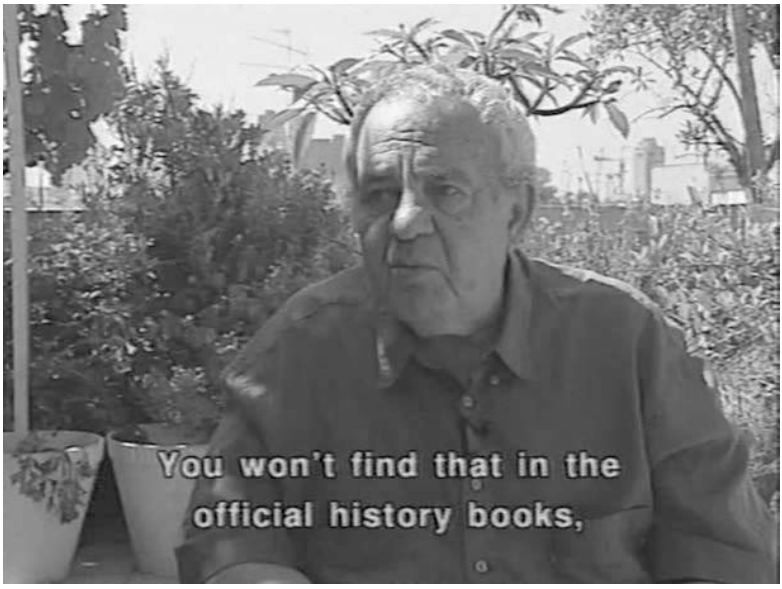

Figure 4.2 Amos Keinan testifies

Figure 4.3 Abu Adel and Bakri meet David and his son who is carrying a gun on his waist

a question: "What can I say, yes or no?" While David remains silent, still unable to come up with an answer, Bakri says: "That means you understand the pain of a person who [. . .]." Before completing the sentence, David rushes in and replies: "I understand it very well." The moment David finishes his sentence, his son—identified as David's son from Moshav Zecharia—interferes in the discussion, so that a dialogue between them starts:

I was born here and this is my place. I don't look at whoever was here before me. Nothing. This land was given to the Jews thousands of years ago, and it's ours.

At this moment, David comes in completing his son's words and comparing his own immigration from Iraq to the loss of home that Palestinians experienced:

> Whether we're comfortable with it or not. We were also hurt when they threw us out of our homes. They did not use force to throw us out and they did not say: "Get out of here!" I know that the State of Israel made a deal with the Iraqis and got us out of there. We came here.

The narrative of David and his son is crucial in this scene. The intergenerational transmission we saw earlier yields to a willful denial in the younger generation. On the one hand, both men reiterate the official Zionist narrative that is utterly grounded in terms of the intricate mythology of Israel's religious origins as Jewish continuity from biblical times: "This land was given to the Jews [. . .]." On the other hand, both of them take the position of an Israeli/Jewish other, who neither acknowledges the Palestinians' rights to their land, nor takes responsibility for what happened to them in 1948: "whether we're comfortable with it or not."

Thus, in relation to Dov and Amos, both David and his son stand as points of extreme opposition. With egad to self and other, the juxtaposition of the narratives of David and his son to those of Dov and Amos allows us to understand the Israeli/Jewish other as a construct that includes different "others." These "others" are divided between an other who refutes Zionism and takes responsibility (Dov and Amos), and another irresponsible Zionist other constituted in the difference between David and his son.[19]

This presentation of the Israeli/Jewish other as internally divided others poses a theoretical challenge to the Palestinian victimized self: namely, where the Palestinian self is located and how it is configured in relation to its "others" so that they can become the "we" of the play and the film's mixed audience. In order to answer this question, the film

resorts to theatrical performance. For the final time and immediately after the scene with David and his son, the camera shifts from the outside to the theatrical stage. On stage, with a metal plate on his head like a soldier's hat, hiding behind the broomstick as a defensive barrier, and with his hand in the shape of a pointed gun, Saeed audiovisually performs both self and other. Speaking Arabic with an Israeli accent, Saeed says: "Where did you come from? Tell me or I'll shoot you." Changing both his accent and position, coming out from behind the broomstick, Saeed starts talking to the audience describing how an Israeli soldier held a gun to his child's head and how he stood there helpless.

Changing his position again into that of the soldier, Saeed then recounts the story in a monologue in which the soldier interrogates the father of the child:

> [Soldier:] Where are you from? [Father:] from Birwa, Sir. [Soldier:] Are you returning to Birwa? [Father:] Yes, Sir. Please, Sir [. . .] [Soldier:] Didn't I order you not to return? Animals! You respect no law? Go on. Get out of here.

In Saeed's performance, the Palestinian self and Israeli other are intertwined in a violent relationship, that of colonizer and colonized. The use of the word "animals" enables a reading in which the Israeli soldier's description becomes fused with racist, imperialist images of Palestinians as less than human. Moreover, the dialogue between self and other, which was established in Saeed's performance of the metaphor of the sea, is now terminated by the sheer force of the soldier's statement: "Get out of here!" What the Iraqis did not say to David ("Get out of here"), the Israeli soldier says to the Palestinians. More importantly, this scene makes concrete the internal division of Israeli/Jewish "others" (between Dov and Amos, and David and his son) in terms of power: not Dov and Amos, as responsible others who have power in Israeli society, but David and his son. The gun on the waist of David's son becomes a symbol of control and power. This symbol not only exposes the conflicted grounds of Palestinian and Israeli discourses of memory and identity but it also embodies their unevenness. Since 1948, Israel always had the advantages of a state apparatus and military authority, which not only fashions images of historical Palestine exclusively as the so-called "Jewish land" internally and abroad but also suppresses and delegitimizes Palestinian narratives of identity.

At the end of Saeed's performance, the focalization of the Palestinian self and the Israeli other as colonized/colonizer seems to bring the film's

Figure 4.4 Dov Yirmiya playing his accordion music to a group of children, and singing *We Bring You Peace*

narrative to a halt. Only then, audiovisual storytelling shifts from the theatrical stage to the outside. In this scene, we see Dov playing his accordion music to a group of children, and singing in Arabic: "We bring you peace."

After the singing, Bakri asks Dov about the reason for his sympathy with the Palestinians, and says: "I sense that you're playing music not only because you love music. You sympathize [with Palestinians] not just because you like Arabs, but also for another reason: You're assuming responsibility for [a] national feeling of guilt. Am I right?" Dov then immediately answers:

> You are right about one thing. For many years, I believed in my Zionism, but not like today's Zionists and also not like the kind we had back then. I believed that we were not harming the Arabs here [. . .] I admit that even before the war, I perceived a trend in Zionism [. . .] when people come to a place where another people lives, especially if there's resistance, and this resistance is justified, we later discovered [. . .] I certainly don't feel comfortable with the idea, even before the establishment of the State of Israel. But after the state was established, from the moment

> there was something we could do about it [. . .] To heal, rectify, show good will, help out, bring back refugees. That's when it started to eat me inside. Since then I've been consistent in my views.

Dov's consistent views of Palestinians not only show the inconsistency of David and his son's views, but also particularize the difference between the views of Israeli/Jewish "others" as based on different ideological trends within Zionism.[20]

In our film, Dov is an Israeli/Jewish subject who believes in a Zionist ideology. Dov's version of Zionism, however, is different from "today's Zionism and also not like the kind we had back then [in 1948]." Unlike the Zionist trend of David and his son, in Dov's ideology, establishing a "homeland for the Jews" should neither harm the Palestinians nor deny their existence "when people come to a place where another people live." Precisely through this articulation of a specific trend of Zionism Dov becomes a subject with a historical consciousness, but also dominant trends of Zionism become atrocious—just like official history—not in their nature, but in their application. The current ideology of Zionism (or the trend of David and his son) is precisely dubious in its lack of historical consciousness: through the denial of the Palestinians' rights and the refusal of responsibility for their catastrophe. Further, unlike David who lives with his ideology "whether [he is] comfortable with it or not," Dov's historical consciousness is characterized by a moment of unease: "I certainly don't feel comfortable [. . .]." After the establishment of the State of Israel, this moment of unease, for Dov, became a moment of recognition of the fact that there was something that could be done about what happened to the Palestinians: "to heal, rectify, help out." Thus Dov's feeling of guilt, "that's when it started to eat me inside," is not grounded in what happened in the past, but in the failure to do something about the Palestinians' suffering in the present.

Dov's distinction of his own brand of Zionism unravels it as an ideology that has multiple strands and trends but that hides them in an artificial unity. Rather than resolving the issue, Dov's narrative suggests that the possibility of resolution of both the conflict is in the hands, not of the Palestinians but of their Israeli "others." The resolution of the Palestinian narrative of *al-Nakba* can only work at the level of the others' ideologies, substituting racist Zionist ideological trends with historically conscious ones. However, until that moment comes, the Palestinians remain colonized and dispossessed: their everyday of exile surges on without any sign of ending or reducing suffering.

The closing scene of *1948* illustrates this contradictory situation. We see Bakri walking among the ruins and the cactus trees, intimating the Palestinian everyday as tainted with loss of place and nostalgia. In a close-up, we see him standing on one of the graves and brushing the dust off the name on the gravestone. At this moment the image of a bird, a seagull, at the shore of the sea enters the screen. As the bird is about to fly away, the camera captures its image, and Bakri's voice over comes in chanting:

> O bird, you have reminded me of my [loved ones] with your plaintive song. Don't compound my sorrows. O bird, when you see a man placing his hand on his cheek, it means he parted from his loved ones. Don't approach him. O bird, everyone had his own troubles. Don't compound my sorrow.

The bird emerges as a metaphor for the tormented continuous journey in Palestinian exile. It not only reminds the exiled of his or her "loved ones" in the past, but also torments the self in the present, compounding "the sorrow." Thus, both the loss of the homeland and the helplessness to overcome it, "when you see a man placing his hand [. . .]," are displaced from the historical catastrophe to the contemporary reality of exile.[21]

In *1948*, the narrativity through which *al-Nakba* is performed, then, suggests a dynamic reciprocity between the past and the present by which the agonized present of exile becomes the main motivation behind the subject's telling of the past. This mode can be derived as performative narrativity: drifting between theatrical performance, historical archives, and personal memories it comprises the performance of a fundamental aspect for the actual state of the Palestinian narrative. The image of Bakri brushing the dust off the name of the gravestone becomes the ultimate enactment of this actuality. Through its confrontation with official Zionist history, the film's performative narrativity shows us the dusty gravestones of Palestinians, while performance exposes their names in the present.

In *1948*, official history and performance emerge as the dialectic of politics and aesthetics. This dialectic, however, appears as self-perpetuating: it feeds on itself, especially through the film's moving inside and outside personal memories and the theatrical stage. Fittingly, the performative approach of audiovisual storytelling accepts intellectual responsibility for maintaining rather than resolving the tension between the aesthetic and the political, using the former to criticize,

reexamine, and transfigure the latter through performative acts of telling. The film constructs temporal bridges between the past of *al-Nakba* and the present of exile that allows us to see both from different angles at once in a durational continuity that they share.

The salient aspect of this analysis of *1948* is not to recognize the temporality of the past event of *al-Nakba* within the present of exile, but to see the aesthetic experience (in this case a theatrical performance) of that catastrophe as not merely a representation of the past but as a living form of the catastrophic present. A present in which the battle for justice, emancipation, and the diminishment of human suffering continues to be waged. Rereading the film's performative narrativity can become a cultural intervention that does not aim to merge self and other, but enacts conflicted discourses of memory through which self and other can converse together in a shared space where narratives and identities are always already implicated in each other. Neither separation nor merging is ever absolute but dependent on the specific contexts in which retelling and re-reading are staged and performed. That this performative retelling and re-reading remains a cultural practice among Palestinians, whether or not engaging in aesthetic practice, becomes apparent in my final chapter in which I will discuss how oral narratives of *al-Nakba* can be read as cultural imaginings in the everyday of exile.

CHAPTER 5

Mankoub: Narrative Fragments of an Ongoing Catastrophe

When I embarked on this book, I started with two main questions. The first concerned the ways in which *al-Nakba* is articulated in diverse Palestinian cultural media; namely, literary and audiovisual narratives. The second concerned the presence of *al-Nakba* in the fabric of contemporary Palestinian everyday life. For this second question, I intended to complement my analysis of literary and audiovisual narratives with an analysis of how perceptions of the loss of homeland are transmitted through oral narratives from one generation to the next within different geopolitical communities of exiled Palestinians. In the past four chapters of this book, I have addressed the first question.

Having come to my closing chapter on oral narratives, I realize that my idea to conduct academic research that equally addresses both concerns has been thematically ambitious and has proved to be almost a "mission impossible." The matter is simple. In bringing these two questions together, my aim was to study contemporary Palestinian identity by crossing the disciplinary boundaries between two seemingly disconnected fields of research: literary theory, especially narratology, and cultural anthropology. While the former field entails close readings of narratives at home, so to speak, the latter is grounded ultimately in *travel*: the combined project would require the analyst to cross physical boundaries and political borders. If I were to draw a conclusion about the difference between both fields, based on my experience with travel as a Palestinian, then my conclusion would be that anthropology is destined *only* for those who can travel, hence not for Palestinians. This is

so, because to be a Palestinian in exile today means to be essentially deprived of the right to travel (physically) and to be denied access to places—especially the place which the subject desires most and where he or she ought to be: Palestine.

In spite of this conclusion, I remain unwilling to give up the link between my research and everyday reality. Therefore I have devised the following solution. I will use fragments of my personal experience with travel, limited as it is condemned to be, to indicate how Palestinian narratives of identity are composed of the countless stories of what takes place in a state of suspension. I am in good company here. Rashid Khalidi, in his book *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, describes the condition of lacking a recognized passport, of being treated as a "suspicious object" at international crossing points, of being questioned and interrogated, all as distinctive acts of "othering" through which the articulation of Palestinian identity is constructed and reinforced. According to Khalidi, it takes only a minute observation of the concrete practices of exclusion at airports, borders, and checkpoints that Palestinians undergo on a daily basis to make clear what it means to be a Palestinian subject today (1997: 1). My experience has been the same.

Given this impaired condition of travel, in this chapter, I limit my analysis to the narratives that I managed to collect during a short visit to the Gaza Strip in 2004. The plan to document this trip on video partly failed due to the typical circumstance that at Cairo Airport I was arrested, separated from the cameramen who were to accompany me, and then deported.[1] Yet, I was still able to document conversations with Palestinians living in Gaza. The second source with which I supplement this scant material consists of *al-Nakba* narratives I uncovered during my search of Internet sources.[2]

My discussion of these narratives revolves around two different issues. First, I reflect on the narratives' temporal orientation in terms of *al-Nakba* between the past and the present. Second, I locate various references to Palestinian cultural identity in relation to the fragmented generational and spatial distribution of their society across geopolitical contexts: exiled Palestinians inside historic Palestine, both in Israel and in the occupied territories, and outside, mainly in the Arab world. I will focus my discussion on notions such as loss of home, the return to the homeland, and the memory of *al-Nakba* in the everyday life of Palestinian exiles.

It is worth mentioning that in my treatment of these narratives I will refer to the speakers' identity and give full names only when the

speakers identified themselves publicly. In other cases the identity of the speakers will be indicated by first names only. As I write these words on the technical aspects of my analysis, I am aware of the symbolic value of the words "identity" and "name." The Palestinian experience of loss of homeland, as we have seen in the previous chapters, is that of a people who strive to keep their names and to find recognition and acceptance for them. However, needless to say here that refraining from mentioning the full names of the speakers is justified also by the fact that, in the Palestinian experience, one simply never knows who is listening. And if they do listen, you never know how they listen nor what they do with what they listen to. Hence, while having to reiterate the theft of identity perpetrated on Palestinians, my enforced deletion of full names responds to the political situation thus created.

I first begin by briefly discussing oral narratives of *al-Nakba* in relation to ethnographic approaches. In this section, I will propose a different mode of reading personal accounts, namely as narratives. Then, I will analyze a collection of personal accounts that were published by the *Journal of Palestine Studies* on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of *al-Nakba* in 1998. Entitled "Reflections on Al-Nakba," this collection includes stories of Palestinians from different walks of life, who all tell what *al-Nakba* means to them personally. By calling these narratives "stories," I do not mean to imply they are fictional. Instead, I want to stress that these personal accounts can be read as "narratives" rather than historical or anthropological evidence.[3] This approach, I will argue below, gives them more autonomy as texts or utterances and more complexity of form and content together. After that I will analyze a selection of the narratives that I collected in my fieldwork in Gaza in 2004, including my own position in that fieldwork. In conclusion, I will draw several parallels between the different aspects of Palestinian exilic identity and the transgenerational transmission of memory of *al-Nakba* as articulated by these personal accounts.

Ethnography as Narrative

In the absence of state archives and the official apparatus of an independent Palestinian state, and since many Palestinians from the first generation of exiles are illiterate, oral history has become a significant mode for both archiving and sustaining Palestinian cultural memory in the present. The cultural transmission of the memory of *al-Nakba* often takes place orally through oral performances and commemorative practices in fragmentary moments that give texture to the fabric of everyday life.[4]

It almost goes without saying that oral histories are always subjective narratives of the past that have meaning for the people who narrate them as much as for those they are about. Almost, but not quite; for what exceeds the subjective nature of their storytelling is the common political backdrop against which this subjectivity is shaped. Most anthropological literature dealing with the oral history of *al-Nakba*, however, rarely goes beyond mere ethnographic description of the historical event: the recounting of political and military activities and the subsequent social transformations in Palestine. Ethnographic approaches to *al-Nakba* are problematic in that they often remain locked within what can be called a narrative about a history of identity.[5] In other words, while the ethnographic approach has offered an important means to unearth concrete evidence and information *about* the historical expulsion of Palestinians, it often paid little attention to *how* the "uprooting" itself makes the narratives produced by the Palestinian subject meaningful to this subject's everyday condition of displacement and exile. Put differently, the question scantly asked is how does the Palestinian subject's narrative of *al-Nakba* of 1948 affect our understanding of his or her narration of the ongoing catastrophe of the Palestinians today?

To answer this question, I wish to put forward an alternative mode of reading oral accounts of *al-Nakba*. Instead of treating them as ethnographic fieldwork notes, I treat them as literary and audiovisual narratives; namely as *narratives in exile*. I do so not to privilege narratology as an approach to ethnography. Rather, I argue that the subject of the everyday, regardless of disciplinary perspective, needs to be posed continuously as the question at the heart of any narrative about the condition of Palestinian exile. Posed as a question, the idea of "the subject of the everyday" can help us not only refine disciplinary modes of reading exilic narratives at the level of historical representation but also to supply insights at the level of these narratives' depiction of current affairs. What characterizes this mode of reading is a shift of focus from the historical event itself (its pastness) to the subject of this event and his or her everyday condition. In other words, rather than referring to *al-Nakba* of 1948, I will mobilize what I call here the *mankoub*. This term refers to the contemporary "catastrophed subject," which I take as my focal point for a reading of the narratives.

At the heart of this narrative mobilization of the *mankoub* is the point that, like literary and audiovisual narratives, oral accounts of the catastrophic loss of homeland evoke cultural imaginings (or "imagings") that provide necessary frameworks to understand the reach and the scope of Palestinian exile in the everyday. This conceptualization is grounded

in a specific reading of narratives in exile not simply as autobiographies but as memories. As I argue below, reading the oral narratives as memories depends on a crucial distinction between autobiographical and memorial modes of storytelling of exilic identities. In the Palestinian case, this distinction is necessary and runs on the assumption that autobiographical narrative risks the pitfall of promoting an individualized sense of subjectivity, whereas the memorial mode destabilizes such a sense of identity in terms of an event/subject constellation between the past and present experiences of catastrophe.

In order to explore this memorial mode of reading of oral narratives of *al-Nakba*, I now turn to the collection "Reflections on Al-Nakba." This collection is composed of the narratives of Mamdouh Nofal, Fawaz Turki, Haider Abdel Shafi, Inea Bushnaq, Yazid Sayigh, Shafiq al-Hout, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, and Musa Bueiri. With the exception of Yazid Sayigh whose narrative represents second and third generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, all of these speakers belong to the first generation of Palestinians who lived through the 1948 *Nakba*. In my analysis of this collection, I will read in particular the narratives of Mamdouh Nofal, Fawaz Turki, and Yazid Sayigh. I focus on these three stories in particular because of the thematic and temporal connections between them and the collection as a whole.

As I have indicated, I read these stories not as historical eyewitness accounts, but as memories of life trajectories that imagine what the catastrophe means to the speakers in their everyday of exile. In each of these stories, memory articulates what in one way or another has been left behind, and thus they practice a sometimes-compulsive retrovision. What interests me here is how the Palestinian subject's voice engenders the exilic discourse, how memory shapes the exile's meanings, desires and needs of and for home, and how the narrative configuration that results can be read as relevant for the Palestinians' struggle to overcome their forced exile. Hence, my reading emphasizes the present-day cultural rather than the historical significance of these narratives. Only when this aspect of the narratives of *al-Nakba* is taken into account can we grasp a sense of Palestinian exilic identity that is anchored in the cultural memory of an ongoing catastrophe.

De-Palestinianized

In "Reflections on Al-Nakba," the stories, together with the oral and written circumstances of their transmission, trigger a memory that illustrates the exilic imaginary of the Palestinian people. The dominant

characteristic of these stories is that their storytelling of *al-Nakba* is both motivated by the need to make sense of a traumatic event from the past, and by the emphatic attempt to give shape to the Palestinian subject's memory of an uncertain condition of forced displacement in the present. This memorial mode of storytelling can be seen at work in the first narrative of the collection, that of Mamdouh Nofal (b. 1944).

In a continuously arresting narrative, Nofal tells how the event of *al-Nakba* continues to exacerbate his cultural memory of loss of place. Consider the following fragment with which Nofal opens his story:

> The closest I can come to explaining what 1948 means to me, and how it affected the path I took in life and the choices I made, is to tell about growing up in Qalqilya, on the frontline with Israel. When the dust of 1948 settled, Qalqilya itself had not been occupied, falling in what came to be called the West Bank. But it had lost more than 90 percent of its agricultural lands, its main source of livelihood, which were now farmed by the Jewish colonies across the railroad tracks that had once linked Turkey, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and which now formed the border with the newly created State of Israel. The war had also transformed Qalqilya into a main station for refugees fleeing the massacres and the fighting in Kfar Saba, Abu Kishk, Miska, Byar Adas, Shaykh Muwwanis, and al-Tireh, who increased the town's population by half. It is difficult, after the passage of fifty years, to sort out my own memories from those of my family, neighbors, friends, and schoolmates, from the collective memory of my hometown. But it seems to me that of the battles for the defense of the town, I have *vague* memories of the young men organizing night and day guard shifts and of the Iraqi army camp and the Palestinian military formations near town. I also remember the throngs of refugees in the mosque next door to our house. The girls' school and the boys' school were also turned into refugee centers, and there was chaos everywhere as the town didn't have the means to absorb such a huge influx. Some of the refugees settled in our town and live there to this day, while others moved inward to other towns or onwards to exile, due to the difficulty of making a living and the scarcity of water resources. (5–6)

Nofal's narrative reflects a key trope of the catastrophe as an event that imprints a life. *Al-Nakba* is an experience that is not only engraved in his memory but also inscribes his personal choices in life. This experiential trope is given concrete shape in Nofal's use of the phrases "the path I took" and "the choices I made," which signify his experience of the loss of Palestine as a climactic instance that determined the course of his later life. Yet, he phrases this determining impact in relation to choice. At stake here, thus, is Nofal's need to assert the *possibility* of choice under constraining circumstances so as to emphasize the need for freedom.

Moreover, what characterizes Nofal's storytelling is that he does not name *al-Nakba*; instead, he describes it as a date, "1948." In his narrative, however, this date acts as a noun rather than a qualification of an event, a noun that implies a story. This story narrates the subject's exile. For Nofal, the only way to tell this story is through recalling his memories "about growing up in Qalqilya." To tell these memories, then, is to give voice to a collective loss of place, which is the closest he can come to expressing what *al-Nakba* means to him. This can be seen in the difficulty that Nofal faces in sorting out his own memories from those of his "family, neighbors, friends, and schoolmates, from the collective memory of [his] hometown." Hence, Nofal can approach the event through memory but not quite reach it.

Narratologically, one of the central drives in the opening of Nofal's story is the nearly explicit desire of his narrative voice to present *al-Nakba* as a malleable event that resonates through its temporal connections to an actual condition of displacement. Significantly, Nofal's voice is temporally and spatially removed from an autobiographical narrative structure of causality and condemned to the remembering of the "after of the event": the ways in which the action of *al-Nakba* determines his life as much as the agency of the Palestinian subject. This memorial storytelling of the aftermath of the event manifests itself textually through Nofal's use of the metaphor of settling dust, "when the dust of 1948 settled." This metaphor can be read both thematically and temporally.

Thematically, the dust signifies the violent nature of the catastrophe and corresponds, therefore, to the chaotic aftermath caused by the huge influx of refugees. Temporally, the settling of the dust can be read as Nofal's attempt to brush off the dust of time so that the temporal gap between the past and the present can be bridged. Once again, the difficulty that Nofal faces in sorting out his memories from the past in the present supports these interpretations. This difficulty of remembering is further highlighted through Nofal's use of words and phrases such as "vague" and "it seems to me." These indications of indecision hint that memory in the narrative thus entangles the personal and the communal. Through this entanglement, the mode of Nofal's storytelling becomes emphatically memorial rather than autobiographical. His narrative shifts from his interior life (individual memory, the motor of autobiography) to the anterior life of the people of Qalqilya, "the collective memory of [his] hometown."

In the context of diasporic and transnational identities, this memorial mode of storytelling of the after of the event invokes a specific cultural grounding of Palestinian exilic identity as composed of individual

and collective experiences in time and space. As Stuart Hall argues, cultural identity is not something fixed in the past, awaiting discovery; nor is it an accomplished essence. On the contrary, identity is subject to the movements of history, culture, and power. However, for Hall, cultural identities also have their histories, and these histories have real effects, both symbolic and material. In addition, cultural identities are always constructed through memory, narrative, fantasy, and myth. Cultural identity is thus not an essence, but a positioning (1997: 51–52). This notion of cultural identity as a constructed positioning changes the way we conceptualize political identity, since we can no longer imagine it as residing solely in specific institutions.

Seen from this perspective, the cultural identity of the subject (as much as his or her life) depends not only on his or her ability to remember the past but, more importantly, on the subject's present, including political ability to articulate his or her identity in terms of this past. Cultural identity entails a configuration of the ways in which the subject is both, to borrow Hall's terminology, "positioned by, and positions [him- or herself] within the narrative of the past" (1997: 52). This concept of cultural identity helps illuminate what Nofal's story performs. Nofal's memorial storytelling articulates Palestinian exilic identity experientially, as composed of a variety of losses, each of which includes information about what Palestinian subjects *were* and, more importantly, about what they *were becoming*. This specific positioning of identity is relevant both on the levels of the Palestinian subject's identification with the lost homeland and his or her loss of (political) identity in the everyday of exile.

In Nofal's narrative, the loss of his hometown is not merely a geographical loss of place but the loss of a land that sustains life—a loss of the means of life. Such a loss leads to the transformation of the place but equally to the transformation of how the political identity of this subject is subsequently positioned (by himself as well as by others) in the present. Falling within the border zone "in what came to be called the West Bank," Nofal's town (Qalqilya) loses its trees and fields, "its source of livelihood," and is transformed into "a main station of refugees". Moreover, the identity of the people who inhabit this place is transformed. Instead of Palestinian citizens, the people of Qalqilya are now "Palestinian refugees":

> So our town which had been self-sufficient and relatively comfortable becomes destitute virtually overnight, cut off from its livelihood of orchards and farmlands on the coastal plain and cattle breeding and

> trade with al-Tireh, al-Taybeh, Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Lydda, and Ramla. The conditions of the original townspeople abruptly deteriorated to abject poverty, such that there wasn't much difference between them and the refugees. (6)

Thus, the catastrophe affects all the people of the town. During *al-Nakba*, the town "becomes destitute," and the living conditions of the "original townspeople" (or *Muwateneen*) of Qalqilya "abruptly deteriorate to abject poverty." Through these desperate conditions, the people of the town are transformed from being "hosts" of other displaced refugees into refugees themselves (or *LaaJ'een*).[6] This transformation of identity constitutes a shift from being sufficient subjects into subjects deprived of their means of livelihood and, hence, denied their right to acquire a sovereign political identity. This can be seen in Nofal's description of how the "abject poverty" that the people of Qalqilya had to endure turned them into a people who are objects of charity:

> Hunger spread, and if it hadn't been for the huge quantities of dates provided by the Iraqi government, many would have died. I remember that we children used to gather the date pits and sell them to bakeries—a full basket for one piaster. We were also set to gathering firewood and dry vegetable stems for cooking fuel and grasses and wild herbs for the rabbits and sheep. The dire situation of Qalqilya's inhabitants was taken into consideration after the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was set up in 1950 and welfare cards were distributed along with emergency and fixed rations to everyone [. . .] I will always remember the number of my family's welfare card: 58610405. (6)

Thus, having lost their homes, trees, and fields, Palestinians now became dependent on charity and international relief aid. Such living conditions often trigger the subject's feelings of a denied subjectivity, and further add to a loss of self-confidence. What underlies this loss, as I already pointed out in my second chapter, is a spatiotemporal actual condition of denial of access to home within which the Palestinian subject is constantly deprived of his or her cultural space of selfhood.

The link between charity and loss of identity can be seen in Nofal's persistent remembering of the number of his family's welfare card: "I will always remember [. . .]." The welfare card to which Nofal refers is still in currency today. For Palestinians, welfare cards represent material symbols that constantly remind them both of their catastrophic loss of homeland and of their refugeeism and helplessness as exiled subjects. In this sense, the catastrophe becomes a number (1948), and the subject's

identity becomes a number "58610405"; hence, survival in the aftermath of *al-Nakba* depends on numbers. The card's number contains some of the digits of the date of *al-Nakba* "1948" that is engraved in Nofal's mind; as I read it, the card itself becomes an embodiment of the *mankoub*. The catastrophe of this subject is grounded not in a loss of cultural identity as a "Palestinian," but rather in a loss of his or her political identity as a "Palestinian citizen."

Similar conceptions of the Palestinians' transformation into refugees and the subsequent loss of their political identity are worked into many of the other stories in the collection. A poignant elaboration of this transformation and loss can be found, for example, in the narrative of Haider Abdel Shafi (1919–2008):

> One often reflects on the past, especially the eventful past. It is difficult to forget the years of the catastrophe, 1947–50, when Palestinians lost three quarters of their homeland and when half of their society was expelled by force and terror to become homeless refugees [...] The influx of refugees posed difficult and complicated logistical problems in terms of shelter, food, health needs, schooling, and so on. The suddenness of the influx made the problems overwhelming. Apart from some outside help provided by a Quaker-led team of international volunteers, it was the determination of the residents that closed the gap [...] The other part of the story is the attitude of the refugees themselves. In spite of their plight, they acted almost as though nothing had happened. The smile never left their faces, and they did not crumble in the face of their fate. This ability to absorb punishment and deprivation has become a trait of the Palestinians. There is no need to dwell on the many kinds of punishment sustained during occupation, but I remember an encounter that impressed me particularly. I was visiting a family whose home had just been demolished by the Israelis. Members of the family, standing amid the wreckage of their house, received me with smiles and got to scrambling about trying to find me something to sit on. It is difficult or impossible to subdue or annihilate such people, as Israel knows very well by now. (14–15)

Abdel Shafi remembers *al-Nakba* as a climactic event through which Palestinians were forcefully expelled from their homes and ended up as "homeless refugees" in exile. Like Nofal, Abdel Shafi also remembers *al-Nakba* in terms of dates. Significantly, however, for Abdel Shafi the memory of *al-Nakba* is not neatly limited to the year of 1948. Instead, he remembers it as "the years of the catastrophe, 1947–50." This mode of remembering of the catastrophe as "years" both problematizes the

singularity of the event, and delineates temporal variations of its subjective experience: *al-Nakba* is experienced differently in time and space. In my analysis of Bakr's film *1948*, I made a similar argument. There, I argued that the remembering of *al-Nakba* as a date (and the different temporal variations of its event) is a crucial point in relation to the commemoration of this event. As I pointed out, Palestinians commemorate *al-Nakba*, similarly to the ways they experienced its event, at different temporal moments.

Moreover, Abdel Shafi recalls the desperate situation of refugees as well as their "attitude" in dealing with their catastrophe. This attitude constitutes the refugees' "ability to endure punishment and deprivation." In this sentence, the word "punishment" is key. As it is well known, there is no "punishment" without a "crime." Narratologically, this word signifies a conflation of focalization. While the Palestinian "I" suffers, the outside focalization (of Israeli military occupation in this case) attributes "guilt," hence punishment. At stake here, then, is a double focalization: an interiorized sense of hostility wherein the narrator becomes his own enemy and, thus, *de-Palestinianized*. Read through this double focalization, Abdel Shafi's description suggests that under Israeli military occupation it is Palestinian existence itself that is considered to be "the crime."[7]

Furthermore, the refugees' resilient attitude can be seen in Abdel Shafi's description of how they, in spite of their catastrophic loss of home, kept smiling and acted as if nothing happened: "The smile never left their faces." The personification of the masses expressed in this description, through the words "smile" and "faces," both gives the refugees a human face and situates their humanity in stark contrast to the inhumanity (of punishment) that they experience. The personification of the refugees becomes a narrative mode neither of boasting nor of lamenting. Instead, this personification serves to expose a cultural practice that characterizes Palestinian identity. This can be seen in Abdel Shafi's encounter with the refugees who are "standing amid the wreckage of their house" and receiving their guest (Abdel Shafi) "with smiles and got to scrambling about trying to find me something to sit on." Through this description, we see the people's resilience and endurance in the face of catastrophe: in spite of the demolition of their house, they still smile. But we also see them practicing their tradition, namely, their act of hospitality to comfort their guest. The positive note expressed in the final sentence, "it is difficult or impossible to subdue or annihilate such people, as Israel knows very well by now," becomes a political rallying cry.

With regard to Palestinians' political transformation into refugees, Abdel Shafi's mode of remembering *al-Nakba* is relevant in two ways. The first, and most obvious, aspect is that his memory evokes the loss of place mainly as a human loss—a loss experienced by human beings. Second, his memory signifies that in spite of the loss of political identity (as homeless refugees), Palestinians managed to preserve their cultural identity. This preservation can be seen in the way Abdel Shafi elaborates on the refugees' resilience both in terms of enduring the hardship under military occupation and in their "ability to adjust":

> But what was probably most noticeable was the refugees' ability to adjust. Most of them were of rural society. They had gotten no education or at most an elementary education under the British; what had mattered to them was working on the land and living from it. With the sudden loss of their land, they immediately fixed on an alternative: education and knowledge [. . .] Soon there were scores of Palestinian university graduates in sciences and humanities who found work opportunities in neighboring Arab states, making a decent living and enough to support their families in their places of refuge. In so doing they thwarted the attempts by Israel and others to erase the Palestinian identity. Soon they started agitating for a role in defending their political rights, which resulted in the establishment of the PLO in May 1964. (15–16)

In the wake of *al-Nakba*, Palestinians resorted to education as a means of survival. Education not merely serves as an avenue to improve Palestinians' living conditions but also functions as a tactic of resistance against "the attempts by Israel and others to erase" their identity since 1948. For Palestinians, what constitutes this notion of "education as resistance" is both the knowledge and belief that Palestine was lost because they were ignorant and uneducated back then. Seen in this context, Abdel Shafi's remembering of the establishment of the PLO in 1964 can be read in the sense that as much as he remembers the years of the Palestinians' loss of their homeland, he equally remembers the times when the Palestinians' contemporary struggle against this loss was launched. Remembering historical data, moreover, is evidence of education.

The Jewish Train Simply Did Not Skid

The most moving part in Nofal's story is where figurations of Palestinian exilic subjectivity abound. In the following fragment, he articulates the

Palestinians' loss of their lands and their transformation into refugees in concrete terms in relation to the establishment of Israel in 1948:

> A National Guard was set up in Qalqilya, and many of the young men joined, their main job being to keep watch on the Israeli border from the trenches dug on the outskirts of town. We children used to amuse ourselves running back and forth between their positions, and some of the guards would send us on errands to buy cigarettes or matches they had run out of. We also used to compete in seeing who was boldest in sneaking into the old orchards and placing rocks or pouring motor oil on the railway tracks, hoping the Jewish train would skid. But the train kept moving back and forth relentlessly, blowing its shrill whistle each time it neared our town. (6)

I consider the train as evoked in this story to symbolize the violent disruption of the townspeople's rural ways of life. As a metaphor, the "Jewish train" works on different levels. The townspeople's helplessness and ignorance to withstand the establishment of Israel produces humor but is also a metonym for Palestinian exilic storytelling. This "Jewish train" simply did not skid and became a terrifyingly visible juncture for the flourishing of the "new state" of Israel built on the denial as well as the destruction of the "old state" of Palestine and the subjects who carry its traces into the present.

This evocation of the "Jewish train" reflects the temporal progression of Nofal's story as a whole. The moment of narration in the opening fragments of his story takes place "inside" the event of *al-Nakba*. However, immediately after the evocation of the train, this moment of narration shifts to after of the event. As a result, the spatiotemporal properties of Palestinian loss of homeland and their transformation into refugees that incite Nofal's story become more concrete. Such a concrete impulse of loss emerges particularly when we read Nofal's evocation of the "Jewish train" as a conceptual metaphor for the violence that engulfs the establishment of Israel in 1948. Both the train's "relentless" movement and the violently felt presence of its "shrill whistle" then become symbolic projections that signify the construction of Israel as constitutive of the Palestinians' *al-Nakba*. At the heart of this symbolism of the Jewish train is that the violent establishment of Israel, as an ideological Zionist construct, confirms the Palestinians' loss of homeland and political identity in the past and also determines the temporal duration of their stories of this loss in the present.

In Nofal's narrative, the story of *al-Nakba* has a long duration. The narrative fragment that immediately follows his evocation of the train underscores this temporality:

> After the establishment of the State of Israel and the departure of the Arab armies, Qalqilya's inhabitants began to realize that this would be a long story. The educated youth set their minds on going abroad. Some entered the Gulf countries illegally and some even died of suffocation hidden inside oil tanks. Men sold the jewelry of their women and tried to reclaim the poor mountainous lands that remained on our side of the border, digging out rocks and filling holes with soil to plant vegetables [. . .] Throughout the years, the people of Qalqilya and the refugees dreamed of returning to their fields and villages. During the earlier years, their sleep was disturbed by nightmares involving Jews hounding them and chasing them out, and they brooded about how the Arab countries had conspired against them and the whole world shared in the injustice meted out to them. As time went on, *al-Nakba* was transformed into a memory that the people of Qalqilya went on commemorating with school holidays and demonstrations in the streets and near the Israeli border [. . .] some of the town's imams saw Qalqilya's tribulations as a sign of God's anger at Palestinians for having gone astray. Many people resorted increasingly to religion [. . .] A handful reacted by turning their back on religion, saying God had abandoned them and had not stood up for the holy places in the blessed land of Palestine (though they refused to join the Communist Party because the Soviet Union had recognized the State of Israel). My father, who was practically illiterate, joined the ranks of the independent nonbelievers. My illiterate mother, on the other hand, became more devout and urged me and my older brother to pray, to fast, and to learn the Qur'an by heart. Following her instructions, I prayed five times a day and often repeated the ayat al-kursi, which she said would protect whoever memorized it from the devil and the attacks of the Israelis. (7)

The establishment of Israel, then, presented as a climactic moment that unleashes the catastrophe of 1948, functions as a continuous provocation that prevents Palestinians from fully constituting themselves as citizens of a Palestinian state in the present. This becomes clear in the ways the loss of place has made a critical impact on the Palestinians' daily lives. Having realized that in the aftermath of the establishment of Israel, the loss of their lands is going to be "a long story"; the townspeople attempt to go on with their lives. While some of them end up in the void of exile outside Palestine in order to secure their living, others remain in Palestine and try to live from the lands left unoccupied by Israel on their side on the border.

The rupture of the after of the event in the first sentence is expressive both formally and thematically. In this sense, "after" becomes also a metaphor of rupture. Formally, the word "after" emulates the change in narrative tenses, from past to present, by which the temporal shift into the aftermath of the event is facilitated. Thematically, this "after" is underlined by the story's sequence of events: namely that the realization of the townspeople—that their story "would be a long story"—takes place after the establishment of Israel. This narrative shift into the aftermath focalizes Israel as a point of reference for the Palestinian subject's experience during *al-Nakba*.

More ordinary words accrue metaphorical meanings. Such a possibility is further alluded to in the people's religious interpretation of *al-Nakba* as "a sign of God's anger at Palestinians." This interpretation exposes Palestinians' catastrophe as a violent loss beyond comprehension but it also, I contend, grounds the loss of place as a projection of a cultural practice. An example of such a projection can be seen in the different ways the townspeople attend to their religion in the wake of *al-Nakba*. While some of them "resorted" to religion, others turned "their backs" on it. From these remarks we can, then, derive the notion that the loss of place and political identity impacts the exiles' cultural practices, that is, their understanding of themselves as much as of their cultural values—in this case, religion. The word *sign* itself, in the sentence quoted, refers to this power to transform meaning that metaphor implies.

In Nofal's story, reading the ways in which the loss of place impacts upon the everyday life of the subject in exile sets the tone for a specific narrative discourse of Palestinian catastrophe. What characterizes this discourse is an imaging of loss not in terms of the past *Nakba* itself, but in terms of the discursive effect of this event on the subject—the *mankoub* in the present. This imaging of the *mankoub* subject is most pronounced in the ending of Nofal's story:

> Those days, whoever did not own a firearm tried to get one, though weapons had to be carefully concealed as the Jordanian police frequently conducted searches and confiscated whatever they found. Many young men carried out a variety of dangerous actions inside Israel [. . .] Many were imprisoned by Jordan [. . .] Many of Qalqilya's sons were killed, including fathers and relatives of friends of mine, when they sneaked across to "steal" a cow or horse or some clothes or water pipes or whatever they could lay their hands on in the Jewish colonies or harvest whatever crops they could in what had been their orchards and fields. No

> one in our town could be convinced that the fruits of their lands, still within sight just across the tracks, did not belong to them anymore [. . .] Despite all the measures taken by Israelis and the Jordanians, frequent skirmishes between the people of our town and the Israeli troops and the colonists continued until 10 October 1956. At 9 P.M. on that date, Israeli forces launched a large-scale offensive against Qalqilya. Ground forces, including tanks, attacked from three directions, and warplanes bombed the town [. . .] I still have clear images of the martyrs pulled out of the debris [. . .] and I will never forget the funeral procession, when all the men, women, and children of the town walked from the mosque to the local cemetery [. . .] When Israel conquered the West Bank in 1967, Moshe Dayan remembered his threat to raze Qalqilya. His troops drove out all the inhabitants and brought in bulldozers to plough the town under and erase it from the map, just as they had done with the villages of Bayt Nuba, Yalu, and Imwas. Qalqilya inhabitants were left without shelter [. . .] By that time I was gone. I had joined the Arab Nationalist Movement in 1961, and a few years later after that, when I was twenty, I joined its military wing, The Heroes of the Return. From that time on, I devoted myself to military work within the Palestinian Revolution in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Tunis. (7–9)

This ending triggers different readings, in line with metaphoric narrativization of *al-Nakba* as ongoing process rather than singular event. I will reflect on two of them: namely, the relationship between the subject and his or her lost place and the repetition of *al-Nakba* in the present.

Nofal's imaging exposes the *mankoub* subject's relationship with the lost place as a connection between life and death, an alternation between being and not being. This place-bound imaging manifests itself in the description of the townspeople who died while crossing the railway tracks in order to reclaim their lost lands and homes: "Many of Qalqilya's sons were killed [. . .] when they sneaked across to 'steal' [. . .] what had been their orchards and fields." Nofal's emphasis on the word "steal" together with the phrase "what had been their orchards and fields" triggers a semantic contradiction, particularly if we read the first sentence in the sense that "the people steal from what belongs to them." Narratologically, the word "steal" triggers a play with focalization. The act of "stealing" from the land is focalized by the Israelis. However, the problematics of this focalization is resolved in the second sentence through the people's conviction that the lands still belonged to them: "no one [. . .] could be convinced." This conviction transforms the townspeople's act of "stealing" into an act of reclaiming their lost lands. It also qualifies their resistance against the "official" Israeli designation

of these lands as not their own. Through this conviction, the notion of "Palestinian resistance in exile" thus appears as not merely a matter of fending off the injustices of loss of home and identity imposed on them in the past but most importantly as an attempt to *undo* such injustices in the present.

This narrative figuration announces a plot line: through this double focalization the reader is prepared for the ending. What characterizes the ending of Nofal's story is that his storytelling articulates the townspeople's acts of resistance against the catastrophic loss of place and also exposes a repetition of that loss in the present. Just as he begins his narrative with a loss of place, Nofal also ends it with a loss of place. On the one hand, the repetition signifies the continuity of loss, and hence, qualifies his story's open ending. On the other hand, this repetition of loss of place signifies a repetition of the catastrophe in the "after" of its (original) event—*al-Nakba* of 1948. This repetition can be observed in Nofal's remembering of the date of 1967, "when Israel conquered the West Bank." His memory presents us (the readers) with an image of the catastrophe similar to the one with which he began his narrative, for the catastrophe we saw in 1948 happens again in 1967. Just as in Nofal's description of *al-Nakba*, at the end of his narrative, we see the Israeli Army driving the townspeople out of their homes: "troops drove out all the inhabitants and brought in bulldozers to plough the town under and erase it from the map." This description announces three steps of annihilation namely "driving out the town's inhabitants," "ploughing the town under," and "erasing it from the map." These agricultural metaphors reinforce the evocation of the land so much as the graduation, in three acts, of ever-increasing violence done to this land.

Nofal's repetition of *al-Nakba* as the ending of his story has consequences for the reader. This repetition helps us understand how the subject's narrative of *al-Nakba* is constructed through the memory of loss of homeland and political identity. It also, crucially, shows how this memory is sustained in a loss of place that is emphatically contemporary. The contemporaneity of loss finds compensation not in the historical event, but in the present of its action in the everyday life of its subject. This happens through an ironic counter strategy of personalization and repetition, leading the reader to believe that the catastrophe of Palestinians is in fact a story that has been going on for a long time and that is still searching for its ending. This is given concrete shape in Nofal's final description when he says: "By that time I was gone [. . .]" He joins the resistance movement outside Palestine—he ends up in

exile. *Al-Nakba*, at this point, appears as the ending of a story, yet at the same time as the beginning of another. With *al-Nakba*, a Palestinian story of a long absence and denial of home in exile began, and has not ended yet.

Nofal's memorial mode of storytelling invites a decoding of each narrative fragment as a reflection not of the past but of the actuality of the present. Each narrative fragment, then, appears not as a text but as a trace. As a narrative imagining of a Palestinian repressed memory, this trace suggests the invisibility of a livable present. It also maps the envisioning of a site, not of a lost home but of both the Palestinian subject's desire and his or her denial of this home in exile. Thus, reading *al-Nakba* in (oral) narratives, through memory, becomes a reading of a narrative discourse wherein the imagining (or the imaging) of the future entails a narrative reversal of the present of exile. In order to make this case about narrative reversal, I will turn now to the next narrative in the collection by Fawaz Turki (1941).

Catastrophic Time: Palestinian Roots Do Not Die

If Nofal's narrative ends with the Palestinians' expulsion into exile, then Turki's narrative functions as sequel to narrate the *mankoub* subject's anxieties in this condition. The dominant narrative topos in his story is that the exiled Palestinians cannot escape their past and roots. Considering that Palestinian identity is the subject of my book, this story resonates particularly strongly for me. In its affirmative framework of Palestinian identity, Turki's story raises the following question: if one's roots are too much to handle in the present, is the Palestinian subject then able to escape these roots in exile? In order to answer this question, Turki begins his story by telling about his attempts to "run away" from the misery of living in the refugee camps and to find, what he calls, "an alternative order of at-homeness" in Australia.

This is how Turki narrates the attempt to escape his Palestinian roots:

> By the middle of 1968, I had been around for twenty-seven years. And if you want a proof that youth is wasted on the young, what I had done with my life up till then is proof enough. For here I was, a Palestinian boy from the refugee camps, buzzing around the Australian bush, shearing sheep, working with road gangs, and toiling in the iron ore mines in the northwest. Palestine was several time zones away, and its memory was already beginning to fade in my mind. Truth to be told, there was

> more to it than that. When I'd arrived in Australia at age nineteen, I was some sort of a runaway, seeking an alternative order of at-homeness. I wanted to escape my roots. I didn't need my damn roots nagging away at me the whole time or have them daily shoved in my face, as they had been when I was growing up in Beirut. I didn't need others to remind me of my otherness whichever way I turned. In short, I was too young to be a Palestinian. I belonged to a people who had been brought to ruin by a fiercely parochial settler movement [Zionism] feeding on the drug of racial hatred and aggression that it had brought with them from Europe, a movement that in a relatively short time had put us in desperate flight across our borders, reduced us to being squatters in other people's lands, and tried to hound us out of history. (9–10)

Turki's opening words carry the reader from the abstraction of a metaphorical description of loss of homeland into the actuality of its imaginings in exile. For example, beneath the wide expansive picture of his daily life in Australia, Turki takes us (both as readers of his text and listeners to his story) into the small details of his personal memory of the past but only to bring us back to the actuality of his present exile from Palestine. Speaking in a direct discourse to an assumed listener, and almost on a challenging tone, Turki presents his personal experience as a Palestinian exile as a manifestation of how the time of youth is wasted. In so doing, Turki focalizes the Palestinian subject's existence in exile first and foremost as a problematic experience, not merely of place but *of* and *in* time. For Turki, being a Palestinian exile is an everyday condition that serves as "proof enough" for wasting one's time. Narratively, this "proof" is manifest in the difference in years between Turki's escape from the refugee camps in Lebanon at the age of 19 and his realization of his Palestinian roots at 27 while in Australia.

This time-bound evocation of the exiled subject's life is also confirmed by the content narrated: Turki's reasons for escaping his roots. Turki explicitly presents himself as a "runaway" who is *willingly* seeking a different home—"I was some sort of a runaway [. . .] I wanted to escape my roots." The final part of his description, however, transforms his seemingly willful desertion of his roots into a "desperate flight," part of the collective uprooting of the Palestinian people as a whole: "desperate flight across our borders [. . .], reduced us to being squatters in other people's lands." The word "squatter" here is a direct reference to the presence of Palestinian resistance movement (the PLO as a political force) in refugee camps in Lebanon during the civil war (1976–1982).[8] The contrast between the words "runaway" and "squatter" in Turki's

description signifies that the Palestinians, having survived the destruction of *al-Nakba* and ended up in exile, now became illegal occupants of other peoples' places.

The practice of "squatting," together with the act of "running away," is connected to a reduced form of survival in Palestinian exile. This is most clear in Turki's description of his personal experience of the refugee camps, which fits in with Palestinians' collective perceptions of life in those camps as what Rosemary Sayigh calls an "abnormal state of being" (2005: 18)—a state of being that asserts varied adaptations but also a deep sense of homelessness. As I already argued in the second chapter, both the varied adaptations of the refugee camp experience and the sense of being "not at home" in exile have become distinct constructs of what constitutes contemporary Palestinian exilic identity.[9]

Moreover, Turki's narration exposes a layered structure of the subject's story of Palestinian exile. At the end of the passage quoted, Turki's storytelling deploys a narrative sequence that leads the reader to discover "the truth" of exilic existence. This narrative sequence moves away from condemnation (from *mankoub*) to conviction (re-Palestinianization): the final sentence has the form of an affirmative generalization, "I belonged to a people who had been brought to ruin by a fiercely parochial settler movement [. . .]." This narrative sequence influences the reader: it triggers a different effect that emerges from reading Turki's story before the phrase "Truth to be told" and after it—his description of Zionism. As a consequence, Turki's presentation of the story not only qualifies his choice "to escape" but also, more importantly, it reveals what determines this choice (or better lack of choice) in the present. This reading effect happens as follows.

At the moment when Turki utters the words "Truth to be told [. . .] I wanted to escape my roots. I didn't need my damn roots nagging away at me the whole time," the reader, at first, reacts with shock and disbelief at the explicit ideology of the narrative discourse through which he presents his attempted escape from his roots. The personification of Palestinian roots as nagging parents is, indeed, expressive and communicative of a strong desire to escape, yet "too real" and generic at the same time.

This reaction, however, turns into understanding immediately after Turki's explanation of what the Zionist movement did to the Palestinians: "[Zionism] [. . .] tried to hound us out of history." This sentence exposes the essence of *al-Nakba* and the violation of Palestinian exilic identity: Palestinians are subjected to a forced displacement from place and crucially condemned of a *re-placement* in history; hence in time. Turki's

imagining of the Palestinian subject's existence as well as his or her life is stretched to its extreme, back into the actuality of exile. It is only at this point of the narrative that the reader's perception of what is being told (the subject's attempted escape from Palestinian roots) triggers his or her imagining of what, and the extent to which, Palestinian "uprooting" from home *does to* the subject's life (and his or her choices) in exile. The condition of being put "out of place" forces the Palestinian subject *out* of him- or herself in time. At stake here is the violent psychology of forced exile, which characterizes Palestinians' existence today. This violence manifests itself in Turki's statement, "I was too young to be a Palestinian." This statement signifies his late realization of loss of homeland as well as the long duration of the Palestinians' expulsion and denial of access to their homes.

In Palestinian exile, this narrative imagining of the impact of uprooting on the subject's existence both evokes the reader's personal empathy, and gets him or her involved in the story. Taking into consideration the oral and written circumstances of Turki's narrative, this narrative effect aims at merging the personal (or private) and public realms. This merging is necessary for conceptualizing the relationship between the Palestinian subject and his or her existence in exile as a political cause for the liberation of his or her life: the Palestinian self as struggling for its selfhood.

Similar narrative articulations of the Palestinian subject's inability (if not the impossibility) to keep the personal and the public realms separate can be found in other narratives in the collection. For example, the following passage from the story of Shafiq Al-Hout (1932) describes his involvement in the Palestinian cause against exile at the end of his narrative:

> So I have spent forty years of my life as a full-time militant in the Palestinian movement, and I hope to spend the rest of my life on the same road. From the time I left Jaffa, I have not been able to separate what is called private from what is called public life, to distinguish between myself and the cause. And if any Palestinian tries to do so he will find others who will remind him that he cannot, no matter how hard he tries. (27)

As Al-Hout's description emphatically shows, for the Palestinian subject, the merging of the personal and the public realms represents a lifetime experience of struggling *for life*. In this struggle, the subject cannot "distinguish between [him- or herself] and the cause." This

impossibility to distinguish domains of life is given narrative shape. According to Al-Hout, the Palestinian subject, "no matter how hard he tries," will constantly fail to establish a complete divide between the personal and the public and he or she "will find others who will remind him [or her] that he cannot." This is precisely what Turki's story and the other ones in "Reflections on Al-Nakba" are attempting to achieve: not so much to gain our sympathy for the Palestinians but to remind us of their modes of existence in exile; an existence wherein the personal and the public merge.

Like Al-Hout, Turki also cannot separate the personal from the public. In Turki's story, this takes the form of his inability to escape his Palestinian roots. Living in Australia, "several time zones away from Palestine," Turki has found the ideal natural setting to escape the past:

> I could not have chosen a better place to flee to. The forbidding landscape of the Australian outback has a way about it—about its searing heat, its unfamiliar rhythms, its influence on the human imagination, its rock and ash and echoes, and the expanse of stars in its night sky—that makes a man jump outside the skin of his past. (10)

Turki's description of Australia as "a place to flee to" focalizes that country as a place that has all the requirements of forgetting, an "amnesic place." However, this amnesic place, which "makes a man jump outside the skin of the past," neither makes Turki forget nor helps him to escape his past. This is, of course, why memory is so crucial to identity. He cannot escape his past simply because his memories of himself (and life) as a Palestinian "always come back":

> But that, I discovered after a while, I could not escape. For it would always come back, that past, as if it were an ache, an ache from a sickness a man didn't know he had. Like the smell of ripened figs at a Perth supermarket that would place me, for one blissful moment, under that big fig tree in the backyard of our house in Haifa. Like the taste of sea salt in my mouth as I swam in the Indian Ocean that would take me back to the Mediterranean, our own ancient sea. Like the apocalyptic images that my mind would dredge up, out of nowhere, of our refugee exodus twenty years before, as we trekked north on the coastal road to Lebanon, where pregnant women gave birth on the wayside, screaming to heaven with labor pain, and where children walked alone, with no hands to hold. Like the memories of my first year at Burj al-Barajneh—a makeshift refugee camp on the outskirts of Beirut—when I was always hungry. And cold. And angry. Angry that the tricycle that my dad had

> brought me a short time before our flight was left behind in Haifa and that some Jewish kid was now riding it around. These evocations loomed large in my consciousness, where they had taken irrevocable tenure. I could no more escape them than I could my skin. The sheer force of my Palestinian past had seeped into the quick of my very being and had a mastering grip on my identity. There was no escaping that—Australian bush or no Australian bush. As a Palestinian in exile, I carried some mighty heavy cargo on my back, and when I was, as it were, driven to unpack it [. . .] I would feel that anger again, that same anger from twenty years before, welling up in me like vomit. (10)

Turki cannot escape his roots because the memories of his past life in Palestine continuously invade his existence as "acts of memory" in the present. These acts aggravate, almost assault his mind, and his body, or more precisely, his senses—the crossroads between mind and body. This can be appreciated in the similes he uses to describe these memories such as "the smell of a ripened fig," "the taste of the sea," and "my mind would dredge up." These evocations ground his memory as both mental in terms of imagination and physical in terms of the senses of touch and taste. This mode of remembering intensifies the subject's feelings of his or her Palestinian identity. Thus, Turki's identity as a Palestinian combines, through memory, the imaginative as much as the corporeal, coalescing in an identity that Turki "could no more escape than [he] could escape [his] skin."

Furthermore, Turki's storytelling of his memories signifies that his acts of memory always come back in exile as a burden: "an ache from a sickness a man didn't know he had." The word "an ache" is relevant to the understanding that, in Palestinian exile, the subject's memories function neither as a relief from nor as a supplement to what was lost. This is a radical departure from the constructive use of nostalgic remembering as I discussed it in the first chapter. This is so because Turki's memories unleash "apocalyptic images," images "of our refugee exodus." These images do not diminish the subject's loss of place but rather amplify it. The moment Turki remembers, all he feels is "that same anger from twenty years before, welling up in [him] like vomit." The simile of "vomit" is expressive of a very physical and uncontrollable sickness that recurs in waves. This simile makes Turki's anger specific: the enemy's hatred is a strange body inside him.

Turki's imaging of how the memories of his Palestinian roots come back to him exposes his life in exile as an experience of what I call "catastrophic time." By "catastrophic time," I am referring to the Palestinian subject's experience of the temporality of *al-Nakba* in ongoing exile. In

order to assess this notion of "catastrophic time," I propose to understand it in terms of the distinction between phenomena and the subjective experience of multi-temporality in the event of migration—what Mieke Bal calls "heterochrony." In her article, "Double Movement," Bal argues that migration is:

> the experience of time as multiple, heterogeneous. This experience includes multiple times between the time of haste and waiting, the time of movement and stagnation, the time of memory and of an unsettling present. The phenomenon I call multi-temporality; the experience of it, heterochrony. (2008: 1)

Bal's distinction between the phenomenon of multi-temporality and its subjective experience in and through time foregrounds travel, movement, and the subject's everyday life as migratory conditions of the postcolonial world. This distinction helps me to read the multiple temporality of the event of *al-Nakba* as well as the subject's heterochronic experience of exile in the present.

In Turki's story, the multi-temporality of subjective experience of *al-Nakba* is manifest in his description of life in exile. Having failed to escape his Palestinian roots, Turki's life in exile is nothing but a time of waiting:

> And here I was in Australia, a Palestinian kid with a name too difficult to pronounce and a patrimony too difficult to locate, talking to myself and waiting for Godot. No matter. For unlike Beckett's two vagrants, I was destined, as were other Palestinians of my generation, to meet that mythical character. Our massive silence, it turned out, our I-me dialogue, our self-address over the previous two decades, was itself a kind of rhetoric [...] Nineteen Sixty-Eight. There was something magical about it all [...] It happened all over the planet, all at once, all the same year: from the general rebellion in France, known as "les événements," that brought down the de Gaulle government, to the antiwar movement in the United States that brought down the Johnson administration; from the Tet offensive in Vietnam to the Cultural Revolution in China; from the Tupamararos in Uruguay to the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland (when Catholics and Protestants marched together for the first time); from the student takeover of Columbia University to the Hippie dropout in Haight Ashbury; from the student protest against Communist rule in Poland to those similar protests against the Russian invasion in Czechoslovakia; from the Beatles releasing their "Helter Skelter" album to feminists disrupting the Miss America Pageant; from

> the bloody confrontation in Chicago outside the Democratic Convention head-quarters to the "three M formulations" (Marcuse, Marx and Mao) of the new left [. . .] it was no wonder that Jimmy Morrison was singing then, "We want the world, and we want it all now." And we were there too, part of it all. We the Palestinians were there doing our own thing—in Karameh, in March of that year. (11)

Turki's storytelling of 1948 through 1968 marks the catastrophe's multi-temporality. It also exposes his subjective experience of this multi-temporality. This can be seen at work in the simultaneity of the date and the waiting: the time of event (1948) and the time of stagnation (1968). The moment of narration takes place in 1968 and not in 1948. As I argued earlier in the case of Nofal's narrative, the storytelling of *al-Nakba* in the after of its event problematizes its singularity and, thus, delineates temporal variations of its subjective experience in the present.

Turki's imagining of his experience in exile as a condition of waiting—through the metaphorical evocation of Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* (1952)—foregrounds this condition as a time of endless and absurd waiting. The combination of the phrases "to meet the mythical character," "massive silence," and "our I-me dialogue" signifies that Turki and his generation of Palestinians waited too long in exile, but also that their cries for help were not heard by the world. Time in exile appears, then, as a predicament. For Turki, the only way to endure this predicament is by updating its time. Turki's naming of the various revolutionary events that took place in 1968—"It happened all over the planet, all at once, all the same year: from the general rebellion in France [. . .]"—positions the Palestinians' struggle in a global context of resistance and emancipation. It also signifies a movement of and in time: All the events that Turki recalls evoke struggles for change and are, hence, temporally forward looking.

However, unlike Beckett's characters and other people in the world, in Turki's case movement in time and looking ahead is utterly grounded in the act of looking back. This is how Turki continues his description:

> Except for one thing. Everybody else was saying: There is no looking back. Are you kidding? Our movement was all about looking back. We could not move forward in 1968 without looking back to 1948—looking back anew at what had happened to us during the two decades on either side of that year. (11)

Thus, for the Palestinians, there is no movement forward without looking back to 1948. And "looking back" always entails the question:

> So the bastards think they have gotten away with it? Hell, no. These people have walked off with our home and homeland, with our moveable and immovable property, with our land, our farms, our shops, our public buildings, our paved roads, our cars, our theatres, our clubs, our parks, our furniture, our tricycles. They hounded us [...] and shoved us in refugee camps. They so thoroughly destroyed our villages that nothing was left of them but the wind that now blew through them. And they even robbed us of our name. Yes, our name got lost in the shuffle in 1948. Those of us in exile became known as "the Arab refugees." Those in the West Bank became "Jordanians." Those few who stayed behind became "Israeli Arabs." And those in Gaza, well, heck, no one even knew what to call them. We were the people that history was supposed to have forgotten and that God was supposed to have given His back to. Excuuuuuse me! I guess both needed a bit of a nudge. And we gave them that in 1968. This was a short time after the "Israelis," as they came to call themselves, were able to conquer and occupy the 23 percent remnant of our country. (11)

Turki's description of the Palestinians' persistent "looking back" is relevant to the subject's experience of the multi-temporality of *al-Nakba* in the present as an experience of "catastrophic time." This is so because the act of "looking back to 1948" constantly reveals a violent destruction of the past, "[t]hese people have walked off with our home." The stark image of people carrying off homes on their backs is one example of the need for concrete depiction. By "concrete depiction," I mean here that the analysis of narrative imaginings of Palestinian catastrophe and exile needs to be first and foremost the analysis of the individual subject but precisely to expose his or her past and present positions within the collective narrative of loss of homeland. To interpret *al-Nakba*, through this image of the Israelis "walking off" with the homes of Palestinians, then, is to expose not only the ways in which Palestinians were forcefully displaced from place but more importantly how they are being replaced in time.

Twenty years after *al-Nakba*, at the moment of narration in Turki's story, and 64 years, at the moment of reading (and listening to) his narrative, the violent destruction of the Palestinian past settles, through memory, the present of the catastrophed subject. It also articulates his or her exile as a time not of movement but of stagnation, almost "standstill." This narrative articulation is not merely grounded in the

material destruction of the homeland: "They so thoroughly destroyed our villages that nothing was left of them but the wind that now blew through them." As a consequence, symbolically it is also constituted by the facts that, together with the material destruction of the land, the Palestinians were "robbed" of their names so that they ended as nameless refugees in exile. This material-symbolic depletion is at work in Turki's description of how both the theft of identity and the subsequent dispersion complicate the Palestinian subject's existence in exile as a condition of "stagnant waiting." For this exiled subject, to move forward in time entails first and foremost a restoration of his or her "stolen" identity. Hence, the resistance to the theft of identity constantly conditions the Palestinian subject's envisioning of the future. This subject's movement in time in the ongoing exile is always a movement towards changing "the past of and in this present." Turki's emphatic exclamation, "Excuuuuuse me!" bears out this understanding in two ways.

First, the "Americanism" of his exclamation, through its sonoric effect of the prolongated "u," signifies that Turki's narrative at this point is specifically directed to an American audience. Second, and more importantly, his exclamation articulates the Palestinian subject's refusal of the destruction of the past, but at the same time expresses his or her resistance to such destruction in the present. This resistance is reflected in the centrality of the year 1968 in his story, which indicates, for Turki, the time of resistance—the year of the battles of "Karameh [dignity] in March of that year"—in which the Palestinians gave themselves as well as the Israelis "a bit of a nudge." On the one hand, this nudge for the Palestinians served to raise their awareness of the need for resistance in exile. On the other hand, for the Israelis, this nudge was the point when the Palestinians launched their struggle to reclaim their stolen name. As Turki puts it:

> If the Israelis feared us at that time, what they feared was not our military might—we had none—but the resurrection of our name. For once we wrested control of our name and etched it on the conscience of the world, we raised a question that became a deadly threat to Israel's very legitimacy: If these people are Palestinians, the world wondered, then they came from Palestine, and if they came from Palestine, then why they are not allowed to return there? (12)

Thus, for Turki, what the Palestinian resistance in exile achieved is that it gave the Palestinians their name back on the world stage. Immediately

after this reflection, Turki's description shifts to what the catastrophic loss of home concretely means for him:

> Now they were astride the whole of historic Palestine and then some, jubilant at their new role as latter day colonial overlords [. . .] They robbed us (I keep using this word because no other will do) of our homeland, superimposed their own state on it, and then proceeded to define what they had created in isolation of its impact on our lives and national destiny. Now they have the chutzpah (a word they coined) to celebrate their crime this year, with much fanfare, exactly half a century after the fact. Look, I am angry. Still angry after all these years. Here's one reason. A while back, on the eve of the Gulf war, I returned to the old country for a visit—yes, these people would allow a Palestinian Arab (with a Western passport) "to visit," but welcome a Russian Jew "to live" in Palestine. I went to the house where I was born. The house with the big backyard and the big fig tree. The house where I had left my tricycle behind in 1948. The house where I had my original leap to consciousness. The house where God had willed me to be born, like all His creatures, to an inviolate freedom. The house I was to grow up and acquire a past in. I knocked on the door and some low-life immigrant, with an Eastern European accent, opened it, and when he realized who I was, refused me the right even to look around. (12–13)

Turki's choice of words such as "robbing" and "superimposing" is quite revealing. Turki stresses the theft of Palestinian identity as a colonial endeavor, "Now [. . .] jubilant at their new role as latter day colonial overlords." His insistence on the theft of Palestinian identity through the repetitive occurrence of the phrase "robbed us" allows this "theft" to gather temporal significance as a "crime" in the present; "half a century after the fact." This can be seen in Turki's reasoning for his anger when he returns to visit his home in Palestine. In this encounter, he is not only banned from having a past in his home but also effectively denied the right to look around. It is precisely this denial of home as a site of "having a past" in the present that causes Turki's anger.

At the end of his story, Turki describes how the Palestinians, despite both their loss of home in the past and their exclusion from it in the present, have managed to preserve their cultural identity. Significantly, he introduces this resilience with the temporal injunction to wait:

> But wait! Our remembrance of where we came from has not torn at the edges. We have not, even after these fifty years, been hounded into oblivion. Palestinian exiles, wherever they are, share the same historical preoccupation, that same turn of phrase, that same communicative

> internality, that same love for the hammer beat of *al-awda* [the return] song that we all grew up singing ("who am I?/ who are ye?/ I am the returnee/ I am the returnee") and that we today hum to our children as we tuck them in every night. We'll still be around fifty years from now, and if Israel is still around—a doubtful proposition, if you ask me—we'll be knocking on its doors, asking to be let in. And if there is no response, we'll break the door down. We'll break the door down, baby. If God is my witness, we'll break it down. My children are not growing up in refugee camps as I have done. They are not living in a host state whose authorities snarl at their heels, or place them close to the door for easy eviction, as their father had lived in Arab host states. But they do realize that, though they are loyal Americans, only in their ancestral homeland would their larger identity be housed, and only through the struggle to liberate it do they become enduringly defined. (13–14)

This description reveals two specific aspects of Palestinian resilience. First, Palestinian identity appears to be as built around a shared experience of the subject's present sense of history in exile: "Palestinian exiles, wherever they are, share the same historical preoccupation." For Turki, what characterizes this exilic identity is the collective belief in the notion of *al-awda* (the return). He describes the dynamics through which Palestinians share the notion of *al-awda* through its song. Palestinians not only have the "same love" that *al-awda*'s song embodies, "that we all grew up singing," but more significantly they also "hum" this song to their children. This act of "humming" brings with it the second aspect of the construction of Palestinian exilic identity—memory transmission. The act of humming to the children signifies a cultural mode of transmission of Palestinian memory, signified both in the loss of words—humming consists of inarticulate sounds—and, at the same time, in the repetition of an old song whose implied lyrics are only too well known. As a result of this memory transmission, Palestinian exilic identity appears as transgenerational.

In Turki's narrative, memory as an aspect of Palestinian identity undergoes a shift in function. Unlike in the beginning of his story, where memory recalls the burden of loss of home, at the close of Turki's story memory turns into a sign of hope and resistance to overcome the predicament of this loss in exile. Memory is now future-oriented:

> We'll still be around fifty years from now [. . .] My children are not growing up in refugee camps [. . .] only in their ancestral homeland would their larger identity be housed, and only through the struggle to liberate it do they become enduringly defined.

What holds Turki's images together is the phrase "my children," which signifies continuity of hope and resistance against the loss of home in exile. If Turki and his first generation cannot overcome the loss of home, then this loss can be overcome by the later generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians. Turki expresses the conviction that resistance is the only means through which his children's identity can be "enduringly defined" as Palestinians, finally *at home*.

But there is more to Turki's use of memory. What characterizes his imagination is that he describes his children's identity as Palestinians even though they were neither born in Palestine nor grew up in refugee camps. It is precisely here that his memory takes on, yet again, a different function. This time memory appears as a tool of self-preservation of the identity of later generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians. The cultural transmission of memory, from parent to child through the act of humming the song, both feeds the exiled subject's notions of hope and resistance and affects his or her identity as specifically "Palestinian."

Similar conceptions of the role of memory as a tool for the preservation of the identity of the later generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians can be found in the other narratives of the collection. A poignant example is told by Inea Bushnaq (1938). Consider the following fragment in which she describes how her American-born daughter performs her Palestinian identity in spite of being away from Palestine most of her life:

> And if the loss of Palestine were my chief bequest, I have watched my American-born daughter follow in some of my long ago footsteps. She has trotted to the *furun*, the communal bake house, with a tray-load of risen dough balanced on her head. She has developed a taste for green almonds with salt and fresh chickpeas roasted on the vine. And, finally, she said to me on the Hudson Street, New York, "Stop! Doesn't that smell make you think for a second that you are in Ramallah?" (18–19)

Thus, by following in the footsteps of her mother, the daughter asserts her identity as a Palestinian. The act of "following in the footsteps" signifies the memory transmission in Palestinian exile from one generation to another. This act, and more precisely where it takes place in the case of "mother-daughter" relationship, has another cultural connotation: Palestinian tradition. *El Bint Tala'a La Emha* ("Like mother, like daughter") is a common saying in Palestinian culture signifying not merely the natural but also the nurturing aspect of identity interconnection and positioning, and thus, memory transmission in the process of growth and the act of teaching the "how to" that it entails. Not only

do we see the daughter performing Palestinian identity by mastering traditional acts of baking bread, "She has trotted to the *furun*," but we also see her enacting this identity through the senses: "She has developed a taste," and she recognizes a smell. This reenactment and mastering of performance of identity is never quite attainable without a memory.

These narrative evocations of the role of the familial (or transgenerational) transmission of memory in the preservation of Palestinian identity in exile relate to the problematic notion of "post-memory" of *al-Nakba*. As I already pointed out in my introduction to this book, I do not use "post-memory" to suggest that *al-Nakba* is in the past, but on the contrary to suggest that the originating moment of the ongoing catastrophe has been transmitted to subsequent generations of Palestinians. I shall return shortly and discuss further how "post-memory" can be interpreted in the Palestinian context in the next section. It suffices to say at this point that the significance of the narrative evocations of transgenerational transmission of memory is grounded in the questions they engender concerning the ways in which we conceive of Palestinian identity, especially of the later generations who have not experienced *al-Nakba* of 1948. Some of these questions include, for example, whether the identity of these subjects is completely constituted by their parents' memories of the historical event? And, is the postmemorial discourse of *al-Nakba*—through the familial transmission of the memory of 1948—the only discourse that shapes the identity of post-*Nakba* Palestinians today?

These questions bring me to the final set of oral narratives of *al-Nakba* that I wish to analyze in this chapter: the narratives of Yazid Sayigh (1955) from "Reflections on Al-Nakba" and a selection of the interviews that I collected during my fieldwork in the Gaza Strip. I choose to analyze these narratives as one set because they are all told by Palestinians from second and third generations of post-*Nakba*. In my reading of these narratives, the question I wish to address is the following: for the later generations of Palestinians, what is it precisely that constitutes their experience and memory of catastrophe, since they were not yet born when it happened? This question complements my earlier discussion of the multi-temporality of *al-Nakba* and the Palestinian subject's heterochronic experience as an experience of catastrophic time. As I will attempt to show below, the Palestinian identity of later generations is not merely constructed through their parents' memories (post-memories) of the 1948 *Nakba* but rather shaped through their everyday experience of exile.

Palestinian Identity Beyond the Post-Memory of *al-Nakba*

If Turki's story foregrounds the identity of his children as Palestinians in terms of familial (or transgenerational) memory, Yazid Sayigh's narrative elaborates on the construction of such an identity in the present. More than half a century after *al-Nakba*, what is the spatiotemporal nature of the loss of home that determines the identity of second and third generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians? This is the question that Sayigh's narrative addresses. Here is how he opens his story:

> For an instant, before I have time to reflect, 1948 is encapsulated for me in two photographs I have in my study. One, in black and white, is an outside shot of my paternal grandparents posing with their seven children in Tiberias in the early 1940s. The other, this time in color, was taken by my mother during a visit in 1980 and shows the front of the family house with its triple arched *liwan* and the black volcanic stone construction typical of the area. Neither photograph hints at the conflict that engulfed family and house; only my knowledge links them. Yet they reveal to me the way in which my images and imaginings—of life in Palestine in the Mandate years, of the individual stories of my father and his parents and siblings, and of the collective uprooting of 1947–49—are telescoped into what has always seemed to me like a single event, depriving me of the detail and texture of a much richer fabric. (19)

Sayigh's narrative presents us with a typical mode of what I call "post-memorial storytelling" in exile. This mode can be observed in his description of his family's photographs. The two photographs are presented through a stark difference. Temporally, while the black and white photograph is taken before *al-Nakba* in "the early 1940s," the color one is taken in "1980." In contrast to the color photograph, Sayigh's uncertainty about the exact date of the black and white one highlights the generational gap of his experience. Thematically, the difference between the photographs is determined by their content. In the black and white photograph, we see Sayigh's grandparents with their children at home in Tiberias, and in the color one we now see the children who became parents (Sayigh's mother), together with their children (Sayigh himself), visiting the lost home—in exile as homeless tourists.

Moreover, Sayigh's knowledge of the two photographs is noteworthy: "only [his] knowledge links them." In this sentence, the word "knowledge" denotes Sayigh's specific narrative position through which his storytelling becomes emphatically "post-memorial": precisely, his knowledge does not equal his memory. This post-memorial

mode of storytelling is highlighted further in how Sayigh's "knowledge of his family's stories" affects his personal relationship with the photographs. Through this knowledge, not only is he able to bridge the temporal gap between the photographs but he is also able to establish a thematic continuity between them in terms of their common subject; the loss of home. Hence, the intergenerational continuity of the Palestinian experience—from his grandparents to his mother and to Sayigh himself.

At this juncture, and before proceeding with my analysis of the rest of Sayigh's story, let me clarify my use of the term "post-memory" and what I mean by the intergenerational continuity of the Palestinian experience. This term, "post-memory," was introduced in discussions about the Holocaust. The Holocaust as a historical event is, however, fundamentally different from *al-Nakba* as a historical event. Although both are catastrophic events, the Holocaust belongs to the past: it was over when the Second World War ended. *Al-Nakba*, I argue, has an originating moment in the past, namely in 1948, but as a historical event it does not at all belong to the past; it extends into the present of Palestinian exile. In order to unpack this argument, I will problematize both "post-memory" and the intergenerational continuity of loss in terms of two theoretical insights as offered by Marianne Hirsch and Ernst van Alphen. The vigor of Hirsch's and Van Alphen's insights—both distinctively different as they are raised within the context of the Holocaust—is that their grounding of post-memory configures aspects of its cultural transmission in geopolitically conflicted discourses, and they do so not merely in terms of historical and individual trauma but also in terms of post-memory as a "site-specific memorization" that affects subjective identification in the present.

In her article "Projected Memories: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," Hirsch conceptualizes post-memory as a means to understand the complexities of the memories of the children of Holocaust survivors as well as the processes of cultural transmission of memory itself. For Hirsch, the significance of post-memory as a specific form of memory distinguished from memory in general depends on generational distance and deep familial connections, and is ultimately grounded in its mediation "not through recollection, but rather through imaginative investment." Moreover, what underlies Hirsch's conceptualization is a particular model of post-memory, which she describes as follows: "as I can 'remember' my parents' memories, I can also 'remember' the suffering of others." At the heart of Hirsch's model of post-memory is "an *ethical* relationship" to suffering, and understandably so

in terms of the Holocaust, in which the subjects (the children) "adopt traumatic experiences—and thus memories—of others as one's own" (1999: 8–9). Thus, for Hirsch, post-memory serves as a model in which a continuity of intergenerational transmission of traumatic memory and experiences becomes possible through imagination.[10]

This brings me to the second theoretical insight on post-memory, that of Van Alphen. In his article "Second-Generation Testimony, Transmission of Trauma, and Postmemory," Van Alphen questions the terms "post-memory," "survivor," and "second and third generations." According to Van Alphen, these terms "share with the idea of intergenerational transmission of trauma the claim of a fundamental continuity between generations." Van Alphen, however, rejects this idea of fundamental continuity between generations, and argues instead that, particularly in the case of the Holocaust, "the dynamics between children and survivor parents is rather defined by dis-connection, hence dis-continuity: disconnection not in an emotional, personal sense but in terms of intelligibility." Hence, what underlies Van Alphen's critique of post-memory is that the transmission of effect is not the same as the transmission of memory, and certainly not of the experience itself. In other words, for Van Alphen, "second and third generations" do not *really* have memories of the traumatic events but rather the effect related to it in their parents' experience (2006: 488).

Taking into consideration my earlier argument of the multi-temporality of *al-Nakba* and the subject's experience of this multi-temporality in exile, both Hirsch's model of the intergenerational continuity of memory and experience, and Van Alphen's distinction between memory and effect, trigger some personal reflection on my part as well as a closer look at Sayigh's post-memorial mode of storytelling with respect to the Palestinian situation. Insofar as my personal experience is relevant here, as an exiled Palestinian from the third generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, I can only substantiate that my own knowledge of my family's stories of *al-Nakba* constitute my memory of *their* experience of the catastrophe. But these memories, working in Van Alphen's vein, are by no means constitutive of my own memory and experience of catastrophe—my *al-Nakba* happens in ongoing exile. For me, the closest model I can come up with to describe my post-memories of *al-Nakba* would be as follows: as I can remember my family's memories of 1948, I can also remember the suffering *not* of others, as Hirsch would have it, but rather my own, my loss of home in the everyday.

Thus, the intergenerational continuity of the Palestinian experience of loss of homeland does not constitute a given construct of Palestinian identity. Instead, as I indicated in my introduction to this book, what

underlies this continuity in the Palestinian case is a present-oriented model of post-memory. In this model, not only the self, the child, takes the position of the other, the parent, but also the distinction between the memories of what the parents lived through in 1948 and what the children experience in the present may become so conflated and blurred that the intergenerational continuity of loss of place can in fact be sustained both in memory and everyday experience. This is so because the Palestinians' loss of homeland, through their exile, did not stop. Hence, in the case of Palestinians, the problem of the term "post-memory" is not so much with memory but with "post." The "post" is by no means constitutive of the experience of catastrophe of subsequent generations of Palestinians; they do not have just post-memories of *al-Nakba*. Whereas the first generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians have memories and experiences of the originating event of *al-Nakba*, second and third generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, although they have not experienced this originating moment in 1948, are still "inside" the event itself living the catastrophe every day.

Similar dynamics take place in Sayigh's narrative. In the passage I have quoted, this can be seen in what Sayigh's knowledge of his family's stories reveals to him in the two photographs. In his case, this knowledge reveals "images and imaginings" (19) that are composed of both individual and collective uprootings. These images and imaginings constantly lead him into what "always seemed [to him] like a single event." Sayigh's description shows, to use Van Alphen's terminology, that what is transmitted through his parents' memories is both the "emotional" and the "personal" effect of their experience but not the *real* experience of the event of *al-Nakba* (2006: 473–88). This conceptualization manifests itself to the extent that *al-Nakba* appears, for Sayigh, as a single event that "deprives" him of the "details" of his parents' experiences of the past event. For Sayigh, these details remain "un-intelligible." This is why he simply cannot narrate them. Unlike Nofal's and Turki's narratives, as well as the other narratives of the first generation of post-*Nakba* that I analyzed throughout this book, nowhere in his story does Sayigh tell the details of the 1948 *Nakba*. Instead, for Sayigh, the only way to expose the details of the past is by shifting the focus of his story from 1948 to the ongoing catastrophe of exile—his own *Nakba*.

This shift of focus can be seen in Sayigh's plea for the need to deconstruct the singularity of the historical event of *al-Nakba*:

> For if there is one thing that I come away with from thinking about 1948, it is the need to deconstruct it and subject its distinct strands to separate analysis before reintegrating them in a dynamic narrative

> that is whole but multifaceted and multilayered and therefore both contractible and expandable [...] 1948 is of course more than a series of historical events that took place in 1947–49 and that had specific, calculable material results. Were that the case, the Palestinian struggle would have been reducible to a legal and "technical political" dispute over repatriation and compensation, which it never was. Rather, it is precisely because for Palestinians 1948 is also about the content, form, and meaning of national identity as practiced in different symbolic and existential contexts—therefore involving variations, adaptations, and compromises—that we must cease to think of as a single event, from which we derive in unilinear fashion assumptions about who Palestinians are, how they came to be and how they will behave. (20–21)

According to Sayigh, then, the deconstruction of the singularity of *al-Nakba* is indispensable to expose both its multi-temporality and the subject's experience in the present. Moreover, this deconstruction positions *al-Nakba* in a direct relation to the construction of Palestinian exilic identity. For Sayigh, just as we "must cease to think" of *al-Nakba* as a singular event, Palestinian identity also needs to be understood as varied and multiple. Thus, the historical event must both be deconstructed and integrated into the fabric of Palestinian experience in the present.

This is what happens in the rest of Sayigh's story. He presents us, almost in the style of an academic essay, three analytical distinctions that are required for the simultaneous deconstruction and integration of *al-Nakba* in the everyday. The first distinction is phrased in terms of what happened "before" and what came "after" *al-Nakba*. As Sayigh puts it, to distinguish between the before and the after is to make a distinction "between the structural social, economic, political, and cultural discourse and practices of Palestinian society as they evolved in the late Ottoman and [British] Mandate periods, as they were transformed during the intense and sweeping dislocations of 1947–49, and as they adapted to post-*Nakba* realities" (20). The second distinction that Sayigh proposes is related to the multiplicity of the narrative of *al-Nakba* "between the all-embracing nature of 1948 [...] and the myriad responses to the unfolding of events of 1947–49 and equally myriad adaptations to their aftermath, which were influenced in varying degrees and combinations by background markers [...] as well as by external agency" (20).

Sayigh's third analytical distinction concerns the construction of his own Palestinian identity in the present. For him, identity takes place "between his personal and political responses to 1948," especially how

"[his] understanding of, and relation to, 1948 has shifted over time" (20). For Sayigh, then, the deconstruction and reintegration of *al-Nakba* in the present involves, first and foremost, the understanding of this experience as an ongoing event. This understanding is manifest in the ways in which the Palestinians' loss of homeland (individual and collective) has unfolded since 1948 both imaginatively so much as discursively.

This imaginative-discursive conceptualization of *al-Nakba* is brought out most concretely in the final two fragments of Sayigh's story. Here is the first of them:

> I moreover strongly suspect that, although my own image of 1948 has been softened from the outset by middle-class upbringing and exposure to cosmopolitan lifestyles and universalistic liberal beliefs, Palestinians similarly born after 1948 who have had to contend with a much harsher aftermath in refugee camps or under Israeli occupation must nonetheless share with me at least a telescoped, compressed, and relativized perspective of 1948. Not that it is not hugely important to them, but simply that their emotional and perceptual stance cannot but be shaped both by their generational distance and by the immediacy of the socioeconomic settings and politico-administrative contexts in which they live. Reviewing the way in which 1948 has been narrated to date and how it has been related to subsequent institutional discourses and practices—by Palestinians—I am struck by the tyranny of the (male, class, and institution-dominated) nationalist narrative, and in particular by the narcissism of intellectuals [. . .] simplifying and homogenizing their experiences and obscuring the fact that they, too, have varied and layered memories, feelings, and even readings of 1948. (22)

In this fragment, Sayigh offers us a concrete conceptual framework for understanding the identity of later generations of Palestinians both in terms of their post-memories of the past event and their current experience in exile. This framework can be seen in Sayigh's self-reflexivity in which he acknowledges the multilayered perceptions of *al-Nakba*: he exposes the specificity of his personal "softened image" of *al-Nakba* in terms of his own life circumstances. He also articulates the inevitable alterity of this "image" for other Palestinians who, like him, were born after the event, yet who live in different circumstances and "had to contend with a much harsher aftermath in refugee camps or under Israeli occupation."

The most significant sentence in Sayigh's story with regard to post-memory is this: "Palestinians similarly born after 1948 [. . .] must nonetheless share with me at least a telescoped, compressed, and relativized

perspective of 1948." Here, Sayigh's description holds the key to the imaginative-discursive framework through which the Palestinian identity of post-*Nakba* generations can be assessed in relation to their post-memories of *al-Nakba* and their experiences of its action in the present. Thus, for Sayigh, the "telescoped perspective" of the catastrophe of 1948 of post-*Nakba* Palestinians needs to be correlated with their everyday lives. What supports this reading of Sayigh's description is the way in which he utterly condemns the grand narrative of Palestinian identity: "Not that [*Nakba*] is not hugely important to them, but simply that their emotional and perceptual stance cannot but be shaped both by their generational distance and by the immediacy of the socioeconomic settings and politico-administrative contexts in which they live." Sayigh's condemnation is based on the sociocultural "male, class, and institution-dominated tyranny" that governs the narration of the Palestinian national narrative. It is also related to the ways in which this narrative has been intellectualized. For Sayigh, the intellectual practices concerned with the Palestinian narrative of identity have often "simplified" and "homogenized" this narrative, and hence failed to take into consideration its multifaceted articulations in the everyday. As he declares, "I am struck by the tyranny [. . .] and in particular the narcissism of intellectuals."

In the final fragment, Sayigh reflects on what *al-Nakba* means to him in the present:

> When I return in my mind to the family house in Tiberias, I wonder what life might have been like had I [. . .] been born there, but conclude that I might in all probabilities have been displaced and diverted by other, unforeseen if more peaceable migrations [. . .] That I was unjustly and forcibly deprived of this birthright is undeniable, but at personal level I like to derive black humor from the fact that the family house has since been turned into what is reputedly the best Chinese restaurant in Tiberias. (22)

Sayigh's imaginative investment of *al-Nakba* is closely linked to his present experience of exile. This can be seen in the way Sayigh's imagination of loss of home, "when I return in my mind," leads him back into a concrete experience, namely the denial of his birthright in Palestine: "That I was unjustly and forcibly deprived of this birthright is undeniable." Sayigh's "black humor" concerning the fact that the lost family house became a "Chinese restaurant" signifies that his absence from home is not a peaceful migration. In this sense, Sayigh's memory becomes an "ongoing memory" that frames and disperses a symbolic landscape of

loss of home. By "ongoing memory," I mean a memory that harks back to a traumatic originary event (*al-Nakba*) and, at the same time, is constantly reworked, reactivated by new events and rearticulated in new acts of memory. This ongoing memory exposes an imaginative geography that helps the exiled subject intensify his or her sense of self as a Palestinian, both individually and collectively in the present.

Similar conceptions of the post-memory of *al-Nakba*, and the ways its dynamics bear on the identity of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, are worked into many of the stories that I have collected in Gaza. Here is, for example, the story of Yousef, a taxi driver living in Jabalia Refugee Camp, who left his hometown with his family during *al-Nakba*. This is how he describes what the catastrophe means to him today:

> Of course, I remember the story of my family and how they were driven out by Jewish war planes from Jora to Gaza in 1948. My father, while pulling the camel on which my mother sat with my newborn sister (Layla), was carrying me on his shoulders then. We live in the camp, and my children were born there too—their grandmother and I told them the story already. We still have ownership papers of our house in Jora—my kids know everything; not only where they live, but also where they come from and what they missed [. . .] We would return tomorrow, if they let us. Who would want to live in this small place? Our home and land in Jora were much bigger. (Yousef, Jabalia Refugee Camp. April 3, 2004)

Yousef not only remembers his parents' stories but also interiorizes these post-memories as his own. Narratologically, this is most obvious in Yousef's use of pronouns ("I" and "we"). While in the beginning of his story, Yousef narrates his post-memory as "I remember the story of my family [. . .]"; in the rest of the passage he inserts himself into the story. This can be seen when he says: "We still have ownership papers of our house." While the "ownership papers" of the lost house belong to his parents, Yousef's use of the pronoun "we" transfers both the loss and ownership to himself and to his children. Thus, instead of a narrator of the story, Yousef and his children become characters *in* this story. As in Sayigh's story, the absence of the details of Yousef's parents' experience of *al-Nakba* is compensated through a shift to his own and his children's experiences in the refugee camp today.

This temporal shift from post-memory to the present experience of exile is also echoed in the narrative of Samah, a university student from Rafah Refugee Camp:

> *Al-Nakba* is a defeat for me. I know the past, because my present is one of military occupation and exile. I am a twenty-eight years old refugee

> from Demra, but I never saw it. I know about my home from parents and grandparents. This camp is not my place; it is the place of refugeeism, not my country. Demra is my land. In the camp, I was born imprisoned. I am imprisoned. Of course I want to return there—I don't want to remain a refugee. (Samah, Rafah Refugee Camp. April 10, 2004)

For Samah, *al-Nakba* is a personal "defeat." Her storytelling affirms her knowledge of the past in a causal relationship with her life in exile. The past loss of home manifests itself through her experience as a Palestinian refugee. According to Samah, "[She] know[s] the past, because [her] present is one of military occupation and exile." Thus, for Samah, *al-Nakba* is grounded in her ongoing experience of "imprisonment" in exile.

Finally, the most poignant depiction of the continuity of *al-Nakba* in the everyday of Palestinian exile is offered by Abdelaziz, from Al-Shati Refugee Camp:

> For me, *al-Nakba* means many things. It is the story of my grandfather, father and mother when they lost our home in Nijd in 1948. Since I opened my eyes on this world, I grew up seeing a strange occupying army with an Israeli flag that I don't identify with or whatsoever. The soldiers imprisoned me because I threw stones during the 1987 Intifada [the uprising] when I was 17 years old. They stopped me from going to school; they ruined my future life since I was young. Now, I am grown up, married with kids, unemployed and can hardly feed my family, but thanks to God; without knowing how my kids are still alive [growing up]. (Abdelaziz, Al-Shati Refugee Camp. April 10, 2004)

Abdelaziz conceives of *al-Nakba*, like the other storytellers, as his parents' stories of the times when they lost their homes in 1948. Moreover, his post-memorial storytelling exposes the Palestinian experience in contemporary terms. For him, *al-Nakba* is a condition of "slow death" that has controlled his life from the moment of birth: "being born under occupation, imprisoned and barred from going to school, unemployed and can hardly feed his family." These cruel conditions are presented as imposed colonial mechanisms that not only affirm the Palestinian subject's post-memory of the past *Nakba* of 1948 but continue to determine his or her ongoing memory and experience of the catastrophe in present exile. Hence, we can now say, Abdelaziz's identity as *mankoub*. As he explicitly puts it: "To make a long story short, me and everyone I know are dying slowly as refugees. Slow death is all that Israel did, and still does, to us daily—that is my *al-Nakba*" (2004).

Abdelaziz's everyday *Nakba* brings me to my concluding remarks. I have argued for a reading of the oral accounts of *al-Nakba* as narratives. This is possible through reading them as both memorial and post-memorial modes of storytelling. At the heart of this reading is a close attention to the stories' language, rhetoric, and concepts rather than to their history and ethnography. Instead of analyzing *al-Nakba*'s brute exercises in the past, I have read the verbal signs of this catastrophe in the everyday exile of the catastrophed subject. This textual, narrative, and anachronistic reading is helpful to expose the multi-temporality of *al-Nakba* but also the Palestinian subject's experience of this multi-temporality in the present—an everyday condition that I have called an experience of catastrophic time.

As I argued, exposing the Palestinians' everyday experience of catastrophe is crucial. It helps us to conceive of the construction of Palestinian identity in the present as a multifaceted concept, which is difficult to elucidate merely in terms of 1948. Many of the stories I analyzed in this chapter, and throughout the book, suggest that the process of identity formation of Palestinians is not only determined historically by their loss of home during *al-Nakba* but also and crucially by the "open-endedness" of their catastrophic experience in the present. This is how reading personal accounts of *al-Nakba* becomes a practice of knowing how to read the imagining (or imaging) of the past yet without detaching it from the subject's everyday of exile.

Afterword: Telling Memories in a Time of Catastrophe

Let me end this book with one final Palestinian exilic narrative. This story is one of the personal interviews which I collected in the Gaza Strip in 2004, and belongs to a Palestinian man from the first generation of post-*Nakba* Palestinians, called Abu Majed, who resides in Rafah Refugee Camp. His story concretizes one of the main arguments of my book: namely, the present-oriented nature of Palestinian cultural memory. This is how Abu Majed narrates what *al-Nakba* means to him:

> *Al-Nakba* happened in phases not at once. Every time the Jews attacked us, we used to fight back and then move on to another place—they kept attacking and we kept running until we reached Gaza. *Al-Nakba* is despair, and everyone in the refugee camp had their share of it. And what made us withstand it back then and also now, is our hope of returning. Just recently some of the people are building cement houses in the camp; the majority of the people see building a house as a "crime" of wasting one's cause. I should tell you something. The Jews lived with us before. When the Jews used to meet each other outside of Palestine, they used to greet one another with *Makhaar bi Yroushelim* (Tomorrow in Jerusalem). In front of this hope, impossible things happen. The Jews call themselves the people of economics, knowledge and progress, but you know what, it seems they are not that after all. The Zionists counted on two things: the old generations of Palestinians will die, and that the young ones will forget. If you look today, from the generations who lived in *el-blad* [the homeland] and tasted its sweetness, no one of these went and blew him or herself up. The ones who do that today are the generations who were supposed to forget. Ever since they came and established Israel, the Jews have been experimenting on us all that happened to them in the Second World War—this is a sign of their stupidity; their actions only add to our anger, and increase our hatred. For the young generations, through

> their occupation of us, everyday they emerge anew as *the* enemy. Shortly after they occupied everything in 1967, the Israelis allowed us to go and visit our homes. Every Friday, I used to take my family and picnic in the yard of our destroyed house in *Breer*. We must and will return 100 percent! Let me tell you why. If the Jews would have come and lived with us nicely, then it would have been OK but they came as oppressors, and oppression always ends.
>
> (Abu Majed, Rafah Refugee Camp. April 5, 2004)

Like most of the narratives I have discussed in this book, Abu Majed's memorial storytelling exposes several aspects of *al-Nakba* as the existential experience *par excellence* that defines Palestinian cultural memory, not in terms of its historical past but in terms of the present of its action in the daily exile of its catastrophed subject (*mankoub*).

The first aspect concerns the far-reaching impact of *al-Nakba* on the forced displacement of Palestinians and the consequent fragmentation of their society in time and space. This fragmentation is given shape in Abu Majed's account of the catastrophe as an event that happened "in phases not at once," as well as how Palestinians were driven into different geopolitical settings, in his case the Gaza Strip. As I argued in Chapter 4, this spatiotemporal fragmentation is relevant for the issue of the nonsingularity of *al-Nakba*. Palestinian cultural reenactments of the catastrophe delineate different collectives or subcollectives of memory, i.e. many *Nakbas* and temporal variations. These reenactments offer us a stark example of a displaced identity, but they also articulate the construction of Palestinian identity as a matter of existing "in the act" of cultural recall of loss of place: an exilic identity that needs to be performed through continuous practices of retellings and re-readings.

The second aspect of Palestinian memory of *al-Nakba* is its orientation to places and longing for the lost home. This aspect is highlighted in Abu Majed's repeated visits to the ruins of his house: "Every Friday, I used to take the family and picnic in the yard of our destroyed house in *Breer*." Indeed, this image of the ruins gives shape to a nostalgic memory. This memory, however, cannot be reduced to a mode of recovery of the past or idealization of the lost place. As I argued in Chapter 1, nostalgic memory in the Palestinian case is not merely a psychic sentiment but also a political activity of remembering, which functions as a cultural response to the loss of place. This memory is simultaneously linked to a process of identification with the legacies of the past in the present. Abu Majed's emphatic certainty of the return to the lost homeland, "We must and will return 100 percent!", not only politicizes

the past loss but also exposes this past as neither remote nor concluded in exile. Palestinian exile, as we have seen in Chapter 2, constitutes an entangled spatiotemporal contemporary condition of forced travel and undesired movement. This actual condition involves a past subjective loss of home but also, crucially, an everyday denial of access to home. Within this condition, the subject is physically denied of his or her cultural space of selfhood.

The third aspect concerns the existence of Palestinian memory under the constant threat of a dominant Zionist narrative with political and military forces to silence it. This can be seen in Abu Majed's temporal shift from the past "despair" of *al-Nakba* into Palestinians' resilience in facing this catastrophe in the present. Both the metaphors of "hope of returning" and the "crime" of building permanent houses in the refugee camp bear out this resilience. This aspect was central to my discussion of Saleh's film *Al-Makhdu'un* in Chapter 3. As we have seen there, the film's exilic narrativity connects spatial representations of Palestinian cultural memory to the exercise of political power. It exposes a transformation of the formation of Palestinian identity, from catastrophe and victimization to ideology and political movements.

The fourth, and final aspect, concerns the generational specificity of Palestinian memory of *al-Nakba*. Abu Majed's narrative emphasizes this specificity in his account of how the Zionist project failed to subdue subsequent Palestinian generations, "The Zionists counted on two things: the old generations of Palestinians will die, and that the young ones will forget." Indeed, this account substantiates that post-*Nakba* Palestinians inherited the past effect of the memory of the catastrophe, as I argued in my discussion in Chapter 5. Most importantly, this account situates *al-Nakba* of the new generations as ongoing in the presence of exile, under military occupation.

In my quest of traces of the cultural memory of catastrophe and the ways in which it affects the evolution, maintenance, and contestation of contemporary Palestinian exilic identity, I have attempted to illuminate instances of the loss of Palestine in a post-*Nakba* culture. In this inquiry I made several moves between Palestinians' acts of memory and acts of storytelling of catastrophe in exile. Each of my moves constituted a shift from the larger historical discourse of the events of 1948 to its memory fragments in Palestinian exilic narratives, and vice versa. The understanding that both acts, remembering and storytelling, bear on each other, and thus can work together in taking the past memory, in time and space, into the present and the future, has served as the central premise of my readings of Palestinian literary, audiovisual, and oral

narratives. By means of a detailed analysis of verbal imaginings and audiovisual imagings of loss of homeland and collective identity, I have tried to achieve a multifaceted understanding of the complex modes of memorial storytelling of *al-Nakba*, and to stress their significance in exposing the ongoing catastrophe of exiled Palestinians today.

I end these closing remarks on a note of urgency. The analytical activity of aspects of Palestinian cultural memory exposes unusual repetitive quality of the events since *al-Nakba*: a calamity that has continued for more than 64 years now, leaving a normal life for so many Palestinians beyond reach. In the face of this durability of *al-Nakba*, I propose that Palestinian exilic narratives are best understood as a series of tensions about cultural identity. In line with this understanding, there is a need, as I suggested in the previous chapters, for a concrete "imaginative-discursive" approach to the analysis of memory in Palestinian culture and politics. This approach presents memory articulations of *al-Nakba* in a way that speaks to contemporary culture of Palestinian exile. Most importantly, it also shows the multiple ways in which Palestinian exilic narratives postulate the transformation of "geopolitical fragmentation" from a specific historical experience into a theme that is expressed as a subject matter, and then into complex modes of memorial storytelling. What needs to be remembered is that Palestinian modes of storytelling of *al-Nakba* in exile are modes of integration not separation; these are stories of a people whose identity has been systematically *unmapped* in time and space, but who are now struggling to reclaim both their name and place on that map.

Notes

Introduction

1. For historical records of British colonial mandate in Palestine (1922–1948), see Al-Aref (1959), Azoulay (2011), Khalidi (1984, 1988: 4–19 and 1992), Fischbach (2003), and Gilbert ([1974] 2005). For a complete list of Palestinian destroyed villages, see *Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center*'s visual tribute of the fiftieth anniversary of *al-Nakba* in 1998 (http://www.alNakba.org/villages/villages.htm). Also, for relevant studies on demographic changes in historic Palestine before and after *al-Nakba*, see Abu-Lughod (1971 and 1982) and Krystall (1988: 5–22). Krystal's article describes the depopulation of Palestinian neighborhoods of West Jerusalem in 1947.
2. The "Right of Return" is an internationally recognized designation in United Nations' resolution number 194 of December 11, 1948. This resolution stipulates that Palestinian refugees should be permitted the return to their homes from which they were previously expelled. This right, moreover, represents a key demand of the Palestinians for any settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and has been repeatedly rejected by Israel.
3. Of the many recent publications on cultural memory, Assmann (2006: 261–73) and Erll and Rigney (2009) are good starting points. Also, on the relationship between cultural memory and the symbols of the nation state, see Nora (1989: 7–25) and Huyssen (1995 and 2003). Huyssen's perspective is critical of fetishism with old things. For concise discussions of cultural memory in the context of conflicted discourses of memory, see Bardenstein (1999: 148–71) and Bal (1999b: vii-3).
4. For excellent theoretical explication of this Zionist metanarrative, see John Rose (2004: 1–8). Rose's study refutes Zionism's mythical history. Also, for relevant critiques on the Zionist project in Palestine, see Hertzberg ([1976] 1997), Garfinkle (1991: 539-50), Palumbo (1990 and 1991), Said (1992), Shapira (1999), and Masalha (1992, 2003, and 2005). Moreover, a useful contribution on Israel's physical transformation of the

landscape of Palestine by carving it into an image of its Zionist ideal is Mitchell (1994: 5–34). According to Mitchell, the face of the holy landscape is so scarred by war, excavation, and displacement that no illusion of innocent original nature can be sustained for a moment. For the term "subaltern," see Spivak (1988b: 271–313, 1996a, and 1996b: 198–222). Spivak uses this term in her description of the circumstances surrounding the suicide of a young Bengali woman that indicates a failed attempt at self-representation. Spivak concludes that "the subaltern cannot speak," not in the sense that the subaltern does not cry out in various ways, but that speaking is a transaction between speaker and listener. Subaltern talk, in other words, does not achieve the dialogic level of utterance.

5. These arguments are further developed in Finkelstein (2005). See also Novick (2001) for his seminal study on the "Holocaust industry." My use of the term "ethnic cleansing" follows Ilan Pappe's use to describe the Palestinian condition. In his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006), Pappe demonstrates conclusively that the Zionist concept of "transfer"—a euphemism for ethnic cleansing—was from the start an integral part of a carefully planned colonial strategy, and lies at the root of today's ongoing conflict in the Middle East. For Pappe, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine is represented most clearly in Israel's persistent attempts to wipe out the Palestinian heritage and cultural identity since 1948. For a recent study on genocide and conditions for a deterioration of Palestinian-Israeli conflict from chronic to catastrophic violence, see Dayan (2008).
6. For an excellent study on the long history of Palestinian national consciousness and identity, see Khalidi (1997). For relevant studies that examines versions of Palestinian and Zionist historical narratives in contemporary context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, see Lockman (1996), Sa'di (2002: 175-98), Stein and Swedenburg (2005), and Rotberg (2006).
7. For relevant discussions on practices of Palestinian traditional storytelling of *al-Nakba*, see Muhawi (1999: 344–48) and Sayigh (1998: 42–59).
8. Barthes' text is cited as the epigraph of James Clifford's introduction in *Writing Culture* (1986: 1-27).
9. For additional discussions on the theoretical premises of cultural analysis, see Wuthnow (1984) and Bal (2002). Moreover, for a recent and valuable example of the methodology of cultural analysis in contemporary expressions of popular culture, see Peeren (2007).
10. For relevant discussion of the notion of "theoretical object" in contemporary art practices, see Van Alphen (2005).

1 Nostalgic Memory and Palestinian Identification

1. These lines are taken from Mahmoud Darwish's poem, entitled "Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading" (2004), in which he bids farewell to

Edward Said. Darwish (1942–2008) has long been recognized as the leading poetic voice of the exiled Palestinian people. For more of his translated poetry, see Darwish (1995, 2003, and 2006) Also, for studies exclusively focused on Darwish's life and poetry, see Mansson (2003).

2. Sayigh (1977: 17–40 and 1979: 3–16). Also, for relevant studies concerning Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon, see Peteet (1987: 29–63 and 1992).
3. The medical significations of nostalgia were first coined in 1688 by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in his dissertation on the homesickness of Swiss mercenaries away from their homeland. See Hofer ([1688] 1934), cited in Hutcheon (2000: 198–207). For prominent studies on nostalgia as a modern cultural disease, see Stewart (1984) and Boym (1995: 133–66 and 2001). In her research Boym conceptualizes "reflective nostalgia" in the case of post-Soviet artists who, according to Boym, "reconfigure and preserve various kinds of imagined communities and offer interesting cultural hybrids of Soviet kitsch and memories of a totalitarian childhood" (1995: 151).
4. As a derogatory concept, nostalgia is often criticized as a symptom of erratic cultural stress due to sociopolitical complexities and rapid changes. Examples of such criticism of nostalgia include, among others, Davis (1979), Chase and Shaw (1989), and Lowenthal (1985).
5. My use of the term *nostalgic* is based on Verhoeff's conceptualization of the term *instant nostalgia*. See Verhoeff (2006: 148–56).
6. Various examples of literary representations written by Palestinians from the first generation of post-*Nakba* such as Abd Al Kareem Al Karmy's (b.1907–1980) poetry have been collected in Salma Jayyusi's *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature* (1992). Also, more examples of Palestinian literature are available in Kanaana (1992) and Neuwirth (2010).
7. I use the term "acts of memory" here to refer to the active nature of collective memory in Palestinian exile. For useful studies on this notion, see Bardenstein (1999: 148–71 and 2002: 353–87), Van Alphen (1999b: 151-71), and Bal (1999b: vii-3).
8. In his article, Van Alphen draws on feminist critiques and psychoanalytical experience and theories of cultural memory such as those by De Lauretis (1984), Williams (1983), Nora (1989: 7–25), Caruth (1996), LaCapra (1994), and Scott (1992: 126–29).
9. This discursive notion of trauma is further developed in Van Alphen (1997 and 2005: 163–205)
10. All quotes from the novel are taken from the English version, *The Ship* (1985). Of course, I also consulted the original Arabic version of the novel, Jabra (1970), to verify the translation.
11. For an extensive discussion of the plot in *The Ship* as a "murder story," see Hamarneh (1991: 223–39).
12. For further discussion on time techniques in Jabra's literary project, see also Allen (1995: 14–16).

13. See Hamon (1981).
14. Iraq was the first Arab country to gain independence from British rule in 1932.
15. It is worth mentioning here that Arab societies' transformation from being colonized into independent societies is still continuing up till today as most of the cultural and political issues such as tribal revenge, democratization, and political defeat remain utterly unsolved.
16. In his reading of *The Ship,* Hamarneh makes this observation about the abundance of Wadi's narration. See Hamarneh (1991: 228).
17. In her study on Palestinian art, Ankori argues that in the context of *al-Nakba* Zionist and anti-Palestinian propaganda often deliberately misrepresented the feelings of humiliation of first-generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians as a sign of their unwillingness to defend their homes or of their sheer cowardice; a misreading that Ankori rejects and instead dutifully analyzes the ways in which Palestinians fended off this propaganda in cultural media, especially visual aesthetics. See Ankori (2006: 51–52).
18. For the term "native," see Geertz (1983: 55–73). According to Geertz, the problem of understanding things from the point of view of the native has been exercising methodological discussion in anthropological understanding. Geertz argues for an interpretation that relies on a "thick description" of cultural acts by which the meanings behind the actions as well as their symbolic imports in a specific cultural setting are exposed. For another relevant anthropological study that focuses on temporal discripency, see Fabian (1983).

2 Traveling Theory: On the Balconies of Our Houses in Exile

1. I use the term "repeated reenactments" in a performative sense as a process of repeated acts through which the subject creates his or her identity. For a very useful discussion on performative effects of repeated reenactments, see Butler (1993: 9–32).
2. Often following Deleuze and Guattari (1994), the amount of literature available on these notions in contemporary critical theory is massive. Among innumerable examples, see Bhabha (1990: 291–322, 1991: 61–63, 1994 and 1996: 53–60), Rushdie (1981), Spivak (1988a, 1996a and 1996b: 198–222), Clifford (1988 and 1997), Ashcroft (1995), and Chambers (1990 and 1994). Moreover, the terms "nomadic subject" and "nomadic consciousness" respectively signify a figuration for the kind of a postmodern subject who relinquishes all idea for fixity in exchange for an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries and the desire to go on trespassing and transgressing. At stake here is a theoretical approach that privileges "transgression," "subversion," and "nonfixity." On these terms, see Braidotti (1994: 36)

3. For further insights on the commitment of Western colonial powers (Britain, France, and Italy) to Zionism see, Said (1992) and Sykes (1973: 5).
4. Unless mentioned otherwise, all quotes and references to the stories are taken from the English version of Badr's collection.
5. *Black September* refers to the events of September 1970 when Hashemite King Hussein of Jordan moved to quell Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) after accusing them of attempting to overthrow his monarchy. For more information on these events, see http://www.palestinehistory.com/history/phototime/tl_1970_1.htm.
6. For a thorough historical analysis of these events, see Khalidi (1985 and 2006).
7. On these meanings of *ghurba*, see the works of Said (1984: 49–55, 1986a, 1986b: 29–37, and 1995a), Turki (1974a, 1974b: 3–17, and 1988), and Shehadeh (2002).
8. I use the term "out of place" in reference to Said's memoir with the same title. The recurring idea that Said expresses in *Out of Place* is feeling wherever he was and for much of his life not quite right in place (1999: 295).
9. For more insights on the charge of "insufficient political specificity," see Balibar and Wallerstein (1991), Balibar (1995: 403–12), and Loomba (1998).
10. Drawing on the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou, Hallward's study rejects the established terms of engagement of *deterritorializing* discourse; what he dismisses as "postmodern jargon." The crucial argument Hallward puts forward in this context is that the postcolonial, contrary to its usual characterization in terms of plurality, particularity, and resistance, is best understood as an ultimately singular or nonrelational category: a singularity is something that generates the medium of its own existence, to the eventual exclusion of other existences. See Hallward (2001: 20–62, 2006, and 2008).
11. Throughout her book, Kaplan dutifully critiques the teleological and ideological comfort with which postmodernism supposedly supplies us through its famous notions of indeterminacy, polysemy, and the endless play of signifiers. However, Kaplan's discussion more than often seems to sort through terminology rather than focus on the way critical practices of individual theorists are differently produced. For example, she is perfectly right to insist that whereas modernists were certain about what counted as center and margin, postmodernists are aware that the gaze itself (as well as the discursive regimes that produce centers and peripheries) is the product of Western metanarratives. Yet Edward Said, for example, deals very differently with that gaze and its effects than other traveling theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie; both tend to impose an idealist reduction of the sociocultural to the semiotics and to exaggerate the heuristic value of the language metaphor. For

excellent critiques of Bhabha's and Rushdie's postcolonial thought, see Lazarus (1999) and Parry (1987: 27–58).

12. On this argument, see also Brennan (1997). Moreover, for a critical study on the cultural politics of diaspora, including the legacies of European imperialism and colonialism as well as the uses and abuses of theory, see Chow (1993).
13. To be sure, Said uses the notion of "metaphorical exile" as opposed to actual exile to characterize the role of the intellectual as an outsider, the naysayer at odds with his or her society who "speaks truth to power" (1994a: 53). One of Said's prominent examples is Theodor Adorno whose exile in the United States was actual and who had been in metaphysical exile in his native country Germany. Indeed, Said recognizes the literary potential of "metaphorical exile"; for him, writing becomes one's true home. This is not to say at all, however, that Said was not aware of the pathos of exile and its physical predicament. On the contrary, his is a contrapuntal awareness of the agonies and ecstasies of this mode of existence with which many of us in today's world are acquainted. As he argues in response to romanticized notions of exile, to think of exile as beneficial, as a spur to humanism or to creativity, is simply to belittle its mutilations, for exiles are cut offs from their roots, their land and their past. (1994a: 47–65). For additional studies focusing on the literary potential of exile, see Seidel (1986), and Gurr (1981).
14. On notions of "mind-body separation," see Keller (1986). In her study Keller argues that the mind-body separation dominate traditional paradigms of Western psychology about the self. According to Keller, such notions manifest themselves in the psychological assumption that maturation requires the separation of the individual from his or her mother—a separation that Keller believes to be grounded in the understanding of the "separate self." For Keller, such a paradigm is rooted in the radical separation of mind and body, and it results in all kinds of dualistic perspectives and binary oppositions such as "self and other," "conscious and unconscious," "male and female," "East and West," "us and them" (1986: 96–100).
15. I use the term "mirror-text" in the sense of "mise-en-abyme," not to overstress the totality of an image but only a certain aspect of the literary text under discussion. For a detailed discussion on the difference and use of both terms in literary narratives, see Bal (1997: 57–58).
16. My understanding of the notion of "critical memory of loss" is inspired by Leo Spitzer's conceptualization of "critical memory" as a present form of memory incorporating the negative and the bitter form the immediate past and thus representing nostalgia's complicating "other side." According to Spitzer, in the case of central European Jews who fled the Nazi genocide to Bolivia, critical memory functions as the overarching framework of their "refugee" collective identity (1998: 373–96).

17. The name "Tal al-Zaatar" literary means "the hill of thyme" and it occupies a particular place in the Palestinian imaginary as a symbol of their history of victimization. Located in the predominantly Christian-controlled part of Beirut, Tal al-Zaatar refugee camp represents the complexity of negotiating Palestinian identity as an ethnic minority in diaspora and the tensions that accompany such negotiation. These tensions were exacerbated during the Lebanese civil war (1975–1976). Referred to as the "Stalingrad" of the Palestinian refugees, Tal al-Zaatar was subjected to a brutal one-year siege by the right-wing Christian factions (the Phalangists) during which the camp was ultimately destroyed. For more historical details about the "massacre of Tal al-Zaatar," see Gordan (1983).
18. Subjective identification in terms of lost villages and towns is a common social practice among Palestinians in exile. This practice is relevant to issues of cultural affinity in exile and the "Right of Return" so as to emphasize Palestinians' attachment to their occupied homes. See Sayigh (1977 and 1979) and Parmenter (1994).
19. In her book, Bal deconstructs the idea that there is any "truth value" in exposition. (1996: 1–11).
20. For relevant studies on the relationship between space and cultural identity, see Bachelard (1957), Lefebvre (1974), Augé (1999). Also, for critical analyses of the cultural dimensions of space, mobility, and place in global contexts, see Appadurai (1996) and Verstraete (2010).
21. For a detailed explanation of both terms, "heteropathic" and "idiopathic" identification, see Silverman (1996: 80–90).
22. Most of these arguments are further developed in Sayigh (2007: 86–105).
23. See Boer (2004a and 2006: 1–42).
24. For a thorough analysis of the socioeconomic structures and political conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, see Sayigh (1977:17-40) and Peteet (1987: 29–63 and 1992).
25. On the mistaken assumptions regarding Palestinians' hatred of Jews and Israel, see Christison (2001). According to Christison, those assumptions dominate both European and American cultural discourses, and they are often employed as a means of gathering more political support for the state of Israel.
26. This point sharply contradicts Glenn Bowman's analysis of the literature of second and third generations of post-*Nakba* Palestinians in which he reads the intolerance and harassment Palestinians received in the refugee camps in Arab countries, especially in Lebanon, as follows: "for these younger [. . .] camp Palestinians the enemy eventually ceased to be those [the state of Israel] who had driven their people from Palestine and became, instead, first the "Arab" in general and then everyone else who exploited them in their exile" (1994: 146). Abu Hussain's answer

makes clear that it would be a twisted logic to substitute the state of Israel with the "Arabs" as "the enemy of Palestinians" in this case because Palestinians' exploitation in exile in these countries is precipitated by the original act of their forced uprooting from Palestine. For useful studies on the term "the enemy" in the Palestinian-Israeli context, see Sayigh (1994) and Lockman (1996).

3 Exilic Narrativity: Audiovisual Storytelling and Memory

1. Benjamin's "Theses," which he wrote in early 1940s while in exile, are part of his political critique of historicism and of historiography as a tool of domination and ideology. The "Theses" also symbolize Benjamin's decisive break with historical materialism and a return to the metaphysical concerns of his earlier writings. For relevant discussions on both aspects of Benjamin's thought and style in general, see Sontag ([1972] 2002), Buck-Morss (1989), Beiner (1984: 423–34), Jacobs (1999), and Ferris (1996 and 2004).
2. Once described by the French critic Yves Thorval as "the filmmaker of the damned of the earth," Tawfiq Saleh (1927) is one of the most controversial figures in Egyptian and Arab cinema. He is an innovative director who is credited for a number of seminal films such as *Darb Al-Mahabeel* (Al-Mahabeel Alley, 1956), *Siraa Al-Abtal* (The Heroes' Struggle, 1962), *Al-Mutamarridoun* (The Rebels, 1968), and *Yawmiyyat Na'eb Min al-Aryaf* (Everyday Life of a Deputy from the Rural Areas, 1968). Saleh's films often show a high degree of sensitivity toward the struggle of the downtrodden against class oppression and the harsh political reality of their life. On Saleh's cinematic works and realist style, see Saleh (1999). Also, on the pan-Arab production context of Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un*, see Shafik (1998: 155–56).
3. On imaginative geographies and orientalism, see Said (1979). Also, for very useful discussions that evaluate both the contemporary political and intellectual relevance of Said's *Orientalism* and the theoretical implications of the concept of "imaginative geographies" in cultural criticism, see Boer (2004b: 9–21 and 2006: 1–42) and Brennan (2000: 558–83). For relevant studies on the use of "imaginative" with regard to national identity, see Anderson (1983).
4. I borrow the phrase "colonial-settler state" from Maxim Rodinson who uses it to emphasize Israel's origins as a creation of Western colonialism in the Middle East (1973: 39).
5. Kanafani, who was born in Acre in 1936, is one of the most acclaimed Palestinian intellectuals: he was a major writer, literary critic, historian, journalist, and theorist of the Palestinian resistance movement until his assassination by *Mossad* (Israeli intelligence) in a car-bomb explosion

in Beirut in July 1972. There is a massive amount of literature on both Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* and his literary project in general as "narratives of resistance." See, among others, Harlow (1987, 1996, and 2006), Kilpatrick (1976: 53–65 and 1983: 1–7), Kanafani (1982), Haider (1980: 110–21), Khouri (1980: 69–101), Sidiq (1984), Harb (2004: 65–76), Boullata (2005: 52–54), and Abu Shawer (2007).

6. For a vivid historical and terminological critique of Palestinian filmmaking, especially in relation to the problematics of how to classify (or identify) Palestinian exilic cinema in the context of the absence of an official name for "Palestine" as an independent political state, see Tawil (2005: 113–40) and Gertz and Khleifi (2008). Also, for relevant studies on Palestinian exilic cinema, including actual information on the dire conditions of its industry under military occupation as lacking the necessary technical and artistic resources, working place and methodology, see Abdel Fattah (2000 and 2000a), Abdel-Malek (2006), Dabashi (2006), and Vitali and Willemen (2006).
7. Specifically, I am referring here to the documentary cinema often conceived of as a visual expression that is based on the attempt, in one fashion or another, to document "raw" reality. At stake here is the common assumption that the documentary offers a "more real" guide to interpret the modern world than its fictional counterpart of film making. For more focused studies on the history, theory and the generic distinction between fictional and documentary cinemas in terms of representation, reality, and imagination, see Nichols (1991 and 2001), Kracauer ([1947] 2004), Winston (1995), Elsaesser and Buckland (2002), and Bordwell and Thompson (2003). Also, for relevant discussions of literary genres and movements, see, for example, Bal (1987) and Culler (2000a).
8. For insights on Eric Rohmer's particular vision of cinema, especially his classical and transparent style of filmmaking, see Rohmer (1989).
9. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin explains how Dostoevsky creates the polyphonic novel by repositioning the idea of the novel, its truth, within multiple and various consciousnesses rather than a single consciousness and by repositioning the author of the novel alongside the characters as one of these consciousnesses, creator of the characters but also their equal. Bakhtin also claims that this new kind of novel is no longer a direct expression of the author's truth but an active creation of the truth in the consciousnesses of the author, the characters, and the reader, in which all participate as equals. This truth is a unified truth that nonetheless requires a plurality of consciousnesses: "It is quite possible to imagine and postulate a unified truth that requires a plurality of consciousnesses, one that cannot in principle be fitted into the bounds of a single consciousness, one that is, so to speak, by its very nature *full of event potential* and is born at a point of contact among various consciousnesses" ([1963] 1984: 81). Such a unified truth of the polyphonic

novel combines several autonomous consciousnesses into "a higher unity, a unity, so to speak, of the second order," which Bakhtin explains only by analogy with "the complex unity of an Einsteinian universe" ([1963] 1984: 16). For useful studies on Bakhtin's thought, see Bakhtin ([1975] 1982: 259–422), Clark and Holquist (1984), Morson and Emerson (1990), Holquist (1990), and Emerson (1996: 107–26 and 1997). Also for a constructive confrontation between Bakhtin's ideas and contemporary expressions of popular culture, see Peeren (2007).

10. For an excellent overview of the analytical use of "affective reading" in a different but related context of conflicted discourses of cultural memory, see Van Alphen (1999b: 143–51). Also, for studies dealing with the relationship between the cinematic image, affect, and antilinear temporality, see Pisters (2003: 66–71 and 2005).
11. In his book, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M. H. Abrams defines paratactic style as, " [. . .] one in which the members within a sentence, or else a sequence of complete sentences, are put one after the other without any expression of their conjunction or relations except (at most) the noncommittal connective, 'and'" ([1957] 1992: 304–05). For a useful critique on the "and" a propos of the phrase "literature and psychoanalysis," see Felman ([1977] 1982).
12. In her analysis of the relationship between Palestinian literature and land, Parmenter uses this term "anti-place" to refer to the function of the desert as more than a symbolic setting in Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* but as a counterpoint to the lost homeland. (1994: 55).
13. It is worth mentioning here that the word "Palestine" itself is a feminine name. For relevant studies on feminine projections of the homeland in Palestinian national lexicon, see Bardenstein (2002: 353–87 and 2006: 19–32) and Sherwell (2006: 429–43).
14. Schacter also discusses distortion in memory, repressed memory of childhood sexual abuse, and recollection of extreme trauma and memory impairment with aging. According to Schacter, implicit memory is always at work even when we are unable to fully recall recent events, pervasively and unconsciously coloring our perceptions, judgments, feelings, and behavior (1996: 80–95). Most of these topics are developed further in Schacter and Scarry (2000) and Schacter (2001).
15. For relevant critiques of psychoanalytic notions of "untrustworthiness" and "unreliability" of memory with special focus on the concept of trauma, see Van Alphen (1997 and 1999a: 24–38) and Lam (2002). Also for a valuable study on the interaction between cognitive-emotive and neurosomatic factors during cultural acts of reading literature, see Burke (2008).
16. For further explication of the symbolic functions of these trees in particular in the context of Palestinian-Israeli conflict, see Parmenter (1994) and Bardenstein (1999: 148–71 and 2006: 19–32).

17. In fact, *Al-Makhdu'un* was banned twice in Egypt and in other Arab countries for its criticism of Arab regimes articulated in this scene. See a description of the film on www.arabfilm.com.
18. The account of the fall from paradise in the Qur'an can be found, for example, in Surah *Al-Baqra* (The Cow). See Yusuf Ali (2000: 4–39).
19. *Al-Fatihah* (The Opening) is the first Surah of the Quran that is customarily recited at the conclusion of a marriage agreement. See Yusuf Ali (2000: 3–4). Moreover, Assad's acceptance of traditional marriage is worthy of a brief note concerning challenges to traditional gender ideologies in Palestinian nationalist discourse. These values, with their thorny contexts, expose Palestinian society with its specific sociocultural fabric. Moreover, the Palestinian resistance movement, like most twentieth-century anticolonialist national movements around the world, often rigidified gender tradition as a key element of cultural nationalism, while political and economic mobilization, most notably during the first Intifada (1987–1993) and the second Intifada (2000–2006), presented Palestinian women with new and alternative scopes for political activism. For in-depth studies on these issues, see Sayigh (1979, 1994, and 2007: 86–105), Tamari (1994: 69–86 and 1997: 17–40), and Sharoni (1998: 1061–89).
20. Negative views of cities of exile are not exclusive to Palestinian literature. They also appear in other exilic literatures. One of the examples that comes first to my mind here is Walter Benjamin's prolific *Reflections* on Marseilles during his exile there as follows: "Marseilles—the yellow-studded maw of a seal with salt water running out between the teeth [. . .] it exhales a stink of oil, urine, and printer's ink [. . .] The harbor people are a bacillus culture, the porters and whores products of decomposition with a resemblance to human beings. But the palate itself is pink, which is the color of shame here, of poverty [. . .]" ([1978] 1986: 131).
21. Surah *Al-Fatihah* (The Opening). See Yusuf Ali (2000: 3–4).
22. For a useful analysis of body politics in the Palestinian national narrative, see Amireh (2003: 747–72).
23. Saleh's interview is cited in Mustafa (2006).

4 The Performance of Catastrophe and Palestinian Identity

1. This *mawaal* (melody) is my translation and it is taken from Palestinian folkloric music that is commonly sung during festive occasions such as wedding ceremonies and births. The audiocassette tape where I found this melody is from a composition of songs by Shafiq Kabha. See Kabha (1989).
2. The term "Israeli-Arabs" is often used to refer to the 17 percent of the Palestinians who remained in the areas on which Israel was established in 1948. Currently, there are more than one million Palestinians living

inside Israel as a "second-class citizen" minority. The vagueness of the term "Israeli-Arabs" is due to the contradictory approaches through which these Palestinian subjects are theorized in dominant political ideologies and academic discourses, especially anthropological and ethnic studies. On the one hand, as Arabs, these subjects are dismissed and degraded as uncivilized subjects. On the other, as Israelis, they are conceived of as an object for civilizing. For further critique of this term as well as the various acts of social disenfranchisement and political oppression that this segment of Palestinians have endured since 1948, see Frisch [(1997: 257–69) and Suleiman (2001: 31–46).

3. In recognition of his life work, Habibi was awarded the Palestinian prize for literature (*Al-Quds Prize*) by the PLO in 1990. In 1992, Habibi also accepted the "Israel prize for Arabic Literature," and as a result, had to face some fierce literary and political attacks by Arab and Palestinian intellectuals that lasted until his death. Habibi was born and buried in Haifa and, in an adamant response to the attacks against him, his will was to have inscribed on his grave: "Emile Habibi remains in Haifa forever." For a comprehensive study on these controversial aspects of Habibi's life and literary project within the modern Hebrew canon, see Hever (2002). Hever's book offers an alternative postcolonial reading of the historiography of Hebrew literature, which exposes the hegemonic Zionist narrative that represses and excludes social, ethnic, and national minorities. According to Hever, Habibi's work is "a decisive example of a Palestinian literary oeuvre that has attained an important status within Hebrew culture" (2002: 211). Also, for a significant survey of the critical studies that dealt with Habibi's novel, *al-Mutasha'il*, see Jarrar (2002: 17–28). Further, see Dalia Karpel's documentary about Emile Habibi's life, *Emile Habibi—Niszarty B'Haifa* (Emile Habibi—I Stayed in Haifa), (1997).
4. To be sure, the theory of performative, initially formulated by John Austin, in *How to Do Things With Words* (1962), changed linguistics drastically. This theory has been modified and extended from philosophy to cultural analysis and back again in other theorizations particularly these by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler. Derrida embraces the theory of the performative as the basis for a new conceptual methodology of analysis in what he refers to as the "new humanities." Through his intervention, the performative is brought to bear on a wide range of cultural practices and events; not only language. Derrida assigns the analytical authority of the humanities within the university to knowledge (its constative language), to the profession (its model of performative language), and to the *mise en oeuvre* of putting to practice of the "performative," which Derrida, alluding to metaphorical fiction, calls the "as if" (2001: 235). On Derrida's conceptualization of *mise en oeuvre* in the sense of "as if," see Derrida (2001: 233–247) and Singer (1993: 539–68). For further studies on Derrida's thought and theory, see Derrida (1976, 1977: 172–97, 1981,

1989: 959–71, and 2000)) and Culler (1981, 1982, 2000b: 503–19, and 2006). The term "new humanities" is cited in Peters (2002: 47–48). In his article, Peters discusses what Derrida outlines as seven programmatic theses in the humanities or what Derrida calls "seven professions of faith for the new humanities" (48). Butler's theorization of performativity follows this Derridian view of iteration as the key to performance in that it accounts for the performative's relationship to cultural practices such as gender. Butler argues that gender is discursively constituted by performative acts, which in their iteration come to form a specific and "coherent" gender identity. Gender, then, becomes a "performative reiteration," that is, as the subject's habit to embody hegemonic norms. As such, for Butler, there is no gender identity behind expressions of gender: identity is constituted by and through the very expressions that are said to be its results. See Butler (1990 and 1993).

5. My assumption here benefits from Richard Bauman's cross-cultural perspective of intertextuality, especially his folklore standpoint of looking at communications across time and the relationship of texts and performance to the past. See Bauman (1984 and 2004). For relevant studies on this perspective in terms of performance, memory, and storytelling, see Dell Hymes's works on the methodology and theory of ethnopoetics in Native American context (2003 and 2004).
6. For a relevant analysis of Masharawi's and Suleiman's films, see Gertz and Khleifi (2008). It is worth mentioning that Bakri's *Jenin, Jenin* (2002) is dedicated to the *Jenin Massacre*. This massacre (also known as *The Battle of Jenin*) took place between of April 3–11, 2002, in Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank as part of Israeli Army's "Operation Defensive Shield." Bakri's film includes testimonies from the residents of Jenin describing how Israeli forces destroyed most of the camp. *Jenin, Jenin* begins with a deaf and dumb man who leads the viewers (and Bakri himself) to the scenes of destruction after which straight interviews with the inhabitants of Jenin are introduced. Bakri also includes an interview with himself. For more information on this film, see http://www.arabfilm.com/item/242/. For detailed insights on the *Jenin Massacre*, see Baroud (2003). Baroud's book is a compilation of eyewitness accounts of the residents of Jenin.
7. Similarly, Simone De Beauvoir's famous term "The Second Sex" indicates the second-class status of women (1949 [1989]).
8. This statement from Freud is discussed by Merchant (1972: 9) and Taha (2002: 56). For Bergson's notion of laughter, see Bergson (1956: 170–89).
9. My use of the term "ontological vertigo" is similar to Inge Boer's use of the term as an effect that emerges from literary works' use of common devices to claim truthfulness of their account while at the same time making use of the imaginary (2004a: 91).

10. For comprehensive historical details as well as the psychological and political impacts of this massacre on the Palestinians, see Kanaana and Zitawi (1987) and Morris (2005: 79–107).
11. For relevant discussions on generational transmission of personal narratives and experiences, see for example, Stahl (1977: 9–30) and Robinson (1981: 58–85).
12. This conceptualization is further developed in Bal (1999b: vii–3).
13. In "official" Israeli political and academic discourse, *al-Nakba* is presented as an event that did not happen. On Israeli negation of *al-Nakba*, see, for example, Kadish and Avraham (2005: 42–57), Morris (1987 and 1990), and Masalha (1988: 158–71 and 1996).
14. For a useful study on this dialectic, see Buck-Morss (2000: 821–65).
15. My use of the term "preposterous temporality" benefits from Mieke Bal's notion of "preposterous history" as she theorizes it in her book *Quoting Caravaggio*. The object of investigation in Bal's book is not the well-known seventeenth century painter, but rather the temporality of art. In her book, Bal re-theorizes linear notions of influence in cultural production. She does so by showing the particular ways in which the act of quoting is central to the new art but also to the source from which it is derived. Through such dialogic relationship between past and present, Bal argues for a notion of "preposterous history," where works that appear chronologically first operate as "after effect" caused by the images of subsequent artists (1999a: 1–27). A similar temporality, I contend, is at stake in Bakri's film, *1948*.
16. Sincerity is itself subject to rhetorical analysis. See Van Alphen, Bal, and Smith (eds.) (2008).
17. For relevant works on testimony in relation to conflicted discourses of memory, see, among others, Lévinas (1996: 97–107), Derrida (2000: 15–51 and 2002: 82–99), Hartman (2002: 67–84), Felman (1991: 39–81), and Sontag (2003: 104–26).
18. The Islamic reference of this relationship as "cousins" can be found in Surah Ibrahim (14: 39). See Yusuf Ali (2000: 200–206). For a relevant study on this relationship in terms of Islamic notions of the community and society, see Haj (2009: 1–30). Haj's study is a close reading of the idea of the modern and the formation of a Muslim subject.
19. For a useful study on the mishaps of the representation of Palestinian history in Zionist narrative in Israeli cinema, see Shohat (1989 and 1994). Shohat's driving thesis is that Palestinians are often not mentioned in Israeli films, and if they are, then their history and their case for a homeland are not treated with understanding and sympathy. In her analysis, Shohat also points out how the exclusive *Jewish rhythm of life* which Zionist cinema promotes serves to camouflage the deep sociocultural discrepancies between the European (Ashkenazi), the Oriental (Sephardim), the Orthodox, and the secular Jews in Israeli society today.

20. For useful studies on ideological trends within Zionism, see Rose (2004). In his study, Rose suggests the urgent need for alternative trends to those ones Zionists thrust upon us in the twentieth century. See also Raz-Krakotzkin (1996: 113-32 and 2007: 530-43). Raz-Krakotzkin's innovative analysis focuses on the Zionist principle of *shelilat ha-galut* (negation of exile), and calls for a through revision of the denigrated concept of *galut*. According to Raz-Krakotzkin, a revised concept of *galut* would enable a Jewish identity that accepts the binationality of the land, and whose political discourse's starting point would be the recognition of the Palestinian collective as a group with historical consciousness. Further, for relevant philosophical discussions on the ways in which political ideologies affect formations of subjectivity and sense of self, see, for example, Althusser (2001: 107–25).
21. For a relevant interpretation of the use of birds in Palestinian folktales, see Muhawi and Kanaana (1989).

5 *Mankoub*: Narrative Fragments of an Ongoing Catastrophe

1. A personal account, as much as a professional fragment, of my limited experience with travel and movement, both as a Palestinian and as an academic, is documented in a 30-minute documentary film, entitled *Access Denied* (2005). Produced by *Cinema Suitcase*, this film shows some of the difficult circumstances I encountered during my visit to the Gaza Strip in 2004, which I planned in order to meet my family but primarily to collect research material for this chapter. *Access Denied* runs with the metaphors of travel and failed encounters between people in order to make a case for a meditative reflection on the intercultural encounter between Arabs and Westerners eager, but not always able, to understand each other. See *Access Denied* (2005).
2. For a useful study on the Internet as an instrument of Palestinian media-activism to establish a virtual community, see Aouragh (2008).
3. The personal accounts in "Reflections on Al-Nakba" are oral narratives written down. The reason I call them "oral narratives" in the first place is related to the dynamics through which they were collected. In its introduction to the narratives, the *Journal of Palestine Studies* points out that it "asked these Palestinians to write down short pieces in which they tell what *al-Nakba* means to them today." Because these people were asked to tell their personal stories, I refer to their status as oral narratives. See "Reflections on Al-Nakba" (1998: 5–35).
4. In this context, different attempts such as conducting oral history projects, the writing of memoirs by intellectuals and politicians and developing rituals of commemoration were made in order to preserve the past and to convey what happened in 1948 to second and third generations of post-*Nakba*

Palestinians who have not experienced the originating event of *al-Nakba*. For several listings, documents and resources on Palestinian historiography of *al-Nakba*, especially oral history projects both inside Palestine and outside it, see, for example, the following initiatives by nongovernmental organizations: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (http://www.badil.org); Palestine Remembered (http://www.palestineremembered.com); and Nakba Archive (http://www.*Nakba*-archive.org/index.htm). Also, for more focused studies on the subject, see Abu Sitta (2004), Sanbar (2001: 87–94), Slyomovics (1995: 41–54 and 1998), Swedenburg (1991: 152–79 and 1995), and Farah (2002: 24–27 and 2003: 20–23).

5. While recent historiography of *al-Nakba* has shown a growing awareness of the importance of recording the events of 1948 from the perspective of those previously marginalized in nationalist narratives—peasants, women, camp refugees, poorer city dwellers, and Bedouin tribes—there is still little documentation on *al-Nakba* as experienced and remembered by the nonelite majority of Palestinian society. On the methodological problems of ethnographic approaches to *al-Nakba* and of social science research on Palestine in general, see Tamari (1994: 69–86 and 1997: 17–40). Also, for a profound critique of memories of Palestine in 1948 beyond traditional national historiography and ethnography, see Ben-Ze'ev (2011). Ben-Ze'ev's study analyzes what happens when narratives of war arise out of personal stories of those who were involved, stories that are still unfolding.
6. The term *Muwateneen* is used in Palestinian discourse to distinguish between those Palestinians who originally lived in cities, towns, and villages in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip before *al-Nakba* (1948) from those Palestinians, the refugees, *LaaJ'een*, who were forced to leave their homes in other places in Palestine and had to settle down in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For relevant studies concerned with the ambivalences of these two terms as well as the sociopolitical situation of Palestinian refugees in general, see Shiblak (1996: 36–45), Tansley (1997), and Mattar (2000).
7. For a very useful discussion on how Palestinian identity remains the only criminalized identity and delinquent selfhood—whose code word is terrorism—in a historical period in the West that has liberated or variously dignified most other races and nationalities, see Said (1994b: 256–88 and 1995b: 230–43).
8. On this episode of Palestinians' history in Lebanon, see Khalidi (1985).
9. See Sayigh (2005: 17–39 and 2007: 86–105). Also, for studies concerned with the practice of "squatting," see Neuwirth (2004).
10. For further explanation of Hirsch's conceptualization of post-memory, see also Hirsch (1997), especially chapter 1 and 6. Also, for critical studies which attribute an ethical dimension to the remembrance of events across cultural and generational boundaries, especially in relation to the suffering of others, see Margalit (2002), Reulecke (2008), Chow (1998), and Bauman (2007 and 2009).

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Index