Radical Sense
Palestine Reader

2025

The Idea Has Failed
By Basman Aldirawi
Translated by Elete

I sympathize with God a lot:
My heart, too, has been let down.
If we could sit together now
we'd share a cigarette. I'd rest my hand on His shoulder, and
we'd cry together until a light rain fell,
washing Gaza of this cloud of smoke
that does not belong to the sky,
stopping the din that kills another child in Gaza
and the blood that's spilling from the world's hand and mouth.
Life will spread across Gaza's chest, and there will be a resurrection:
Not a wound nor a scar on her.
But scars do not die, ya Allah.
I hear Him cry: "A billion silent, a million killed."
The sound of weeping rings out
And though I am no obedient worshiper, I pray.
I remember the faces of families and friends,
the streets, the cities, the sea,
the faces of everyone I've ever met, every day in Gaza.
I pray and I hear His voice, with every explosion and severed limb, shouting:
The idea has failed
The idea has failed

Eman Ghanayem

Proactive Grief

Palestinian Reflections on Death

Abstract: Part memoir, part theoretical reflection, this essay offers one answer to the question "How do Palestinians grieve?" In this narration of the author's mother's relationship to death, her multiple displacements, and her plan for her life, the term *proactive grief* is used to theorize how and why her mother's life trajectory was shaped by her strife to have a dignified death, in other words, to be able to die in Palestine. To illuminate the significance of her mother's approach to death and its relationship to being Palestinian, being refugee, and living under colonial war conditions, this essay also reflects on the difficulty of writing about grief while being personally entangled in its complicated emotions. Ultimately, her mother's proactiveness and commitment to home within and beyond life present an intimate narrative and a family history that could show readers what it means to be Palestinian, to live colonization, to love home, and to face constant threat with dignity.

Prelude: My Mother's Obsession with Death

My mother sits me down very often to tell me about the things she wants to leave me when she dies. My mother, a Palestinian who spent her formative years as a refugee before making her way back home—in the West Bank where she now lives with the rest of my family—is not saying that because she thinks she will die suddenly. She also does not say that politically—that is, in political terms related to her life under war conditions and the possibility of getting killed. No, none of that. My mother has a plan for her life.

MERIDIANS · feminism, race, transnationalism 21:2 October 2022
DOI: 10.1215/15366936-9882108

She used to say, "I will die at the age of sixty-three" (she is sixty-six now). She used to hope to die while praying, but sometimes would tell stories about other women where she would say, "She died in her sleep, *masha'Allah*!"—so perhaps she wanted that too? Her plan had a clear trajectory. It had a beginning, a middle that is the present, and an end: death. Death often factors the most in her stories. I know that my grandfather died of cancer, but I do not know much about how he lived. I know that my grandmother hemorrhaged to death because of a medical mistake made during the amputation of her leg, due to a negligent doctor's dismissing her when she reported a stroke, which originally hit her leg, because she walked in the snow, because she wanted to save her trees (you see, a storm was coming, and she did not want them to die). I know all the details of my grandmother's death. I imagine them so often that they actually turned into a memory, yet I do not have real memories of how she looked, or how she was with her trees, or where I was when she died.

My mother would always caution us about how people end up dying when they have remorselessly done bad deeds. I learned about the difference between good and bad through my mother's metaphors of death. She would equate painful deaths to evil life. She often gave as examples war criminals and how they die. She would always say, "Look at X and how many Palestinians he killed . . . now look at how he died." My mother never wished death on anyone except Zionists, especially soldiers.[1] And it was not framed as a threat (not that I need to offer that disclaimer). She would say that because she genuinely believed that any person who is capable of killing others or authorizing the death of others, with full impunity, needs to disappear. Her metaphor for death in that context was "to be taken away." She always wished soldiers to be taken away, before they kill anyone, because they killed someone, or because everywhere they go, they bring death.

My mother always prays for a swift death, but she knows that there likely is a tough path ahead. Like my father, like every senior person in my family, my mother has chronic illnesses. She always says that sickness is an opportunity for redemption. When we are sick, we realize our own mortality—a lesson so impactful that it would remind us to be better humans. Sickness, in that sense, offers us a second chance, or so she would imply. She anticipates that her chronic conditions will kill her slowly. Again, none of this is said in hopelessness. My mother has a plan.

My mother has a plan for my father too. She feared that he would suffer in his death. Her rationale was his eruptive emotion, his inability to easily

let go, which often trapped him into a mental reaction in which he would say something hurtful—something others would have a hard time forgiving. He usually did not remember what he said, which made my mother assume a lack of remorse. I believe that forgetfulness was his way of coping. A sensitive child who was expected to compete for the love of his mother, my father had a lot of unprocessed heartbreak. It led him to a state of constant movement, traveling out of Palestine to study in Lebanon—a challenge for someone who had only Palestinian documents and came from extreme poverty—then to the United Arab Emirates where he worked for twenty years without receiving citizenship rights, then to Jordan, then back to Surif, his home village in the district of Hebron. His difficult journey from poverty to moderate wealth, in pursuit of stability, a near impossibility within the conditions of imminent displacement, led him to a constant state of restlessness. My father's response to tension, to crisis, to reminders of finality and vulnerability always manifested in denial, negotiation, anger, depression, but never acceptance—an unconsummated, almost ritualistic, cycle of grief.[2]

I understand if this part of the story is hard to rationalize. Why would my mother think that her own husband might have a bad death? Why would she tolerate his chronic despondency? And how did that fit into her plan? My mother's fear about my father's death motivated her prayers for years: she prayed that my father finds comfort, that he forgives hurt, and that he lets go of what he cannot control; in other words, that he dies peacefully. Her fear comes from love. I am also convinced that her love is of the kind that, she anticipates, could vindicate her as well. She, by extension, by not giving up on his fate, by not allowing a painful death to occur, by not being a silent witness to the procession of possible tragedy, might also be able to do good, to save another human—might also be able to die a dignified death. Such is a desire that surfaces in the subtext of her conversations, even as it is not outwardly iterated. The rule of thumb for her, in the big picture of life and the point of it, is to always move beyond misery. She will not despair about her life, my father's, mine, and her family's. She has a plan for her life and everyone's. She wants to save us; she wants to be saved by us in return.

Before going further into the point of this story, and other stories about my mother that can expand on its implications, I would like to propose a thesis about grief. My argument is threefold. First, there is an intrinsic tie between grief, hope, and dignity in the setting of death under settler

colonial conditions. I use the term *proactive grief* to name the type of grief that emerges out of these conditions, and which constantly rejects despair even while it acknowledges and works toward an end.[3] Second, I argue that this type of grief implicates settler colonialism and the multiple forms of dispossession that Palestinians experience. Throughout this essay I use my mother's story as a form of ethnography to illuminate a Palestinian epistemology that grapples with the complexity of crisis, death, and mourning in the context of colonial war and constant displacement. Proactive grief intertwines with place and one's relationship to it. It structures itself through a cultivated conviction in origin and the Palestinians' perception of life and death through an Indigenous relationship to Palestine: the place where they strive to be and where they hope to die.

This takes me to my third and final argument. Because I am attempting a theory on Palestinian grief while being intimately implicated in its context, I argue that the process of writing this essay, and about death and colonization generally, is also a process of grief that is complex, cyclical, and unfinalized. For that reason, I am not answering the question How do Palestinians grieve? as much as I am processing it, reflecting on possible answers, and honoring my mother and her wisdom. In that sense I am also participating in proactive grief, which primarily motivates why I narrate a family story in this essay and how I establish my reading as subjective and as motivated by the same set of values I discuss. It is important to say here that, in line with Palestinian anti-colonial praxes against despair, this essay, while speaking of severe death conditions, and while aware of how it could burden its readers or heavily resonate with them, concludes with hope and iterates it throughout.

Proactive Grief in the Journey to Death

My mother's story, and my family's story in general, takes place in multiple locations. To understand how my mother was able to develop her plan for her life, readers have to know certain aspects about Palestinian ways of thinking. My mother's approach to driving is an adequate analogy to use here. She once told me that the best way to drive is to chart out the way in your head before you even run the car. "You have to visualize it in full, every step, every place, every turn, and the final destination, and that will make driving much easier." This is how she put it to help me get less overwhelmed and flustered when I drove in the busy streets of Amman where we lived at the time. Charting out places, visualizing the full map, or planning a

journey with a start and an end reflects what I will describe here as a refugee mindset. Like myself, every refugee or child of refugees I know has expressed a similar inclination to draw mental maps. They can take the form of what we traditionally understand as a map, or they could be a formula, a route, or a set of choices that can help us move left, right, across, and beyond. Sit next to the door in crowded settings, take classes with friends so they can have your back, have an alternative career plan in case you need it, confide your valuable information to someone you trust in case of an emergency, keep your legal documents up-to-date, always save money, and so on. These roadmaps could be for one's day-to-day existence but could also extend to many years ahead.

The refugee's displacement factors greatly in how these maps are drawn. Death comes from anywhere, at any point, and in every imaginable way. In the fact of its omnipresence, it has no place and no time, but also all places and all times. Displacement teaches refugees of the many places of death and the work death does everywhere they turn. To a large extent, refugee displacement does not connote a lack of placeness, as some would think, but instead a proliferation of place. Contrary to popular opinion about what constitutes a refugee and the focus on their homelessness that sets them apart from figures like the citizen or the well-traveled (i.e., "the global citizen"), refugees tend to be hyper aware of place. They know it too well, and they set their memories and goals in relation to it. My mother's plan is to die in Palestine. She hopes to be buried in Der Sharaf in Nablus, her birthplace. Her parents died in Jordan, a full country removed from their original home. The process of transferring dead Palestinian bodies back to Palestine is virtually impossible. This goes in line with Israeli policies that deny Palestinians a dignified death and access to their place-specific mourning traditions (or impose an expense with deep financial and political ramifications for the majority of Palestinian families).[4] Denial of burials in Palestine for those outside it, the confiscation of dead bodies to delay mourning, and the burial of Palestinians in unmarked graves are some of the many ways Israel's colonization of Palestine has impacted our relationship to death and, by extension, life on both personal and communal levels.[5]

My mother's approach to death has always anticipated the possibility that, like her parents, she does not have much control over how, when, and where she dies. Her aspirational death plan, right from its very inception, has involved always achieving the most possible proximity to her

birthplace, which she hopes to be her final abode. In a way, the plan is meant to help her regain some control over her future and, even if symbolically, take charge of her life. Her journey across multiple settings of displacement culminated in a return to Palestine after decades of *shatat*, or diaspora, in Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and then Jordan again. Such a feat would be almost impossible to achieve today. In the 1980s my mother took advantage of what at the time was known as the "reunion law." This legal opening enabled Palestinians who were Jordanian citizens, but whose spouses had Palestinian documents, to attain legal Palestinian credentials as well. In the process of (bluntly put) hustling her way through this arduous process, the details of which I cannot divulge in public writing, my mother's Jordanian citizenship combined with my father's Palestinian citizenship, and, together, we were able to become both Palestinian and Jordanian. In Palestinian terms, we were able to cross the border between Jordan and the West Bank. I was the only person among all my Palestinian refugee friends in Jordan to be able to travel to Palestine. And, since obtaining this dual status, I have lived in both places.

Like my mother, I learned to map this multi-location existence in how I lived, in my thoughts about the world, and in every life decision I made. Like language itself, my bilingualism, my ability to speak the *fallahi*, or Palestinian rural dialects of both my parents, the dialect of Amman where I lived most of my life, the dialect of Ramallah where I worked, enough of Hebrew to understand soldiers, and colloquiums of the American Midwest where I lived for eight years—are all evidence of proliferated place, of being able to gauge the many words and cultures of human emotion, and of knowing how to communicate them in different settings. My mother's plan, like the intricate language of Palestinian feelings, is extremely aware of the complex relationship between people, place, and life and how the three should interact. In the face of an omnipresent death condition, my mother meets life with a well-cultivated protocol and due respect. She says to the reality of dying: I know you are plural, unsettled, shape shifting, tongue twisting, and supreme, and I plan to carry myself through you with seriousness and gravity. I will never take you lightly, I will never bend your truth, and I know you will happen to me however you please.

In its quintessence, proactive grief is a form of proactive living. In an existence defined by its boundaries, by constant threats of destabilization, roadblocks, enclosures, and expulsions, my mother's plan for her death affirms a complex map of what lies ahead: every possible step, every

possible place, every possible turn, and the ultimate destination. It is a map of life that is not about certainty, or about defying death, but about hope and the constant strife to do good and be at peace. Her death philosophy comes from a place-oriented culture that primes one's origin as the catalyst for one's life struggle and pursuit of happiness, or as my mother would put it, *el-ridha wa hadat el-bal*, contentment and peace of mind. For Palestinians who exist under the cyclical and hard reality of settler colonial dispossession, that origin is and remains to be Palestine—whether in the sense of it being one's actual birthplace or when made through the power of familial memory into a real, felt homeland. Understanding how this point of origination functions in my mother's death plan greatly factors in evaluating the immense significance of her strategy and the overall value of proactive grieving. In my mother's story, her birthplace and her death place are intended to be the same. Such intention defines the aspirational trajectory of everything she does and hopes to achieve. It also plays a great role in how she has structured our family and planned our lives (because, as mentioned previously, she wants us to die a good death too). This becomes most evident in my current diasporic circumstance and the strain it continues to have on my family. Every year I spend in the United States, my family's rarely uttered fear that I may never come back becomes harder to hide. While growing up, my mother often shared her death plan with me because she needed a witness and a listener, but she also used it to prepare me for what later became my own trajectory for life: I, too, want to die in Palestine. Whenever my family's fear of losing me surfaces, I remind them that my plan never strayed from theirs.

I am not saying that my mother's idea of death is shared by every Palestinian mother, woman, or person. But her approach, which was her mother's and now is mine, reflects a recurrent life pattern relevant to her and her family's type of Palestinian displacement among the many that define our collective colonization. My mother's experience with multiple dispersions instilled in her an ethical approach to life that motivated her good actions and her movements. There is much to say about the religious foundation that influenced my mother's outlook, particularly in aspects of "contentment and internal peace." The emotional comfort of prayer, the meditative serenity of ritual, and her unbroken conviction that strife is a pathway to better things—all constitute the contours of her death philosophy. But alongside her Muslim faith, my mother's definition of strife always mingled with her unbroken bond with Palestine that continues to overcome all

obstacles. My mother, in her fifties, once walked through sewage pipes just to visit Jerusalem. When I was in my twenties, she used to have me dress like a minor so I could walk through the checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem to avoid getting carded.[6] She always insisted "we find a way" to visit all possible places in Palestine, whether they are in the West Bank or the parts of Palestine we are colonially denied. That strife matters. "A form of getting closer to Allah," she sometimes called it. "Our way of earning life," she would add.

I end this section with strife because practicing proactive grief is about understanding the journey to death as demanding ethical and political decisions that prime loyalty to home, family, and people. Return, or *al-awda*, as a concept that motivates Palestinians, their writings, and their political movements not only connotes a desire to return to one's homeland, but it also predetermines the whole trajectory of Palestinian life.[7] Everything my mother did and continues to do pursues Palestine and the preservation of her family's right to live and die there. The grieving process that underlies this mission contends with colonialism and its strong hold of Palestinian lives that often leaves us ambivalent and with minimal control. Like cyclical violence, my mother's strife renews in the presence of new and open-ended displacements, responds to this endless violence, and finds refuge in the certainty of death. Rather than escape the truth of mortality, my mother created a smart death plan that could counteract Israeli settler colonialism and its intention to make Palestinians live and die horribly, unexpectedly, and in degrading form.[8] My mother, in all places and all times, chose dignity instead.

The Process: How to Write Palestinian Grief?

My intention with this essay is to highlight Palestinians' approach to death as an intelligent model of anticipatory thinking and anti-colonial resiliency. To accept death is not a small feat. To accept it within constant daily reminders of how it can be utilized as a colonial tool to coerce and terrorize, and while witnessing the many ways Israelis kill Palestinians, makes hope the more difficult to generate.[9] Personal strife, or *jihad al-nafs*, defines this form of thinking, and the pursuit of a dignified life and a dignified death represents its primary motivations.[10] The original story is simple. My mother was born in Palestine, and she wants to die there. What complicates it is that I was not born in Palestine, but I also want to die there. At what point did her strife become mine? How did this transition happen?

And what does it say about Palestinians and their way of being? These questions influenced how I chose to unravel the narrative and its implications. My mother is the hero of the story, but I needed to establish that I am also there, and so is her husband and the entirety of her family, which includes five children and twelve grandchildren. We are all part of her death plan, and we are all part of her political agenda.

The storytelling itself was the hardest part in the writing process. Establishing a distinction between my parents on the subject matter of death, and then maneuvering a way to highlight my mother's perspective as philosophical and foundational to our family history, required self-examination and emotional vulnerability. There are also parts of the story I could not tell—all the deaths that my mother experienced and all the near-death experiences of loved ones she witnessed that influenced her thinking. I needed to grieve too in the process of writing about her grief. These feelings intuitively but painstakingly emerged out of me as I stared at the page. This was not a performed state of mind but real mental distress emerging from the context of writing this essay: the harsh reality of COVID-19 deaths and the heightened settler, police, and military violence in East Jerusalem,[11] Gaza, and different parts of the West Bank and historic Palestine during the summer of 2021.[12] I was writing this while mourning the distance between me and my family, my inability to hold them, my anxiety of losing them before seeing them again, and the immense strain of a colonization that psychologically and emotionally abuses us.

When I started writing this essay, I used the least formal, least bold font possible. I made it very small and used narrow margins. I figured that way the magnitude of certain words would be lost in the busy pages, the voice would feel less formal, and I would be less debilitated by the stress of having to maintain rationality when colonial violence defies all sense. In the process of writing about grief, I also stumbled on having to define it. I wanted to use my mother's story as a literary text that I could analyze and use as a site for theory making. But I wanted it to be a theory about my family that could explain our relationship to Palestine, my mother's strange activity of recounting her hopes for her death, and how we as a family choose to grieve. In that sense the definition needed to be personal and specific to our colonial experience. Muslim faith factors greatly in how my mother understands life and death, and it combines with a political angle that brings up the question of Palestine, Palestinian belonging, and my mother's unbreakable loyalty to the homeland. The intricacy of her

conviction nuances and defines what it means to be Palestinian, Muslim, refugee, woman, and parent in the way my mother has been. In the larger picture of Palestinian decolonization, my mother's liberatory action is her death plan, which I, her direct descendant, understand as a cultural inheritance. In the telling of the story, I came closer to understanding that inheritance, its deep implications, and why I too have been obsessed with it for years.

It was also difficult to stray from my mother's story and into secondary references and theoretical considerations that shift the attention away from her. I drew a mental map of the story, and I kept to the path that starts with her and ends with her. There are theoretical angles to consider: theories about mourning, grief, and grievability[13] that could expand on my mother's story and, ultimately, turn it into an entry point into a much larger discussion on Palestinians and settler colonialism. I could not go into those paths while telling the story. My mother is the matriarch of seventeen direct descendants, she has lived in multiple homes and experienced immense hardship, and her story represents many others in Palestine and elsewhere. I used the term *refugee mindset* to create an opening for readers who share similarities with my mother. Displacement manufactured my mother's resourcefulness, and it made her more able to anticipate and manage disruptive crises and an unstable life condition. What she does stems from a deep cultural practice. It revolves primarily around grief, but it also represents other forms of knowing: knowing how to live, how to create family, how to mother,[14] how to be Palestinian, how to be Indigenous and refugee, how to be an ethical human, how to be under colonization, and how to be beyond colonization. These implications led to my theoretical juncture in the telling of her story: "Proactive grief is a form of proactive living." It was not a premeditated statement; rather, it organically emerged out of the details of her story. I wanted readers to be reminded that writing about death is also writing about life, that my mother accepts but does not desire death, and that Palestinians desire life strongly, even as they approach it practically. More importantly, I wanted readers to observe (and, hopefully, intellectually participate in) the contradictions that define my mother's life and the lives of many like her: living in the context of always dying, death as a life force, and so on. Like the intricate epistemology that underlies her Palestinian story, the dialectic of life and death that defines her ways of being, thinking, and feeling is a topic that, over the course of this essay, was more accessible to describe through the intuitive pull of storytelling than to theorize as a macro social phenomenon. Rather

than force scholarly sense into the contradictions of living under colonial conditions, storytelling helps me invite readers to know with me, to reflect on the difficulty of life, and to grieve together.

The complexity of what my mother's story potentially and likely represents is equally heightened by the fact that I, the writer, am also her daughter. The close proximity means that I am able to share intimate details about her life and my family's history while also wanting to make sense of them. As a child, my mother's constant mention of death perplexed me, even scared me. The details I used in this essay, the narrative I reconstructed, serve as an investigation, a way to answer why and how she became the way she is. Conceptualizing her approach to death as a plan brings retroactive assurance, and it bridges a mental gap that I needed to fill. In the process of trying to understand her better, I was able to take pride in her and our Palestinian story more. The fear I experienced as a child listening to her talk about dying somehow, here, brought me strength and comfort. I am not writing this essay in a separate space and time from the death condition that determined and will always determine Palestinian life. I write it at a juncture similar in its complexity and incomprehensibility to the many that shrouded my mother's life with existential threat. Many feelings remain unarticulated here. I am writing this essay over six-thousand miles away from my mother, having not seen her in over two years, hindered by COVID-19 travel restrictions and immigration issues to see her, and burdened by a barrage of news from home that has defined the year 2021 for us so far: a war on Gaza that killed 256 Palestinians and injured thousands, including protestors in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and 48 territories;[15] the desecration of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem during the month of Ramadan; the threatening of hundreds of families who inhabit the Palestinian neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan in East Jerusalem; great harms experienced by Palestinians who live in West Bank villages near illegal Jewish settlements as they protect their lands from theft; and a heavy-handed suppression of Palestinian voices in the streets and on social media. I write this essay while mourning, as a form of mourning, and to remind myself through the telling of my mother's story that our death always will and should matter.

Conclusion: We Will All Die

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un. Surely, we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return is a statement said by Muslims when they hear news of death. The statement is meant to stir, or restir, like sickness does, like abrupt

death, the following epiphany: we will all die. Death begins where words end—complete silence, complete peace after unrest, the conclusion of crisis. My mother's relationship to death gives insight into the relationship between colonial violence and grief. Understanding cultural expressions of grief, such as my mother's, can generate an idea about the feelings and motivations that underlie how those who are constantly confronted with death within and across multiple settings of uncertainty, and who live their entire lives under real colonization, choose to process the finitude of life.

My mother and I recently discussed a new plan that anticipates and could solve the following problem: what should we do if she dies while I am away? She brought up the question anxiously. Because I am always unable to visit my family as frequently as she wants, my mother assumed I would not make the trip to see her. She was genuinely surprised to hear that I had planned for that many years ago. I said that I will immediately book a direct flight to Jordan, take a taxi from the airport to the Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian borders, take the bus that crosses into the West Bank, take a shuttle to Hebron, take a minibus to Surif, and hopefully be able to say goodbye before the burial.[16] "I will not let it happen without seeing you," I concluded. Proactive grief, once more in this case, intrinsically emerges as a roadmap that affirms mutual dignity under colonialism's constant state of crisis and death. My mother was elated to hear my plan. *Allah yirdha 'aliki, farrahtini*, "God bless you; you made me happy," she said.

For reasons I attempted to understand here, my mother derives freedom, comfort, and joy in planning her death as finely and wisely as she does. In writing her story, I wished to prepare myself for the worst, thus participating in her ritual of early mourning. It is not only the occasion of her ultimate death that saddens me but also the fact that my map might not work or, more accurately, might not be possible in the context of the ambivalences that plague Palestinians all the time. I will, however, take her lead and anticipate every step, every place, and every turn—never hesitating to hope that my final destination and hers will be the same.

Eman Ghanayem is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Comparative Literature and the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University. Her research examines Palestinian and American Indian literatures, and the larger context of Indigenous and refugee narratives, through a framework of interconnected settler colonialisms and comparative Indigeneities.

Notes

I would like to express my gratitude for the essay's two anonymous reviewers and their valuable feedback, and for Jyoti Puri for her great help and encouragement throughout this process, especially when terrible news from home made it almost impossible to move forward. I am also thankful for Amanda Batarseh, Ashjan Ajour, Nayrouz Abu Hatoum, Sarah Ihmoud, Jennifer Mogannam, Loubna Qutami, and Randa Wahbe for their thoughtful reading and their show of support in the truest manner of Palestinian feminist love.

1 *Zionism* here refers mainly to what is also known as modern Zionism, or political Zionism, the nineteenth-century nationalist ideology whose primary objective was to create a Jewish nation-state in Palestine through colonial means (such as the expulsion of the native population, land appropriation, the creation of Israel, and the erasure of the Palestinian narrative). Palestinians use *Zionism* to connote the settler colonization of Palestine and those who maintain it (in the particular example of my mother's saying, that would be Israeli soldiers).

2 I am here referring to the popular grief model that postulates that those experiencing loss go through five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and, ultimately, acceptance. My father passed away on April 4, 2022, months into revising this essay for the special issue. The reader may want to know that my father passed away in Palestine, as my mother had hoped, and that he was buried in his home village. Those my mother thought would be unable to forgive my father were, according to what she later told me, some of the ones who mourned his death the most. I could not be present in Palestine when he died and during his burial.

3 I use the term *proactive grief* to highlight farsightedness and wisdom in the way my mother and many Palestinians experience death. While writing this essay, I found that Hayder Al-Mohammad's (2019) article, "What Is the 'Preparation' in the Preparing for Death? New Confrontations with Death and Dying in Iraq" reflects a similar approach to the subject matter of death, culture, and war. The idea of preparing for death as he analyzes it also implies a proactiveness enmeshed with a refusal to despair, particularly as relevant to Iraqi cultural practices. In addition, Al-Mohammad discusses the blurring of binaries between life and death, which, alongside many other things, leads to the "dying" exerting much labor for the sake of those assumed to be living longer than them. My mother's death plan falls within that category of labor.

4 Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2020) in "Necropenology: Conquering New Bodies, Psychics, and Territories of Death in East Jerusalem" offers examples of the legal and financial burdens inflicted on Palestinians who wish to bury their relatives in their place of origin and in accordance with religious ritual.

5 These death-related policies have been part and parcel of the Zionist colonization of Palestine since its beginnings. See Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2013, Daher-Nashif 2018, Daher-Nashif 2020, and Wahbe 2020. Achille Mbembe's (2019: 66) concept of necropolitics, or "the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die," is also useful to engage with here to understand the

relationship between colonization and the violent management of native death. Necropenology (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2020), a Palestine-specific legal delineation of Mbembe's necropolitics, is relevant and useful here as well.

6 Palestinians from the West Bank have a green identity card that limits their access and movement. Unlike Jerusalemites and Israeli citizens, they are required to prove that they have a reason to enter Jerusalem, apply for a permit in advance, and show these documents before entering the city. Minors and seniors are often exempted from this process.

7 Return constitutes a major preoccupation for Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and in the diaspora. It is a primary cultural consciousness and the driver of the Palestinian Cause (here, the term is often phrased as "the right of return," or *haq al-awda*).

8 *Karameh* or dignity is deeply cultural to the Palestinian People. Randa May Wahbe (2020) offers insight into the humiliation Palestinians are forced undergo in their experience with targeted life-threatening violence. "The politics of *Karameh*," as she frames it, become the means to respond to real and potential humiliation in death.

9 I am not denying that killings occur on the Israeli side as well. However, it is important to point out that the killing of Palestinians is legalized, institutionalized, governed, and made systematic by the Israeli government, which, as Palestinians and non-Palestinian scholars of settler colonialism contend, should be understood as a settler colonial government. My reflections should then be understood as a critique of settler colonial states and governmentality rather than of individuals or individual intent.

10 In Islamic teachings, *jihad*, which is Arabic for strife or struggle, has different forms. *Jihad al-nafs*, or *jihad* of the heart, is the most internal form of strife, and it manifests in the individual's ability to withstand pain and temptation and enact faith in Allah and the work of fate, especially in matters of life and death.

11 Displacing families and neighborhoods and possessing their homes and lands in East Jerusalem has been part and parcel of Israeli policy for many decades. For a historical overview, see Abowd 2014. For reports on violence in the time of writing this essay, see Jundi 2021a, Jundi 2021b.

12 During the outbreak of COVID-19, Israel implemented violent measures that threatened Palestinian lives, which eventually prompted terming Israel "a medical apartheid" state (Rabbani 2021). These measures included Israel's obfuscation of Palestinian health-related activities in their communities (e.g., the destruction of sanitization stations in Hebron), refusing to improve poor health-care accessibility for Palestinians, failing to properly address upticks in deaths among the Arab population, and prioritizing the vaccination of its Jewish population over Arabs. Besides these pandemic-related acts of violence, Israel continued its illegal settlement in the West Bank, its dispossessive practices in East Jerusalem, and its siege and war on Gaza. For an overview of Israel's violence during COVID-19, see the *Journal of Palestine Studies*' summer 2020 special issue "The Pandemic and Palestine," edited by Rashid Khalidi and

Sherene Seikaly. The special issue gives great insight into the many facets of Israel's threats to Palestinian life, medically, politically, and socially.

13 The term *grievable* is theorized by Judith Butler (2009) in her examination of complicated mourning in the setting of war. Imperial wars and the invisibility attached to those deemed "casual deaths" deny oppressed, racialized peoples the world's reverence and grief. Though this idea majorly circulates in studies of grief and mourning, and is incredibly valuable to the study of power, its conceptualization focuses primarily on colonial denials of precarious lives. This essay follows a different approach by giving no attention to colonial perspectives on native lives and instead discusses cultural forms of resiliency that, I would argue, undermine colonial projections—discursive and otherwise. In that sense my mother's life is not predicated on colonial views of it but instead operates above and beyond colonization itself. My approach is inspired by Palestinian and Arab feminists who centralize everyday practices of Palestinian and Arab women and peoples in contexts of wars.

14 I say "mother" here because it is relevant to my mother's experience. But I am also thinking about mothering in the context of care, community, and radical politics. Arab feminist scholar Nadine Naber's (2021) theorization of radical mothering is particularly useful here (see also Naber, Naser, and Strong 2020).

15 *48 Territories* is one term used by Palestinians to name lands that were stolen to create what is now geopolitically bounded as the "State of Israel."

16 For Muslims burials should happen immediately after a person's death. This is another reason that the Israeli government's policy of confiscating the bodies of dead Palestinians (those killed by soldiers in contact zones such as protests) is considered religiously and culturally offensive.

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WE LOVE WHAT WE HAVE

We love what we have, no matter how little,
because if we don't, everything will be gone. If we don't,
we will no longer exist, since there will be nothing here for us.
What's here is something that we are still
building. It's something we cannot yet see,
because we are part
of it.
Someday soon, this building will stand on its own, while we,
we will be the trees that protect it from the fierce
wind, the trees that will give shade
to children sleeping inside or playing on swings.

CHAPTER 8

Precarious Politics

The Activism of "Bodies That Count" (Aligning with Those That Don't) in Palestine's Colonial Frontier

REMA HAMMAMI

It was the day they were clearing the villagers of Mufaqara from their land. The soldiers were pushing and shoving people around, hauling off their belongings and dumping them. . . . The children screaming as their homes were being bulldozed, people trying to save a few of their belongings, people who barely had anything. That day I felt totally depressed. Defeated. You ask yourself, where is the world? Where is the press? There was no one there. No one saw what was happening to us. That was the moment I realized that we were totally alone.
—HISHAM, leader of the Popular Resistance Committee of Southern Hebron Hills / Masafer Yatta

This essay focuses on a particular site of struggle and strategy of activism that involves the coming together of intelligible and unintelligible bodies in an attempt to resist the necropolitics of Israeli settler colonialism in the West Bank / Palestine. The strategy of building solidarities with "bodies that count" is analyzed in relation to the way Israeli sovereign power and imperial geopolitics operate to distribute precarity unevenly both across and within Palestinian space in the West Bank, relegating the Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta to a zone of hyperprecarity and elimination. As such, in this zone, the struggle of the communities has become centered on the possibility of existence itself. The analysis here focuses on how the active solidarities of grievable bodies (those recognized by sovereign power as rights-bearing subjects, or indeed as fully human—here Israelis and Euro-Americans) entering this zone attempt to produce countervisibilities and connection in the face of the

erasures and isolation deployed by Israeli colonial violence. In contrast to the wider literature on "protective accompaniment" that tends to foreground the voices and agency of white, western subjects in their narratives of these types of activisms, here I reverse the usual order and put Palestinians from the communities at the center.

Imperial Peace / Colonial Space

In 1999, at the height of the Oslo "peace process" between Israel and the PLO, the Israeli military (Israeli Defense Forces, or IDF) issued an evacuation order against the twelve Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank. The military had designated the land on which the communities existed in an arid and isolated part of the southern Hebron Hills an IDF training area, "Firing Zone 918," and the residents of the communities were charged with "illegally" residing there. Over the period of October/November 1999, the IDF systematically expelled more than seven hundred families from their lands, demolished their homes and cisterns, and poured cement down their wells.[1]

Over the course of the 1990s within the settler colonial cartography of the West Bank and the Imperial geopolitics of the Oslo "peace process,"[2] the villages of Masafer Yatta had become reterritorialized into a zone of hyperprecarity known in diplomatic language as "Area C." The 1994 Oslo Accords subdivided the once seamless territory of the occupied West Bank into three zones marked by varying degrees of Palestinian "autonomy" from Israeli control. Palestinian towns and cities (Area A) became zones of Palestinian Authority (PA) "full responsibility," and PA "security control" over the population within those areas was the signal mark of "autonomy." Palestinian villages within their municipal boundaries became categorized as "Area B," zones in which the PA had civilian responsibility over the population, while Israel continued to hold full rights of "security" control over them. The remaining 64 percent of the land, the lightly populated territory surrounding the 166 separate islands of Areas A and B, was deemed "Area C"—the area that crucially contains both the majority of Palestinian farm and pasturage lands, along with Israeli settlements and IDF military installations. To this day, Area C remains under direct Israeli civil and military control and is where the Israeli military is the literal sovereign. Through this violent process of reterritorialization, Palestinians in towns (now Area A) and villages (Area B) of the West Bank were brought under a form of imperial trusteeship under the tutelage of a global assemblage of peace and state-building actors and institutions that mediated the direct

necropolitics of Israeli sovereign rule, while those inhabiting Area C found themselves plunged into a zone of abandonment on what was now Israel's settler colonial frontier. One Area C resident described it this way:

> Look around you, under that tent is the house we built—two small rooms with no doors or windows, of course without a permit, that's why we covered it in a tent—to hide it. They came last week and said there is a demolition order on it. . . . And [laughs] this tent we're sitting in—there's a demolition order on it too. What's there to destroy? Some iron poles and a tarp! They've even made our access to the breeze illegal—they don't want us to get any air! (Um Bahjat, al Mufaqara)

In Area C approximately two hundred thousand Palestinians live in 230 scattered communities, side by side with three hundred thousand Israeli settlers in 135 settlements and another 100 "settlement outposts."[3] The majority are small herding and farming communities and Bedouins who often do not have the basics of modern infrastructure (water, electricity, accessible roads) and also lack the most basic social services (schools and health clinics). Housing is often "temporary" and includes caves, shacks, and tents. This dearth of modernity is due not to "underdevelopment" but to active "de-development" by the Israeli authorities, who prevent even the most basic forms of permanent construction and thwart all attempts at creating the infrastructure for "livable life."[4] Along with the constant surveillance/destruction of the communities' attempts at making an infrastructure of existence by the Israeli military, there is the constant threat of and actual "frontier violence" undertaken by settlers against them. Humanitarian and human rights reports regularly describe a range of Israeli mechanisms that lead to what they call the population's "vulnerability to displacement," including restrictive planning and zoning; house demolitions and mass eviction; the creation of military firing zones and closed military areas; access restrictions to land, water, and pasturage; and the near constancy of settler violence.[5]

Necropolitics, Settler Colonialism, Erasure

> The ramified system in place in South Hebron, like everywhere else in the Occupied Territories, exists for one and only one purpose—to steal land and to make the owners of this land disappear. Everything, and everybody, on the Israeli side is fully mortgaged to this single aim.
>
> —DAVID SHULMAN, Israeli Ta'ayush activist

In his seminal article "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembe extends and transforms Giorgio Agamben's theorization of the state of exception from the camp to the colony: "The colony is the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of the judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of 'civilization.'"[6] By focusing on the colony as a formative site of the state of exception, Mbembe brings racism and its translation into different economies of violence over bodies and territory into the genealogy of contemporary forms of governmentality and the biopolitical. In this reading, the colony and sovereign power are coconstitutive: in the colony a permanent state of emergency reigns where law is displaced by arbitrary and discretionary rule and where in the management of native populations modern biopolitics is superseded by its constituent logic of necropolitics. Or, as Hunaida Ghanim puts it in relation to the native, "From the moment that power is directed to destroying, eliminating, and dismantling their group, the decision about their life becomes a decision about their death."[7]

In understanding the specific form that colonial necropolitics takes in the context of Masafer Yatta, it is useful to read Mbembe in conjunction with Patrick Wolfe's more historicized account of settler colonialisms. Wolfe has noted that the deep logic of settler colonialism is the elimination of the indigenous population in order to settle their land, a process that has adaptively involved different technologies of violence across different colonial formations and historical periods (such as assimilation or mass displacement—and not solely genocide).[8] As a structure that unfolds through time (and space), elimination is also shaped by the balance of power between indigenous populations and the colonizing power.[9]

In Israel's case, the technologies of "elimination" through mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing that marked its founding in 1948 gave way to the modalities of military occupation after the 1967 capture of the West Bank and Gaza. As Richard Falk noted, Palestinians "find themselves being colonized by an alien power against their will and under the pretext of 'belligerent occupation.'"[10] In the contemporary West Bank, these logics are now refracted through the differential "protection" offered by the presence of what constitutes an imperial trusteeship over the Palestinian Bantustans of Areas A and B, operating within the wider logics of Israeli settler colonial necropolitics—producing what Mbembe describes as "late colonial occupation": "a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical."[11] Thus, in Area C, where the Israeli military is the literal sovereign, the logics of

elimination are free to unfold relatively unimpeded; there modern biopolitical techniques (urban planning, land use, residency procedures) in the service of necropolitics, bound by military "law," operate in tandem with the frontier violence of the colony's shock troops: its settlers. And as Wolfe notes, there "the murderous activities of the frontier rabble constitute the colonial state's principle means of expansion."[12]

Hyperprecarity / Nongrievable Life

That precariousness is an ontological condition common to all life is the starting point for Judith Butler's arguments for situating contemporary ethical politics around a recognition of mutual vulnerability and interdependence. Precariousness refers to and follows from our social existence as bodily beings, always dependent on others for the needs of our survival. Precarity refers to the political conditions that follow when these needs of survival are not addressed: it "designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death."[13] For Butler, precarity also refers to the situation of populations forcibly exposed to forms of state-sanctioned military violence whose condition is exacerbated by the fact that their only option is to seek protection from the very state that targets them with violence.[14] To highlight this twofold condition of precarity, the specific political condition induced by Israeli necropolitics in Masafer Yatta (and for Palestinians in Area C generally), I refer to its situation as hyperprecarity.[15]

The differential distribution of precarity across populations relies powerfully on representational regimes that delimit whose lives are worthy of sustenance and protection and whose lives are perceived as disposable or not even human. The distinction between lives that are recognizable, as constituting the human "us" in dominant Western (and colonial) norms, Butler (building from her social ontology of precariousness) refers to as "grievable," in contrast to those "ungrievable" others who are made unintelligible by the racist operations of these same norms. The loss of a Palestinian life is grieved by those intimately close and often by those farther away. But a Palestinian life, though grievable within its own community, becomes ungrievable across ontological divides that foreclose it from being recognized as human—a process that is innately political. To grieve someone thus moves from being a personal experience of loss to becoming the basis for sustained political acts of recognition and mutual interdependence. As will become clear in what follows,

these ethics are centrally embodied in the forms of resistance politics at work in Masafer Yatta.

To Exist Is to Resist

To get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home.
—DEBORAH BIRD ROSE IN WOLFE, "Settler Colonialism"

The people here are doing their own story—they are really saving themselves. We are a part of this story, but really it's the people, the communities themselves.
—ANNA, Italian activist, Operation Dove

The subhead above, "To Exist Is to Resist," is the slogan of the Popular Resistance Committee in Masafer Yatta, in the South Hebron Hills. Given the settler colonial logics of elimination, as the slogan points out, simply continuing to exist as bodies and communities in Masafer Yatta is itself a resistant act. But maintaining existence is not simply about staying put—to do so in such circumstances results in the ongoing erosion of the infrastructure necessary for "livable life." As such, over three decades the constant and persistent efforts of the villagers themselves to create this infrastructure has been the core of resistance. The everyday and constant work of just "being" is made up of the multitude of acts of making life possible in and through the everyday. The persistent acts that make home and livelihoods, of going out to plant and harvest wheat, of herding sheep in the hills, collecting water in cisterns, planting trees and harvesting olives, of children walking miles to the closest schools, of men and women continuing to marry, of women to give birth and raise children—when targeted with elimination become simultaneously the underlying logic of resistance to it. One might call this a politics of subaltern persistence.

As Butler has noted, an awareness of one's own precarity leads to an acknowledgment of one's dependence on others: "Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all."[16] For situated communities of hyperprecarity, this awareness that one's survival depends on so many others is an everyday doxa, and in Masafer Yatta it probably has deep historical roots in surviving in and through the harsh environment. Even before the occupation and the settlements came, this was

always a vulnerable project that could not be accomplished without mutual dependence and an ethic of mutual care with both neighbors and strangers. It is this mutuality that has created the identity of "community" and actually instantiates it in the absence of the usual mechanisms of state municipal designation or public buildings. When this long-standing doxa of interdependence becomes faced with the logics and mechanisms of settler colonial elimination, it becomes politicized. In Masafer Yatta one constantly hears a statement to the effect of "My struggle is not just mine"—that is, I am not struggling to save only my home; I am struggling for my community's existence, because without it my home means nothing.

But this politics of subaltern persistence was ultimately no match against the fully unbridled logics of elimination that became so brutally clear in the events of 1999. In Hisham's description of those events in the opening quote of this essay, he points to two crucial absences he identified in that moment that had enabled the villagers' everyday struggles of creating livability to be so easily defeated: visibility ("no one saw what was happening to us") and connection ("There was no one there"). The logics of elimination both rely on and produce differential visibilities through which the colony can be instantiated and normalized and the native's presence can be erased.[17] Settlements are actively visibilized in space in terms of both location (on hills) and architecture (red roofs).[18] They are marked on regular road maps and planners' charts and are signposted on the roads and highways.[19] By contrast, the Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta are actively invisibilized—they do not exist on maps and plans, nor are they marked by road signs. To locate them one has to look for the markers of the neighboring Israeli settlement. Their residents are forced to build "invisible" homes—to live in the caves of their grandfathers or, if above ground, to keep buildings low and squat or hidden under tarps.

The violence involved in this process is differentially visibilized as well: that inflicted on the native in the process of rendering the "empty landscape" for colonization remains unseen, while the violence incurred by soldiers and settlers is made (spectacularly) visible and deployed in a politics of mourning that further fuels the logics of elimination.[20] As Hisham puts it, "Look, we all know how the occupation works. They want to evict us and at the same time they use violence to try and make us react violently. If we're violent, it's easy for them—they can just get rid of us."

But more fundamentally, this regime of visibility rests on the same grounds as the colony: the ontologies and their attendant epistemologies that mark off Palestinians as racialized noncitizen subjects/others from the rights-bearing

Israeli citizen subjects who are their colonizers. Captured within these imperial/colonial frames of being and representation, Palestinian personhood is unintelligible, Palestinian suffering is invisible, and regular demands for rights and recognition are already foreclosed.[21] Regular modes of political resistance also become absorbed into and occluded by these operations of power, reducing them to forms of self-defeat.[22]

As such, the isolation that Hisham speaks of was not simply a practical political state, but a more profoundly ontological one. Thus, finding a politics of the possible meant finding ways to emerge into the intelligible by creating forms of countervisibility and connection that could open up a geopolitical space in which the struggle might break into realms of recognition/recognizability.[23]

Enabling Existence: Alter-Geopolitics and the Practice of Possible Resistance

> Before they came, our struggle was just going round and round in circles.
> —HISHAM

The communities' strategies to create countervisibility have centered on actively seeking and making linkages with intelligible bodies—with those who are recognized by sovereign power as grievable,[24] or with what Jennifer Hyndman has called "bodies that count."[25] Struggles that foreground connections between grievable and ungrievable bodies are what Sara Koopman has called alter-geopolitics.[26] She locates this in the tradition of insights from feminist geopolitics that emphasize bodily practices and the making of everyday securities in the face of militarized violence. For her, "groups doing alter-geopolitics are making connections, often across distance and difference, which focus on the safety of bodies (often by moving bodies) and ground geopolitics in everyday life."[27]

Koopman writes about alter-geopolitical struggle within the framework of "protective accompaniment," a growing form of global human rights–based political practice that brings First World bodies into sites of armed violence to both monitor human rights violations and "protect" human rights workers. "Protective accompaniment" originated in the Indian nonviolent struggles for independence and the American civil rights movement, continued during the Latin American "Dirty Wars" starting in the 1980s, and has persisted into the present, and it also encompasses other contemporary locations of violent conflict, such as Sri Lanka.[28] Though the best-established global groups are

often animated by religious or secular ethics of nonviolence, all frame their work within a discourse of human rights. Theorizing the politics of protective accompaniment is still in its nascence. But at the center of debates that have emerged among activists themselves is the obvious problematic of whether deploying racial privilege and hierarchies of corporeal value against sovereign violence simply reproduces the same racial and corporeal distinctions that the sovereign violence rests on.[29]

The practice of "alter-geopolitics" in Masafer Yatta involves some of the tactics (and dilemmas) of protective accompaniment but ultimately encompasses a wider array of practices (and bodies) in confrontation with the nature of Israeli sovereign power operating there. Taken together, these practices have attempted to create forms of connection and countervisibilities in an attempt to "internationalize" the space of Masafer Yatta in ways that can open a space in which the ongoing struggle for existence can become a struggle for recognition.

Grievable Bodies, Visibilities, Cameras

Rather than detail the history of how "bodies that count" came into the space of Masafer Yatta joining the communities' struggle, I want to concentrate on how the presence of these grievable bodies works in this particular space. What types of visibility and connection does their presence produce? Does activism based on placing grievable bodies next to ungrievable ones simply reproduce the same hierarchies of corporeal value that it depends on? Or does it and can it work to break them down?

There has been more than a decade of actions, links, and everyday practices of alter-geopolitical activism in Masafer Yatta. A rich and diverse network of activists and solidarity workers from an array of backgrounds have linked themselves with the struggle for existence by the communities. The vast majority have actually spent time in the communities, some staying as part of ongoing projects of accompaniment, others routinely coming to participate in a variety of ongoing actions. People from the villages have an extensive vocabulary of acronyms for the range of groups that have spent time there (ISM, Ta'ayush, CPT, etc.) as well as human rights and other organizations (B'tselem, ACRI, COMET, etc.) that have become part of the dense network of actions and relationships. A wide array of reports, blogs, and videos produced by this range of actors documenting events and actions taken in the communities have been produced and circulated through the Internet. Some communities

(al Mufaqara and Susiya) now have their own dedicated websites. In practical terms, both activists and the community distinguish between the everyday bodily work of accompanying shepherds to their fields, or children to the school, versus the role bodies play in moments of mass action. Israeli and international activists are involved in both types of accompaniment. Although Israeli activists were the first to come to the villages, it is international activists who form a permanent presence of living in the communities.[30]

The main aim of everyday accompaniment is to enable shepherds and farmers to access lands that settlers through the use of violence have tried to deny them entry to and that the military enforces. By denying the communities access, settlers advance their own goals in two ways. First, the already meager economy of the villagers becomes unsustainable, leading them to abandon their communities in search of a living elsewhere. And, second, if settlers can keep them from accessing grazing and other lands under the law of the colonial sovereign for over a period of ten years, these lands will revert to the state—and therefore the colony:

> The conflict is over the land; the shepherd's lands and the farming land—the settler wants them both. So it's up to us to make sure that the shepherd is on his land and the farmers are on their land every day. The conflict is every day. Everyone is involved. If I go on my own [to the land], I'm weak but if I go with others then we can work on the land and stop the settler from taking it. (Hisham)

> I suppose you could say I work appointments and emergencies [laughs]. So the shepherds they call me, we are on twenty-four-hour call, and say, "I am going with my sheep to this valley tomorrow." Almost all of the sites, settlers try and stop them or the military does. So that's an appointment—we go with the shepherd to that valley, create a presence and monitor. Then there are the emergencies, I get a call that a shepherd is somewhere and settlers are coming—so we try and get there as quickly as possible. (Anna, Italian accompanier, Operation Dove)

The act of going to the land in defiance of settler threats and the military has become the logic of a persistent everyday activism that through constant repetitive performance attempts to keep remaking and securing livable space for the community, and prevents its reterritorialization as a settlement. But to move one step beyond this—to create "the new" (or, more often, re-create it)—takes forms of "mass action." Only through a mass of bodies in action

together can the physical infrastructure that marks existence and collectivity be (re-)created. Here, the Palestine Solidarity Project reports one such action:

> On Saturday, May 26th, 2012, locals together with more than thirty-five Palestinian, Israeli and international activists built a third single story prefabricated building in the village of Um Faqara [al Mufaqara], South Hebron Hills. . . . The construction of the three new structures was organized by the Popular Committee and activists with the aim of peacefully resisting the Israeli occupation by affirming the right to live of the community of al Mufaqara.[31]

In both situations there are multiple ways that visibility is both used and created by "bodies that count" that also operate across different scalar levels. First is the way they work "on the ground" in the day-to-day intimate and always potentially explosive encounters when Palestinians are confronted by soldiers and settlers. In these encounters, the presence of the Israeli or international activist bodies (as people from the community and the activists describe it) serves not to protect Palestinian bodies, but to deflate the always potential violence of the military (and to a lesser extent that of the settlers) that would be exerted on Palestinians if they were "alone." Activists are intelligible to soldiers: they share the same ontological ground and therefore have shared normative scripts. Activists invoke this shared ground in their interactions with soldiers who are then forced to affirm those norms—a process of reminding and recognizing that is impossible for Palestinians to invoke:

> The [foreign] girls is [*sic*] better with the soldiers, I try and talk to them about the occupation but with the girls they say, you know, like where do you come from? What do you do? [laughs] and the girls can use that. (Sandro, Italian activist, Operation Dove)

> It's good, it allows us to try another way, the soldiers try to make it personal but we can use this to try and take it in another direction—we can then talk to them about the occupation. (Luisa, Italian activist, Operation Dove)

> Having heroically driven the flock down toward the wadi, the soldiers and policemen pick their way over the rocks toward us.
> "You are now in a Closed Military Zone. You have fifteen minutes to get out of here."
> "And just where are we supposed to go?"
> "Down into the wadi, past that curve in the hills."

"And why are you doing this?"
"I work for the brigade commander. Ask him."
"I'll be glad to ask him, but he doesn't want to talk to me."
"You now have fourteen minutes."
"You know what you are doing is illegal," we say. "The Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that the army cannot declare a Closed Military Zone arbitrarily, and it is expressly forbidden to do so if this means denying Palestinian shepherds and farmers access to their lands." (David Shulman, Israeli Ta'ayush activist)

But perhaps the more important way that foreign bodies work to "bring down the violence" of the military and settlers is through countersurveillance and the production of countervisibilities. Through their presence, and increasingly through the use of cameras, they attempt to make the violence entailed in erasure visible. One activist explains it this way:

When there's an action against, for instance, demolishing a home, everyone is there (activists, the community, soldiers), and the soldiers can get violent. So we do nonphysical interposition to try and keep down the violence of the situation, try and lower the tension. If you use a camera, the soldier is less likely to be violent because he knows it is all on camera. Having a camera, staying close to the Palestinians to make them feel safer, and try and talk to the soldier. (Anna, Operation Dove)

Hisham and the international activists use the human rights language of "documentation" when talking about these countersurveillance measures. And indeed, the texts and videos produced are posted on websites and blogs, written up as reports sent to human rights organizations and other official and nonofficial addresses, and constantly circulate far beyond the spatial confines of Masafer Yatta. Soldiers and settlers fear that reports and images of their violence may become visible to specific circuits where they may actually face consequences for it.[32] This fear then becomes used as a tactic by activists and the communities on the ground, who constantly use cameras in daily accompaniment as well as in mass actions. Here are two descriptions of the operations:

If I go on my own, it's different how the soldiers act—he'll be in your face, and if you answer him he'll start pushing you around, beating you, but when there's a foreigner filming, his behavior changes completely. He starts behaving better. (Maher, schoolboy shepherd, Atwaneh village)

> You know, the video camera, it depends on the situation. If you point the camera in the face of soldiers or settler, they can become more violent, but if you use it further away, it can bring down the level of violence or tension. . . . But also we use it in legal work. We can take evidence, and then their lawyer can't say "No, you are a liar." You can't do nonviolent action without it. (Sandro, Italian activist, Operation Dove)

> "Waaargh!!!" the older settler roars and charges us with a rock in his palm. I am afraid, finding myself behind the camera at a settler attack once again. . . . "Stop them!" I shout to the soldiers in the jeep down in the wadi. The settler runs past us to throw the stones at the shepherds. . . . "I will butcher you!" he screams at GH and throws a big rock towards him. GH dodges the rock, thank goodness. I get it all on tape. (Amitai Ben Ami, Israeli Ta'ayush activist)

The soldiers' and settlers' fear that their violence will be caught on tape and potentially made visible becomes a possibility that both activists and the community employ in everyday resistance. Attempting to visibilize the violence of Israel's occupation to especially Israeli but also international publics through popular media has increasingly become a programmatic strategy of activists as well as human rights organizations across the occupied West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli human rights organization B'tselem has since 2007 run a video activism project—giving hundreds of cameras to communities at risk, like those of Masafer Yatta across the West Bank. But catching settler and soldier violence on camera and getting the evidence onto Internet sites is no guarantee that their violence will actually become visible. Kuntsman and Stein have shown how such activist media in the Israeli context enters into a dense field framed by what they call "digital suspicion," a long-standing interpretive practice deployed to undermine Palestinian claims.[33] In the current context these older discourses now couple with the technological realities of digital media and produce competing forms of knowledge and conflictual interpretive communities that open varying political possibilities for both state institutions and activists.[34]

As Stein notes, most of the activist videos from the field are not even posted online.[35] Those that are often remain un-noted save by the communities of activists themselves. And the few who do break through the dense layers of Israeli apathy/suspicion about the occupation's evils and become viral (and therefore visible to Israeli publics) do so because they transgress the dominant

frame—and show violence being enacted against the legible or grievable bodies of international and Israeli activists.

The other circumstance in which settler or military violence breaks into visibility within Israeli publics is when the nature of the violence performed by Jewish Israeli bodies transgresses racial and gendered norms of Jewish/Israeli identity. In these cases the identities of the victim remain irrelevant. Thus, one of the few activist videos taken in Masafer Yatta that became viral in Israel was a clip of four settler youth carrying clubs, descending a hill, and coming toward a shepherd and his wife, who they then mercilessly beat. The video created a huge debate in Israel, not because of the beating of the shepherd and his wife, but because of what the settlers were wearing: head coverings that mimicked the iconic and feared image of Palestinian militants.[36] In both of these cases, the violence visited on Palestinians can momentarily appear, but only as the background or shadow of the main subject of the violence—either to grievable bodies or to norms of Jewish/Israeli identity. Outside of these conditions, only in extraordinary instances have Palestinian victims of Israeli violence been able to appear as human to Israeli publics. In the limited cases where they have, it is because they appear as something other than Palestinian (either as an *extremely young* individual child or as an extremely vulnerable individual woman).[37] In both instances, their humanity is individual, exceptional, and singular. An activist named Hisham describes the difference as follows:

> When the settlers tried through violence to stop the kids from reaching the school, we went to Hebron and asked for some of the international solidarity workers there [to come]—they were Americans. . . . The next day the settlers attacked them—the kids and the solidarity workers. People went to hospital—so what happened?—there was media pressure, you know. Americans were attacked and ended up in hospital in south Hebron. . . . Palestinian kid gets attacked, given that he's Palestinian its normal, no one's interested. But because he's an American it's a different situation. (Hisham)

Palestinians from the communities are aware of the way the politics of visibility continues to operate unequally across race and to a lesser extent across gender within activist media practice. Hisham and others prefer to focus on more immediate and critical priorities and achievements: that cameras at the direct level of activism in the field (where they are most successful) can temper and deflect violence and be used to provide counterevidence to the always

trumped-up charges used by the police and military when detaining young men from the communities. But a politics of hope also animates the use of cameras and the potential impact of their more mediated effects: the hope that the films produced help rally support and solidarity for their struggle across diverse activist networks and communities and one day may become part of wider projects of making evidentiary claims against the military and settlers.

Gendered Bodies

The differential order of corporeal value at work in Masafer Yatta uses both racial and gender logics. Masculinist norms associating female bodies with vulnerability are clearly operative across the varying bodily encounters and their particular configurations of race, violence, and power—but are constantly opened up to new possibilities and reinscriptions in daily life. The following quotations offer a sense of this process:

> The women and the girls are strong, praise be to God, very strong. When they [soldiers] take a boy we [women] go after them and don't let go until we've taken him back. Even if they use violence we stay with them. Have another biscuit, come on, I'll be upset if you don't. (Um Bahjat, al Mufaqara)

> The first time it was 2002, I remember, the men had gone down to a valley . . . to plow the land, and then the settlers came from the caves and started attacking them with stones. There were lots of people injured—nine people ended up in hospital. When the soldiers came, instead of stopping it they let the attack continue and then started arresting people. From that day women started facing the soldiers and the police, intervening, and trying to stop the men from being arrested. There'd be fewer men taken. It started automatically, and then after that we began to organize it. (Sumaya, head of the women's committee, Atwaneh)

> The Palestinian women defy the military and sit down in front of them, quickly starting a small fire and beginning to make tea. The soldiers push and kick and force them up. For a short eternity they kept on driving the group arbitrarily up the hill past the closed zone. (Amitai Ben Ammi)

Women from the communities are often described as being the front line of collective actions. In demonstrations they are always in the lead, or when someone (usually male) is arrested by the military, it is women who engage

physically with the captors in order to "steal back" the captured body. The possibility of using female bodies in this way is based on exploiting the normative order, according to which the female body is invested with a sexed and gendered vulnerability; at the same time, the act works to subvert these norms. Soldiers, Palestinians, and Israeli and international activists all share to varying degrees these heteronormative scripts. Women's bodies, especially orientalized ones, pose a challenge to the masculinist/militarist norms of the soldiers that are framed by masculine defense of the vulnerable/feminized home front. In this equation, women regardless of race become civilianized—and if they are "passive, oppressed Muslim women" this actually works to enable their inclusion into the category of civilian.[38] Thus when these "civilian" female bodies come into confrontation with male military bodies, the sex/gender/racial order that defines "defensive" versus "offensive" bodies becomes completely confounded and threatened. In this encounter, soldiers are left unable to lay claim to their normative truths of masculinist protection of the vulnerable feminine—instead, the whole logic of a settler colonial military might be laid bare for what it is. "And it's like, when we defend and intervene, we women just feel great," Amal of Atwaneh explains. "We can do something—and we've done something."

In the interactions within the community of solidarity (among solidarity activists and men and women from the communities), norms about "local custom" and the importance of respecting their sex/gender boundaries are often invoked. Women from the communities themselves regularly invoke and reproduce these local norms in relation to "outsiders." But when they relate the instances when they have broken them by using them against the soldiers, it is with a jubilance that often accompanies acts of feminine subversion:

> The settlers don't differentiate, they don't care, they'll attack a girl, a woman, but the soldiers have this thing, they freak out if there are foreigners filming there and a settler is attacking a woman or girl. Soldiers will attack or arrest guys, but not women, or only rarely. They're scared of the reaction in the media. But in Mufaqara, when the girls were defending the mosque from being destroyed they arrested them—OK, I mean at the end they don't really differentiate either. (Amal, Atwaneh)

While the military is loath to transgress any female body—including the visible bodies of international and Israeli female activists—the settlers operate according to a different set of norms. All bodies not operating according to the

logics of elimination are threats to the collective body of the colony, regardless of sex/gender or race. Anna's comment speaks to this point:

> Now we [international accompaniers] are five women and one boy [*sic*]. It's the same in other fields—though sometimes it's more equal women and men. . . . The (Palestinian) men here have had to work on themselves. It's not easy to be able to trust twenty-year-old Italian women to accompany them. They are all very respectful—they trust us and we work to deserve their trust. (Anna)

Nonviolent resistance undertaken against settler colonial violence as well as the strategies of protective accompaniment linking ungrievable to grievable bodies all speak to a resistant politics congruent with the feminist geopolitical ethics identified by Koopman.[39] Simultaneously, the work of female bodies protecting male ones in the face of militarist violence suggests how gender norms are transgressed both in the dynamics of everyday resistances to elimination and also in the production of resistant masculine subjectivities—particularly Palestinian ones. Palestinian male bodies are the most directly targeted by and thus most vulnerable to Israeli colonial violence. In addressing the politically subjugated Palestinian masculine body, Julie Peteet has argued that masculine subjectivity reframed humiliation and beatings as rites of passage to manhood in the first Palestinian intifada—a move that reinstated subjugated male bodies as sites of resistant virility.[40] In the orientalizing discourse of aid agencies, Palestinian men, powerless and humiliated by the occupation, reclaim their masculinity by engaging in domestic violence (a claim agencies continue to produce despite all evidence to the contrary).[41]

> All my respect to them [women and girls], it's something to be really proud of. Guys are always the most targeted with imprisonment. . . . When the girls and women come and they sneak in from here and from here and take you back [while being hauled off by soldiers], well, that's a victory for us. Instead of [ending up] being imprisoned and fines and all of that. (Maher, schoolboy shepherd, Atwaneh)

Both of these claims view Palestinian masculine subjectivity as unitary and limited rather than as polyvalent, and open to multiple interpretations and subject positions. In the context of Masafer Yatta, colonial violence enacted against Palestinian male bodies is the norm, and is part of the everyday of being male in this environment. As such, attempting to elude violence while continuing to push back against the politics of elimination becomes prioritized

as the more successful act of resistance. One body saved from a beating or a capture while it is involved in retaking stolen land or rebuilding a demolished home becomes in itself a victory when resistant bodies (especially Palestinian male ones) are targeted by sovereign violence. In this understanding, the male body no longer belongs to a separate domain of the masculine; rather, it becomes a site invested with the entire political ethic of the community in resistance, opening up the possibility of reordering norms of masculine/feminine and vulnerability/protection.

As the quotation above by the young Italian female accompanier (Anna) suggests, however, the deordering of normative masculine and feminine subjectivities in the process of struggle (which is necessary for it to succeed) is something that activists and the community are both readily aware of and attend to carefully. And it is particularly in these instances of handing one's body over to another, especially when it is a male body to a female one, that vulnerability opens itself into trust.

Conclusion: Crossing Boundaries / Remaking Spatial and Political Imaginaries

The types of visibilities produced through the activism of using "bodies that count" seems to rely on rather than challenge the racial hierarchies that frame and actively produce Masafer Yatta as a space of hyperprecarity. One might argue that the slippages that occur, those brutal self-images that are usually cast off as "an aberration," might through their constant repetition begin to break open a space in which Palestinians begin to appear as legible, as mournable, as having equal worth to an Israeli or Euro-American "us." But it is actually in the everyday coming together of grievable and ungrievable bodies in the space of Masafer Yatta that we can see how the constant defiance of hierarchies of corporeal value begins to break them down:

> What I mean is, the settlers, when they see the Israeli activist, it brings out more violence in them. The settler, he sees a Palestinian and an Israeli together, and he leaves the Palestinian and goes after the Israeli. (Hisham)

> After a while one of the soldiers begins to scream curses, sharp and thin in the desert air. "You ruiners of Israel, *ochrai yisrael*, you are aiding the enemies of the Jews, degenerates"—he is waving his gun, threatening us [the Israeli activists], fingering the clip. (David Shulman)

> "Are you an Arab?" one of the settlers approached Muhammad. "Get out of here!" And then to me: "Are you my brother, or his brother?" (Neve Gordon, Israeli Ta'ayush activist)

Israeli activists pose a profound political challenge to the military and settlers and their racial/spatial imaginary of Masafer Yatta as containing the "us" of (Jewish) Israelis versus the "them" of Palestinians. Not only are they bodies "out of place" (as Israeli/Jewish bodies who are not soldiers or settlers); they are also "our" bodies that have unraveled from "us" and woven themselves into "them," the enemies we aim to eliminate. The rage of soldiers and settlers toward Israeli activists is not simply about their being on the wrong side, but of quite literally embodying an existential threat to the Zionist nationalist imaginary of an ethnically bounded Jewish Israeli nation. Instead, Israeli activists are a constant reminder (or, in the eyes of settlers and soldiers, a nagging insistence) of a possible national future that is not based on ethnic privilege and exceptionalism. Hisham asks, "Before they [Israeli activists] came, what Israelis did we know? Settlers, soldiers, they were the Israelis for us."

Israeli bodies that link themselves to Palestinian ones also subvert the binary ethno-religious logic, increasingly suffusing Palestinian nationalism. On the one hand, there are the effects of Israel's spatial policy of ethnic separation, making the physical interaction between Israeli Jews and West Bank and Gazan Palestinians virtually impossible. In tandem with this, there has been a rise of Islamist rhetorics about the conflict with Israel being "civilizational" in nature. Both have led to a Palestinian nationalist imaginary that increasingly mirrors the ethnic exclusivism of Zionism.

But beyond these more obviously political effects, there are the ways the activists and communities themselves still bounded by these hierarchies and binaries increasingly begin to elude them in relation to each other. And this process opens a space in which transformative relationalities begin to emerge:

> We both know that us and the Palestinians—for the world our lives are not worth the same. But the fact that I live in this house, and I sleep and eat like you and run when you call me, and we eat the same food and listen when you want to tell me something—this really tells us both that I do not believe your and my life are not worth the same. Maybe this isn't clear at first—but happens over time. . . . This way of being in a conflict is a way that you become part of it and that really changes those dynamics. We share everything, we share daily life—OK, we share stories about problems

with settlers and soldiers, but we also talk about problems of kids and of boyfriends and love problems, or problems of the sheep's milk. . . . And that changes everything. . . . That sharing of daily life inside the conflict—that changes everything. (Anna)

A passport is a good tool with soldiers and police, but what makes your action work here is your total commitment—if you're not committed you are no use here. So what works here is not our passport but our commitment. (Pippo)

Do they offer protection? No, the Israelis and internationals can't protect us. But what they do, let me find the right words . . . They make our existence possible. (Hisham)

"So, who would you say are better here [at struggle]? The [Palestinian] men or women?" Reply: "They're the same." (My joking question and the response of a young man from al Mufaqara)

Week after week, on Saturday morning, we follow him to the fields. Today, like every week, there are women and children—the wonderful, impish children . . . marching with him. We head over the hill and down into the wadi and straight into the fields, which the thieves have plowed. . . . The soldiers are ready. They come at us, they bark, threaten, order us to stop . . . but Sa'id keeps walking until he has crossed the wadi and moved halfway up the next hill. . . . All I can say is that I'll follow Sa'id wherever and whenever he wants me. (David Shulman)

The foreigners here have really helped. They got our story out to the world. When they first came it was strange for people. People were suspicious: Who are they? What do they want? . . . A year passed and then people understood. Now they're like one of the families in the community: there's a wedding and they should come; someone's cooked something special, they send a dish over to them. They've become part of us. (Sumaya, head of the women's committee, Atwaneh)

What I've learned from the people here is how to trust. To trust strangers. To trust in the future. To expect the worst but do the best. (Pippo)

I've learned a lot from Palestinians; maybe the most important is being able to see the future as a huge possibility. Being able to wake up every day and forgive the past and the present and to see a big future ahead. (Anna)

Notes

The narratives used throughout the text are differentially ascribed. The Palestinian and international accompaniers I have given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity; the former for obvious reasons, the latter because their identification could result in summary deportation by Israel. The Israeli activist narratives I have taken from various blogs and activist sites where the authors have felt free to use their full names.

1 See the Israeli human rights organization B'tselem's webpage on "Firing Zone 918" at http://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/918, accessed May 3, 2016; also see UN OCHA, "Life in a 'Firing Zone.'"

2 As will be evidenced by the discussion below on the unfolding of the Oslo Accords, I put "peace process" in quotes to demarcate that in the case of Palestine (as in many other cases), peace was simply a different modality for perpetuating violence and dispossession.

3 See various reports on Area C by the United Nations Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs, Occupied Palestinian Territories (UN OCHA), including "Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank"; "Area C Humanitarian Response Fact Sheet"; and "Restricting Space."

4 This fact is captured well by Peter Lagerquist, whose aim, however, is to show how Israeli human rights lawyers instrumentalized the "false primitivism" of the communities, on behalf of their legal defense. See Lagerquist, "In the Labyrinth of Solitude."

5 See UN OCHA, "Area C Humanitarian Response Fact Sheet"; "Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank"; "Life in a 'Firing Zone'"; and "Restricting Space."

6 Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 26; see also his *On the Postcolony*; Agamben, *State of Exception*.

7 Ghanim, "Bio-power and Thanato-politics."

8 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 387–409.

9 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 387–409.

10 Falk, *Unlocking the Middle East,* 114.

11 Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 29. However, what Mbembe's account misses in terms of Palestine is how the constituents of this concatenation are unevenly distributed across different spatial zones of the imperial protectorate's presence and nonpresence in the West Bank and Gaza.

12 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 392.

13 Butler, *Frames of War*, 25.

14 Butler, *Frames of War*, 25–26.

15 In the context of Palestine, Gaza is another zone of hyperprecarity, but one where Israel uses different modalities of violence for its production.

16 Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

17 For a feminist reading of this process in the context of Palestine see Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Palestinian Women and the Politics of Invisibility."

18 Weizman, *Hollow Land*.

19 At the same time, plans and money and the whole military/political-economic machinery that builds settlements are kept, if not invisible, opaque. A number of Knesset inquiries have sought to uncover the hidden and complex webs of money, plans, and permissions that connect governmental and extragovernmental organizations and route money from supranational Zionist organizations and philanthropists to the settlement project. All of the settlements have been built through this bureaucratic opaque-ness—a sleight of hand through which the Israeli state's colonial designs that breach international law can be undertaken without directly embarrassing their imperial allies.

20 For an example of how the settler politics of mourning operates see Feige, "Jewish Settlement of Hebron," 323.

21 Butler, *Frames of War*.

22 It seems almost banal to state that any form of Palestinian armed resistance is immediately transposed into the frame of "terrorism" and Israel's "right to defend itself." "Terrorism" becomes a master signifier that occludes and absorbs not only acts of Palestinian armed resistance but a host of other Palestinian nonviolent resistant acts and speech. Attempts to gain membership to the United Nations, and BDS—the movement for boycott, divestment, and sanctions—have all been declared forms of terrorism by various Israeli politicians and their supporters.

23 Butler, *Precarious Life*; Butler, *Frames of War.*

24 Butler, *Precarious Life*; Butler, *Frames of War.*

25 See Hyndman, "Feminist Geopolitics Revisited." The communities of Masafer Yatta are not the first or only West Bank and Gaza communities that have mapped themselves into these new forms of embodied global solidarity politics. The best-known solidarity actions are the weekly actions in the village of Bil'in and other communities attempting to resist land and livelihood dispossession by Israel's "Separation Wall." The global symbol of these on the ground solidarities in Palestine is the American activist Rachel Corrie, who was killed by an Israeli military bulldozer in March 2013 while she and other international activists were trying to prevent the Israeli military's ongoing devastation of Palestinians' homes in Rafah, Gaza. On these activisms in Bil'in see Jawad, "Staging Resistance in Bil'in," 128–142; Roei, "Molding Resistance." For critical self-reflections by Euro-American accompaniers on the politics of bodies that count in Palestine see Stamatopoulou-Robbins, "The Joys and Dangers of Solidarity in Palestine."

26 See Koopman, "Alter-geopolitics."

27 Koopman, "Alter-geopolitics," 202

28 For an overview of the ethics and history of the protective accompaniment movement see Mahoney and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards*.

29 Along with discussion of these problematics in Koopman's "alter-geopolitics" see

also her "Cutting through Topologies," 825–847, as well as "'Mona, Mona, Mona!'" See also Henderson, "Citizenship in the Line of Fire"; Coy, "The Privilege Problematic in International Nonviolent Accompaniment's Early Decades" and "'We Use It but We Try Not to Abuse It.'" See also Hyndman, "Feminist Geopolitics Revisited."

30 Since 2004 the communities have had a constant presence of young Italians sponsored by a Catholic-linked organization, Operation Dove, which also has accompaniers working in Albania and Colombia. Israeli activists with jobs and lives just over the Green Line come regularly on Fridays or Saturdays.

31 See "PSP Activists Join Building Project in Um Faqara," *Palestine Solidarity Project*, http://palestinesolidarityproject.org/2012/05/27/psp-activists-join-building-project-again-in-um-fagara/, accessed May 4, 2016.

32 This fear by (most) soldiers and (many) settlers rests on a number of grounds. Most fundamental is the Zionist imaginary of belonging to the liberal West and the desire to protect this in its own self-representation as well as in projections of it globally. The huge and ongoing investments by the Israeli state in its global image maintenance attests to this. The Israeli military has a double investment in the protection of its liberal humanist image given that in a number of countries (the United Kingdom, Spain) there are standing indictments against specific Israeli generals for war crimes. Fear of indictments for war crimes among the senior military has not only led to the creation of a huge legal apparatus within the Israeli military to inform what actions might be indictable internationally; it has also led them to create strong internal military sanctions against foot soldiers whose acts are caught by visual media or posted on social media. For such cases see "Israeli Soldiers are Fighting for their Right to Point Guns at Young Palestinians," *Vice News Online*, https://news.vice.com/article/israeli-soldiers-are-fighting-for-their-right-to-point-guns-at-young-palestinians, accessed May 4, 2016; "Fleeing Soldiers Claim Officers were Afraid of Media Photos," *Israel National News Online*, http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/163017#.VOcvy8bLBpl, accessed May 4, 2016; "Anger Over Ex-Israeli Soldier's Facebook Photos of Palestinian Prisoners," *The Guardian Online*, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/16/israeli-soldier-photos-palestinian-prisoners, accessed May 4, 2016.

33 Kuntsman and Stein, "Digital Suspicion, Politics and the Middle East."

34 Kuntsman and Stein, "Digital Suspicion, Politics and the Middle East."

35 See Stein, "Viral Occupation Cameras and Networked Human Rights in the West Bank."

36 Another infamous example is the video of a settler woman chanting "Inti sharmuta" ("You are a whore") through a mesh screen at the Palestinian woman living next door to the settlement in Hebron. See "'Sharmuta Video'—Settler Harassment of Palestinians in Hebron," *Youtube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUXSFsJV084, accessed May 4, 2016.

37 In terms of violence against Palestinian children, the July 2013 arrest of a five-year-old boy in Hebron (captured on camera by B'tselem) was the first time since the

Moving towards Home
By June Jordan

"Where is Abu Fadi," she wailed.
"Who will bring me my loved one?"
—The New York Times, 9/20/1982

I do not wish to speak about the bulldozer and the red dirt
not quite covering all of the arms and legs
Nor do I wish to speak about the nightlong screams that reached
the observation posts where soldiers lounged about
Nor do I wish to speak about the woman who shoved her baby
into the stranger's hands before she was led away
Nor do I wish to speak about the father whose sons were shot
through the head while they slit his own throat before
the eyes
of his wife
Nor do I wish to speak about the army that lit continuous
flares into the darkness so that the others could see
the backs of their victims lined against the wall
Nor do I wish to speak about the piled up bodies and the stench
that will not float
Nor do I wish to speak about the nurse again and again raped
before they murdered her on the hospital floor
Nor do I wish to speak about the rattling bullets that did not
halt on that keening trajectory
Nor do I wish to speak about the pounding on the doors and
the breaking of windows and the hauling of families into
the world of the dead
I do not wish to speak about the bulldozer and the red dirt
not quite covering all of the arms and legs
because I do not wish to speak about unspeakable events
that must follow from those who dare
"to purify" a people
those who dare
"to exterminate" a people
those who dare
to describe human beings as "beasts with two legs"
those who dare
"to mop up"
"to tighten the noose"
"to step up the military pressure"
"to ring around" civilian streets with tanks
those who dare
to close the universities
to abolish the press
to kill the elected representatives
of the people who refuse to be purified
those are the ones from whom we must redeem
the words of our beginning

because I need to speak about home
I need to speak about living room
where the land is not bullied and beaten to
a tombstone
I need to speak about living room
where the talk will take place in my language
I need to speak about living room
where my children will grow without horror
I need to speak about living room where the men
of my family between the ages of six and sixty-five
are not
marched into a roundup that leads to the grave
I need to talk about living room
where I can sit without grief without wailing aloud
for my loved ones
where I must not ask where is Abu Fadi
because he will be there beside me
I need to talk about living room
because I need to talk about home
I was born a Black woman
and now
I am become a Palestinian
against the relentless laughter of evil
there is less and less living room
and where are my loved ones?

It is time to make our way home.

ISRAEL

Whose Country Is It Anyway?

It's mine. We can put the question to rest. Israel belongs to me. Or so I was raised to believe.

I've been planting trees there since I can remember. I have memories of my mothers breast—of hunger (she was sick and weak); of having my tonsils out when I was two and a half—of the fear and the wallpaper in the hospital; of infantile bad dreams; of early childhood abandonment; of planting trees in Israel. Understand: I've been planting trees in Israel since before I actually could recognize a real tree from life. In Camden where I grew up we had cement. I thought the huge and splendid telephone pole across the street from our brick row house was one— a tree; it just didn't have leaves. I wasn't deprived: the wires were awesome. If I think of "tree" now, I see that splintery dead piece of lumber stained an uneven brown with its wild black wires stretched out across the sky. I have to force myself to remember that a tree is frailer and greener, at least prototypically, at least in temperate zones. It takes an act of adult will to remember that a tree grows up into the sky, down into the ground, and a telephone pole, even a magnificent one, does not.

Israel, like Camden, didn't have any trees. We were cement; Israel was desert. They needed trees, we didn't. The logic was that we lived in the United States where there was an abundance of everything, even trees; in Israel there was nothing. So we had to get them trees. In synagogue we would be given folders: white paper, heavy, thick; blue ink, light, reminiscent of green but not green. White and blue were the colors of Israel. You opened the folder and inside there was a tree printed in light blue. The

tree was full, round, almost swollen, a great arc, lush, branches coming from branches, each branch growing clusters of leaves. In each cluster of leaves, we had to put a dime. We could use our own dimes from lunch money or allowances, but they only went so far; so we had to ask relatives, strangers, the policeman at the school crossing, the janitor at school—anyone who might spare a dime, because you had to fill your folder and then you had to start another one and fill that too. Each dime was inserted into a little slit in the folder right in the cluster of leaves so each branch ended up being weighed down with shining dimes. When you had enough dimes, the tree on the folder looked as if it was growing dimes. This meant you had collected enough money to plant a tree in Israel, your own tree. You put your name on the folder and in Israel they would plant your tree and put your name on it. You also put another name on the folder. You dedicated the tree to someone who had died. This tree is dedicated to the memory of. Jewish families were never short on dead people but in the years after my birth, after 1946, the dead overwhelmed the living. You touched the dead wherever you turned. You rubbed up against them; it didn't matter how young you were. Mass graves; bones; ash; ovens; numbers on forearms. If you were Jewish and alive, you were—well, almost—rare. You had a solitary feeling even as a child. Being alive felt wrong. Are you tired of hearing about it? Don't be tired of it in front of me. It was new then and I was a child. The adults wanted to keep us from becoming morbid, or anxious, or afraid, or different from other children. They told us and they didn't tell us. They told us and then they took it back. They whispered and let you overhear, then they denied it. Nothings wrong. You're safe here, in the United States. Being a Jew is, well, like being an Amerikan: the best. It was a great secret they tried to keep and tried to tell at the same time. They were adults—they still didn't believe it really. You were a child; you did.

My Hebrew school teachers were of two kinds: bright-eyed Jewish men from New Jersey, the suburbs mostly, and Philadelphia, a center of culture

—mediocre men, poor teachers, their aspirations more bourgeois than Talmudic; and survivors from ancient European ghettos by way of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen—multilingual, learned, spectral, walleyed. None, of course, could speak Hebrew. It was a dead language, like Latin. The new Israeli project of speaking Hebrew was regarded as an experiment that could only fail. English would be the language of Israel. It was only a matter of time. Israel was the size of New Jersey. Israel was a miracle, a great adventure, but it was also absolutely familiar.

The trick in dedicating your tree was to have an actual name to write on your folder and know who the person was to you. It was important to Amerikan Jews to seem normal and other people knew the names of their dead. We had too many dead to know their names; mass murder was erasure. Immigrants to the United States had left sisters, brothers, mothers, aunts, uncles, cousins behind, and they had been slaughtered. Where? When? It was all blank. My fathers parents were Russian immigrants. My mothers were Hungarian. My grandparents always refused to talk about Europe. “Garbage, ” my fathers father said to me, “they’re all garbage. ” He meant all Europeans. He had run away from Russia at fifteen—from the Czar. He had brothers and sisters, seven; I never could find out anything else. They were dead, from pogroms, the’Russian Revolution, Nazis; they were gone. My grandparents on each side ran away for their own reasons and came here. They didn’t look back. Then there was this new genocide, new even to Jews, and they couldn’t look back. There was no recovering what had been lost, or who. There couldn't be reconciliation with what couldn't be faced. They were alive because they were here; the rest were dead because they were there: who could face that? As a child I observed that Christian children had lots of relatives unfamiliar to me, very old, with honorifics unknown to me— great-aunt, great-great-grandmother. Our family began with my grandparents. No one came before them; no one stood next to them. Its an incomprehensible and disquieting amnesia. There was Eve; then there is a harrowing blank space, a tunnel of time and

nothing with enormous murder; then there's us. We had whoever was in the room. Everyone who wasn't in the room was dead. All my mourning was for them—all my trees in the desert—but who were they? My ancestors aren't individual to me: I'm pulled into the mass grave for any sense of identity or sense of self. In the small world I lived in as a child, the consciousness was in three parts: (1) in Europe with those left behind, the dead, and how could one live with how they had died, even if why was old and familiar; (2) in the United States, the best of all possible worlds—being more-Amerikan-than-thou, more middle-class however poor and struggling, more suburban however urban in origins, more normal, more conventional, more conformist; and (3) in Israel, in the desert, with the Jews who had been ash and now were planting trees. I never planted a tree in Camden or anywhere else for that matter. All my trees are in Israel. I was taught that they had my name on them and that they were dedicated to the memory of my dead.

One day in Hebrew school I argued in front of the whole class with the principal; a teacher, a scholar, a survivor, he spoke seven languages and I don't know which camps he was in. In private, he would talk to me, answer my questions, unlike the others. I would see him shaking, alone; I'd ask why; he would say sometimes he couldn't speak, there were no words, he couldn't say words, even though he spoke seven languages; he would say he had seen things; he would say he couldn't sleep, he hadn't slept for nights or weeks. I knew he knew important things. I respected him. Usually I didn't respect my teachers. In front of the whole class, he told us that in life we had the obligation to be first a Jew, second an Amerikan, third a human being, a citizen of the world. I was outraged. I said it was the opposite. I said everyone was first a human being, a citizen of the world—otherwise there would never be peace, never an end to nationalist conflicts and racial persecutions. Maybe I was eleven. He said that Jews had been killed throughout history precisely because they thought the way I did, because they put being Jews last; because they didn't understand that one

was always first a Jew—in history, in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of God. I said it was the opposite: only when everyone was human first would Jews be safe. He said Jews like me had had the blood of other Jews on their hands throughout history; that had there been an Israel, Jews would not have been slaughtered throughout Europe; that the Jewish homeland was the only hope for Jewish freedom. I said that was why one had an obligation to be an Amerikan second, after being a human being, a citizen of the world: because only in a democracy without a state religion could religious minorities have rights or be safe or not be persecuted or discriminated against. I said that if there was a Jewish state, anyone who wasn't Jewish would be second-class by definition. I said we didn't have a right to do to other people what had been done to us. More than anyone, we knew the bitterness of religious persecution, the stigma that went with being a minority. We should be able to see in advance the inevitable consequences of having a state that put us first; because then others were second and third and fourth. A theocratic state, I said, could never be a fair state—and didn't Jews need a fair state? If Jews had had a fair state wouldn't Jews have been safe from slaughter? Israel could be a beginning: a fair state. But then it couldn't be a Jewish state. The blood of Jews, he said, would be on my hands. He walked out. I don't think he ever spoke to me again.

You might wonder if this story is apocryphal or how I remember it or how someone so young made such arguments. The last is simple: the beauty of a Jewish education is that you learn how to argue if you pay attention. I remember because I was so distressed by what he said to me: the blood of Jews will be on your hands. I remember because he meant what he said. Part of my education was in having teachers who had seen too much death to argue for the fun of it. I could see the blood on my hands if I was wrong; Jews would have nowhere; Jews would die. I could see that if I or anyone made it harder for Israel to exist, Jews might die. I knew that Israel had to succeed, had to work out. Every single adult Jew I knew wanted it, needed it: the distraught ones with the numbers on their arms; the immigrant ones

who had been here, not there; the cheerful more-Amerikan-than-thou ones who wanted ranch houses for themselves, an army for Israel. Israel was the answer to near extinction in a real world that had been demonstrably indifferent to the mass murder of the Jews. It was also the only way living Jews could survive having survived. Those who had been here, not there, by immigration or birth, would create another here, a different here, a purposeful sanctuary, not one stumbled on by random good luck. Those who were alive had to find a way to deal with the monumental guilt of not being dead: being the chosen this time for real. The building of Israel was a bridge over bones; a commitment to life against the suicidal pull of the past. How can I live with having lived? I will make a place for Jews to live.

I knew from my own urgent effort to try to understand racism— from the Nazis to the situation I lived in, hatred of black people in the United States, the existence of legal segregation in the South—that Israel was impossible: fundamentally wrong, organized to betray egalitarian aspirations—because it was built from the ground up on a racial definition of its desired citizen; because it was built from the ground up on exclusion, necessarily stigmatizing those who were not Jews. Social equality was impossible unless only Jews lived there. With hostile neighbors and a racial paradigm for the states identity, Israel had to become either a fortress or a tomb. I didn't think it made Jews safer. I did understand that it made Jews different: different from the pathetic creatures on the trains, the skeletons in the camps; different; indelibly different. It was a great relief—to me too—to be different from the Jews in the cattle cars. Different mattered. As long as it lasted, I would take it. And if Israel ended up being a tomb, a tomb was better than unmarked mass graves for millions all over Europe—different and better. I made my peace with different; which meant I made my peace with the State of Israel. I would not have the blood of Jews on my hands. I wouldn't help those who wanted Israel to be a place where more Jews died by saying what I thought about the implicit racism. It was shameful, really:

distance me, Lord, from those pitiful Jews; make me new. But it was real and even I at ten, eleven, twelve needed it.

You might notice that all of this had nothing to do with Palestinians. I didn't know there were any. Also, I haven't mentioned women. I knew they existed, formally speaking; Mrs. So-and-So was everywhere, of course—peculiar, all held in, reticent and dutiful in public. I never saw one I wanted to become. Nevertheless, adults kept threatening that one day I had to be one. Apparently it was destiny and also hard work; you were born one but you also had to become one. Either you mastered exceptionally difficult and obscure rules too numerous and onerous to reveal to a child, even a child studying Leviticus; or you made one mistake, the nature of which was never specified. But politically speaking, women didn't exist, and frankly, as human beings women didn't exist either. You could live your whole life among them and never know who they were.

I was taught about *fedayeen*: Arabs who crossed the border into Israel to kill Jews. In the years after Hitler, this was monstrous. Only someone devoid of any humanity, any conscience, any sense of decency or justice could kill Jews. They didn't live there; they came from somewhere else. They killed civilians by sneak attack; they didn't care whom they killed just so they killed Jews.

I realized only as a middle-aged adult that I was raised to have prejudice against Arabs and that the prejudice wasn't trivial. My parents were exceptionally conscious and conscientious about racism and religious bigotry—all the homegrown kinds—hatred of blacks or Catholics, for instance. Their pedagogy was very brave. They took a social stance against racism, for civil rights, that put them in opposition to many neighbors and members of our family. My mother put me in a car and showed me black poverty. However poor I thought we were, I was to remember that being

black in the United States made you poorer. I still remember a conversation with my father in which he told me he had racist feelings against blacks. I said that was impossible because he was for civil rights. He explained the kinds of feelings he had and why they were wrong. He also explained that as a teacher and then later a guidance counselor he worked with black children and he had to make sure his racist feelings didn't harm them. From my father I learned that having these feelings didn't justify them; that "good" people had bad feelings and that didn't make the feelings any less bad; that dealing with racism was a process, something a person tangled with actively. The feelings were wrong and a "good" person took responsibility for facing them down. I was also taught that just because you feel something doesn't make it true. My parents went out of their way to say "some Arabs, " to emphasize that there were good and bad people in every group; but in fact my education in the Jewish community made that caveat fairly meaningless. Arabs were primitive, uncivilized, violent. (My parents would never have accepted such characterizations of blacks.) Arabs hated and killed Jews. Really, I learned that Arabs were irredeemably evil. In all my travels through life, which were extensive, I never knew any Arabs: and ignorance is the best friend of prejudice.

In my mid-thirties I started reading books by Palestinians. These books made me understand that I was misinformed. I had had a fine enough position on the Palestinians—or perhaps I should say "the Palestinian question" to convey the right ring of condescension—once I knew they existed; long after I was eleven. Maybe twenty years ago, I knew they existed. I knew they were being wronged. I was for a two-state solution. Over the years, I learned about Israeli torture of Palestinian prisoners; I knew Jewish journalists who purposefully suppressed the information so as not to "hurt" the Jewish state. I knew the human rights of Palestinians in ordinary life were being violated. Like my daddy, on social issues, the policy questions, I was fine for my kind. These opinions put me into constant friction with the Jewish community, including my family, many

friends, and many Jewish feminists. As far as I know, from my own experience, the Jewish community has just recently—like last Tuesday—really faced the facts—the current facts. I will not argue about the twisted history, who did what to whom when. I will not argue about Zionism except to say that it is apparent that I am not a Zionist and never was. The argument is the same one I had with my Hebrew school principal; my position is the same—either we get a fair world or we keep getting killed. (I have also noticed, in the interim, that the Cambodians had Cambodia and it didn't help them much. Social sadism takes many forms. What can't be imagined happens.) But there are social policy questions and then there is the racism that lives in individual hearts and minds as a prejudgment on a whole people. You believe the stereotypes; you believe the worst; you accept a caricature such that members of the group are comic or menacing, always contemptible. I don't believe that Amerikan Jews raised as I was are free of this prejudice. We were taught it as children and it has helped the Israeli government justify in our eyes what they have done to the Palestinians. We've been blinded, not just by our need for Israel or our loyalty to Jews but by a deep and real prejudice against Palestinians that amounts to race-hate.

The land wasn't empty, as I was taught: oh yes, there are a few nomadic tribes but they don't have homes in the normal sense—not like we do in New Jersey; there are just a few uneducated, primitive, dirty people there now who don't even want a state. There were people and there were even trees—trees destroyed by Israeli soldiers. The Palestinians are right when they say the Jews regarded them as nothing. I was taught they were nothing in the most literal sense. Taking the country and turning it into Israel, the Jewish state, was an imperialist act. Jews find any such statement incomprehensible. How could the near-dead, the nearly extinguished, a people who were ash have imperialized anyone, anything? Well, Israel is rare: Jews, nearly annihilated, took the land and forced a very hostile world to legitimize the theft. I think Amerikan Jews cannot face the fact that this is

one act—the one act—of imperialism, of conquest that we support. We helped; we're proud of it; here we stand. This is a contradiction of every idea we have about who we are and what being a Jew means. It is also true. We took a country from the people who lived there; we the dispossessed finally did it to someone else; we said, they're Arabs, let them go somewhere Arab. When Israelis say they want to be judged by the same standards applied to the rest of the world, not by a special standard for Jews, in part they mean that this is the way of the world. It may be a first for Jews, but everyone else has been doing it throughout recorded history. It is recorded history. I grew up in New Jersey, the size of Israel; not so long ago, it belonged to Indians. Because Amerikan Jews refuse to face precisely this one fact—we took the land—Amerikan Jews cannot afford to know or face Palestinians: initially, even that they existed.

As for the Palestinians, I can only imagine the humiliation of losing to, being conquered by, the weakest, most despised, most castrated people on the face of the earth. This is a feminist point about manhood.

When I was growing up, the only time I heard about equality of the sexes was when I was taught to love and have fidelity to the new State of Israel. This new state was being built on the premise that men and women were equal in all ways. According to my teachers, servility was inappropriate for the new Jew, male or female. In the new state, there was no strong or weak or more or less valuable according to sex. Everyone did the work: physical labor, menial labor, cooking—there was no, as we say now, sex-role stereotyping. Because everyone worked, everyone had an equal responsibility and an equal say. Especially, women were citizens, not mothers.

Strangely, this was the most foreign aspect of Israel. In New Jersey, we didn't have equality of the sexes. In New Jersey, no one thought about it or needed it or wanted it. We didn't have equality of the sexes in Hebrew

school. It didn't matter how smart or devout you were: if you were a girl, you weren't allowed to do anything important. You weren't allowed to want anything except marriage, even if you were a talented scholar. Equality of the sexes was something they were going to have in the desert with the trees; we couldn't send them any because we didn't have any. It was a new principle for a new land and it helped to make a new people; in New Jersey, we didn't have to be quite that new.

When I was growing up, Israel was also basically socialist. The kibbutzim, voluntary collectives, were egalitarian communities by design. The kibbutzim were going to replace the traditional nuclear family as the basic social unit in the new society. Children would be raised by the whole community—they wouldn't "belong" to their parents. The communal vision was the cornerstone of the new country.

Here, women were pretty invisible, and material greed, a desire for middle-class goods and status, animated the Jewish community. Israel really repudiated the values of Amerikan Jews—somehow the adults managed to venerate Israel while in their own lives transgressing every radical value the new state was espousing. But the influence on the children was probably very great. I don't think it is an accident that Jewish children my age grew up wanting to make communal living a reality or believing that it could be done; or that the girls did eventually determine, in such great numbers, to make equality of the sexes the dynamic basis of our political lives.

While women in the United States were living in a twilight world, appendages to men, housewives, still the strongest women I knew when I was a child worked for the establishment, well-being, and preservation of the State of Israel. It was perhaps the only socially sanctioned field of engagement. My Aunt Helen, for instance, the only unmarried, working woman I knew as a child, made Israel her life's cause. Not only did the strong women work for Israel, but women who weren't visibly strong—

who were conformist—showed some real backbone when they were active on behalf of Israel. The equality of the sexes may have had a resonance for them as adults that it couldn't have had for me as a child. Later, Golda Meir's long tenure as prime minister made it seem as if the promise of equality was being delivered on. She was new, all right; forged from the old, visibly so, but herself made new by an act of will; public, a leader of a country in crisis. My Aunt Helen and Golda Meir were a lot alike: not defined in terms of men; straightforward when other women were coy; tough; resourceful; formidable. The only formidable women I saw were associated with and committed to Israel, except for Anna Magnani. But that's another story.

Finally in 1988, at forty-two, on Thanksgiving, the day we celebrate having successfully taken this land from the Indians, I went to Israel for the first time. I went to a conference billed as the First International Jewish Feminist Conference. Its theme was the empowerment of Jewish women. Its sponsors were the American Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Congress, and the Israel Women's Network, and it was being organized with a middle-class agenda by middle-class women, primarily Amerikan, who were themselves beholden to the male leadership of the sponsoring groups. So the conference looked to secular Israeli feminists organizing at the grassroots level—and so it was. Initially, the secular Israeli feminists intended to organize an alternate feminist conference to repudiate the establishment feminist conference, but they decided instead to have their own conference, one that included Palestinian women, the day after the establishment conference ended.

The establishment conference was designed not to alienate Orthodox Jewish women. As far as I could see, secular Jewish women, especially Israelis, were expendable. What the hell? They could be counted on to keep working —keep those battered womens shelters going, keep those rape crisis centers

open—without being invited into the hotel. They couldn't afford to come anyway. The wealthier excluded the poor and struggling; the timid (mainstream) excluded the grassroots (really mainstream but as socially invisible and despised as the women they represent and serve); the religious excluded the secular; Jewish excluded Palestinian; and, to a considerable degree, Amerikans, by virtue of their money and control of the agenda, excluded Israelis—feminists, you know, the ones who do the work in the country, on the ground. Lesbians were excluded until the last minute by not being specifically included; negotiations with those organizing what came to be called the post-conference put a lesbian on the program speaking as such, though under a pseudonym because she was Israeli and it was too dangerous for her to be known by her real name. War-and-peace issues were underplayed, even as the establishment conference was held in the occupied West Bank; even though many feminists—organizers and theorists—consider both militarism and masculinity feminist issues—intrinsically feminist, not attached to the agenda because of a particular political emergency.

I went because of grassroots Israeli feminists: the opportunity to meet with them in Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem; to talk with those organizing against violence against women on all fronts; to learn more about the situation of women in Israel. I planned to stay on—if I had, I also would have spoken at and for the rape crisis center in Jerusalem. In Haifa, where both Phyllis Chesler and I spoke to a packed room (which included Palestinian women and some young Arab men) on child custody and pornography in the United States, women were angry about the establishment conference—its tepid feminist agenda, its exclusion of the poor and of Palestinian feminists. One woman, maybe in her sixties, with an accent from Eastern Europe, maybe Poland, finally stood up and said approximately the following: "Look, its just another conference put on by the Amerikans like all the others. They have them like clockwork. They use innocents like these"—pointing to Phyllis and me—"who don't know any better. " Everyone laughed,

especially us. I hadn't been called an innocent in a long time, or been perceived as one either. But she was right. Israel brought me to my knees. Innocent was right. Here's what compromised my innocence, such as it was.

1 THE LAW OF RETURN

Jewish women attended the establishment conference from many countries, including Argentina, New Zealand, India, Brazil, Belgium, South Africa, and the United States. Each woman had more right to be there than any Palestinian woman born there, or whose mother was born there, or whose mother's mother was born there. I found this morally unbearable. My own visceral recognition was simple: I don't have a right to this right.

The Law of Return says that any Jew entering the country can immediately become a citizen; no Jew can be turned away. This law is the basis for the Jewish state, its basic principle of identity and purpose. Orthodox religious parties, with a hefty share of the vote in recent elections, wanted the definition of "Jewish" narrowed to exclude converts to Judaism not converted by Orthodox rabbis, according to Orthodox precepts. Women at the establishment conference were mobilized to demonstrate against this change in the Law of Return. The logic used to mobilize the women went as follows: "The Right is doing this. The Right is bad. Anything the Right wants is bad for women. Therefore, we, feminists, must oppose this change in the Law of Return. " Fight the Right. In your heart you know the fight is for the sake of women, but don't tell anyone else: not Shamir, not the Orthodox rabbis, not the press; but especially not the Amerikan Jewish boys who are sponsoring your conference, who are in Israel right then and there to lobby Shamir and to keep an eye on the girls. Fight the Right. Find an issue important to Jewish men and show up as the women's auxiliary. Make them proud. And don't offend them or upset them by making them stand with you—if they want you there—for the rights of women.

Protesting the change in the Law of Return was presented at the establishment conference as “taking a first step” against the power of the Orthodox rabbis. Because the power of these men over the lives of Jewish women in Israel is already vast and malignant, “taking a first step” against them—without mentioning any of the ways in which they are already tyrants over women—wasn’t just inadequate; it was shameful. We needed to take a real step. In Israel, Jewish women are basically—in reality, in everyday life—governed by Old Testament law. So much for equality of the sexes. The Orthodox rabbis make most of the legal decisions that have a direct impact on the status of women and the quality of womens lives. They have the final say on all issues of “personal status, ” which feminists will recognize as the famous private sphere in which civilly subordinate women are traditionally imprisoned. The Orthodox rabbis decide questions of marriage, adultery, divorce, birth, death, legitimacy; what rape is; and whether abortion, battery, and rape in marriage are legal or illegal. At the protest, feminists did not mention women.

How did Israel get this way—how did these Orthodox rabbis get the power over women that they have? How do we dislodge them, get them off women? Why isn’t there a body of civil law superseding the power of religious law that gives women real, indisputable rights of equality and self-determination in this country that we all helped build? I’m forty-four; Israel is forty-two; how the hell did this happen? What are we going to do about it now? How did Jewish feminists manage not to “take a first step” until the end of 1988—and then not mention women? The first step didn’t amount to a feminist crawl.

2 THE CONDITION OF JEWISH WOMEN IN ISRAEL IS ABJECT

Where I live things aren’t too good for women. It’s not unlike Crystal Night all year long given the rape and battery statistics—which are a pale shadow of the truth—the incest, the pornography, the serial murders, the sheer

savagery of the violence against women. But Israel is shattering. Sisters: we have been building a country in which women are dog shit, something you scrape off the bottom of your shoe. We, the "Jewish feminists. " We who only push as far as the Jewish men here will allow. If feminism is serious, it fights sex hierarchy and male power and men don't get to stand on top of you, singly or in clusters, for forever and a day. And you don't help them build a country in which women's status gets lower and lower as the men get bigger and bigger—the men there and the men here. From what I saw and heard and learned, we have helped to build a living hell for women, a nice Jewish hell. Isn't it the same everywhere? Well, "everywhere" isn't younger than I am; "everywhere" didn't start out with the equality of the sexes as a premise. The low status of women in Israel is not unique but we are uniquely responsible for it. I felt disgraced by the way women are treated in Israel, disgraced and dishonored. I remembered my Hebrew school principal, the Holocaust survivor, who said I had to be a Jew first, an Amerikan second, and a citizen of the world, a human being last, or I would have the blood of Jews on my hands. I've kept quiet a long time about Israel so as not to have the blood of Jews on my hands. It turns out that I am a woman first, second, and last—they are the same; and I find I do have the blood of Jews on my hands—the blood of Jewish women in Israel.

Divorce and Battery

In Israel, there are separate religious courts that are Christian, Muslim, Druze, and Jewish. Essentially, women from each group are subject to the authority of the most ancient systems of religious misogyny.

In 1953 a law was passed bringing all Jews under the jurisdiction of the religious courts for everything having to do with "personal status. " In the religious courts, women, along with children, the mentally deficient, the insane, and convicted criminals, cannot testify. A woman cannot be a

witness or, needless to say, a judge. A woman cannot sign a document. This could be an obstacle to equality.

Under Jewish law, the husband is the master; the woman belongs to him, what with being one of his ribs to begin with; her duty is to have children—preferably with plenty of physical pain; well, you remember the Old Testament. You've read the Book. You've seen the movie. What you haven't done is live it. In Israel, Jewish women do.

The husband has the sole right to grant a divorce; it is an unimpeachable right. A woman has no such right and no recourse. She has to live with an adulterous husband until he throws her out (after which her prospects aren't too good); if she commits adultery, he can just get rid of her (after which her prospects are worse). She has to live with a batterer until he's done with her. If she leaves, she will be homeless, poor, stigmatized, displaced, an outcast, in internal exile in the Promised Land. If she leaves without formal permission from the religious courts, she can be judged a "rebellious wife, " an actual legal category of women in Israel without, of course, any male analogue. A rebellious wife will lose custody of her children and any rights to financial support. There are an estimated 10, 000 agunot—"chained women"—whose husbands will not grant them divorces. Some are prisoners; some are fugitives; none have basic rights of citizenship or personhood.

No one knows the extent of the battery. Sisterhood Is Global says that in 1978 there were approximately 60, 000 reported cases of wife-beating; only two men went to prison. In 1981 I talked with Marcia Freedman, a former member of the Israeli parliament and a founder of the first battered-women's shelter in Israel, which I visited in Haifa. At that time, she thought wife-beating in Israel occurred with ten times the statistical frequency we had here. Recent hearings in parliament concluded that 100, 000 women were being beaten each year in their own homes.

Marcia Freedman was in Haifa when I was. I saw only some of what she and other feminists had accomplished in Israel and against what odds. There are now five shelters in Israel. The shelter in Haifa is a big building on a city street. It looks like the other buildings. The streets are full of men. The door is locked. Once inside, you climb up several flights of steps to come upon a great iron gate inside the building, a gate you might find in a maximum-security prison for men. It is locked all the time. It is the only real defense against battering men. Once the iron gate is unlocked, you see women and children; big, clean, bare common

rooms; small, immaculate rooms in which women and their children live; an office; a lounge; drawings by the children who live there—colorful, often violent; and on the top floor a school, the children Palestinian and Israeli, tiny, young, perfect, beautiful. This shelter is one of the few places in Israel where Arab and Jewish children are educated together. Their mothers live together. Behind the great iron bars, where women are voluntarily locked in to stay alive, there is a living model of Palestinian-Israeli cooperation: behind the iron bars that keep out the violent men—Jewish and Arab. Feminists have managed to get housing subsidies for women who have permission to live outside the marital home, but the process of qualifying can take as long as a year. The women who run the shelter try to relocate women fast—the space is needed for other women—but some women stay as long as a year. At night the women who run the shelter, by now professionals, go home; the battered women stay, the great iron gate their lone protection. I kept asking what if— what if he comes? The women can call the police; the police will come. The cop on the beat is nice. He stops by sometimes. Sometimes they give him a cup of coffee. But outside, not too long ago, a woman was beaten to death by the husband she was escaping. The women inside aren't armed; the shelter isn't armed; this in a country where the men are armed. There isn't any network of safe houses. The locations of the shelters are known. The women have to go out to find jobs and places to live. Well, women get beaten—and beaten to

death—here too, don't they? But the husband doesn't get so much active help from the state—not to mention the God of the Jews. And when a Jewish woman is given a divorce, she has to physically back out of her husband's presence in the court. It is an argument for being beaten to death.

A draft of Israel's newly proposed Fundamental Human Rights Law—a contemporary equivalent of our Bill of Rights—exempts marriage and divorce from all human rights guarantees.

Pornography

You have to see it to believe it and even seeing it might not help. I've been sent it over the years by feminists in Israel—I had seen it—I didn't really believe it. Unlike in the United States, pornography is not an industry. You find it in mainstream magazines and advertising. It is mostly about the Holocaust. In it, Jewish women are sexualized as Holocaust victims for Jewish men to masturbate over. Well, would you believe it, even if you saw it?

Israeli women call it "Holocaust pornography. " The themes are fire, gas, trains, emaciation, death.

In the fashion layout, three women in swimsuits are posed as if they are looking at and moving away from two men on motorcycles. The motorcycles, black metal, are menacingly in the foreground moving toward the women. The women, fragile and defenseless in their near nudity, are in the background. Then the women, now dressed in scanty underwear, are shown running from the men, with emphasis on thighs, breasts thrust out, hips highlighted. Their faces look frightened and frenzied. The men are physically grabbing them. Then the women, now in new bathing suits, are sprawled on the ground, apparently dead, with parts of their bodies severed from them and scattered around as trains bear down on them. Even as you

see a severed arm, a severed leg, the trains coming toward them, the women are posed to accentuate the hips and place of entry into the vaginal area.

Or a man is pouring gasoline into a woman's face. Or she's posed next to a light fixture that looks like a shower head.

Or two women, ribs showing, in scanty underwear, are posed in front of a stone wall, prisonlike, with a fire extinguisher on one side of them and a blazing open oven on the other. Their body postures replicate the body postures of naked concentration camp inmates in documentary photographs.

Of course, there is also sadism without ethnicity, outside the trauma of history—you think Jewish men cant be regular good ol' boys? The cover of the magazine shows a naked woman spread out, legs open, with visual emphasis on her big breasts. Nails are driven through her breasts. Huge pliers are attached to one nipple. She is surrounded by hammers, pliers, saws. She has what passes for an orgasmic expression on her face. The woman is real. The tools are drawn. The caption reads: Sex in the Workshop.

The same magazine published all the visual violence described above. Monitin is a left-liberal slick monthly for the intelligentsia and upper class. It has high production and aesthetic values. Israels most distinguished writers and intellectuals publish in it. Judith Antonelli in The Jewish Advocate reported that Monitin "contains the most sexually violent images. Photos abound of women sprawled out upside-down as if they have just been attacked."

Or, in a magazine for women that is not unlike Ladies' Home Journal, there is a photograph of a woman tied to a chair with heavy rope. Her shirt is torn off her shoulders and upper chest but her arms are tied up against her so that only the fleshy part of the upper breasts is exposed. She is wearing pants—

they are wet. A man, fully dressed, standing next to her, is throwing beer in her face. In the United States, such photographs of women are found in bondage magazines.

For purists, there is an Israeli pornography magazine. The issue I saw had a front-page headline that read: ORGY AT YAD VASHEM. Yad Vashem is the memorial in Jerusalem to the victims of the Holocaust. Under the headline, there was a photograph of a man sexually entangled with several women.

What does this mean—other than that if you are a Jewish woman you don't run to Israel, you run from it?

I went to the Institute for the Study of Media and Family on Herzelia Street in Haifa: an organization built to fight violence against women. Working with the rape crisis center (and desperately fund-raising to stay alive), the institute analyzes the content of media violence against women; it exposes and fights the legitimacy pornography gets by being incorporated into the mainstream.

There is outrage on the part of women at the Holocaust pornography—a deep, ongoing shock; but little understanding. For me, too. Having seen it here, having tried to absorb it, then seeing stacks of it at the institute, I felt numb and upset. Here I had slides; in Israel I saw the whole magazines—the context in which the photographs were published. These really were mainstream venues for violent pornography, with a preponderance of Holocaust pornography. That made it worse: more real, more incomprehensible. A week later, I spoke in Tel Aviv about pornography to an audience that was primarily feminist. One feminist suggested I had a double standard: didn't all men do this, not just Israeli men? I said no: in the United States, Jewish men are not the consumers of Holocaust pornography; black men aren't the consumers of plantation pornography.

But now I'm not sure. Do I know that or have I just assumed it? Why do Israeli men like this? Why do they do it? They are the ones who do it; women aren't even tokens in the upper echelons of media, advertising, or publishing—nor are fugitive Nazis with new identities. I think feminists in Israel must make this "why" an essential question. Either the answer will tell us something new about the sexuality of men everywhere or it will tell us something special about the sexuality of men who go from victim to victimizer. How has the Holocaust been sexualized for Israeli men and what does this have to do with sexualized violence against women in Israel; what does it have to do with this great, dynamic pushing of women lower and lower? Are Jewish women going to be destroyed again by Nazis, this time with Israeli men as their surrogates? Is the sexuality of Israeli men shaped by the Holocaust? Does it make them come?

I don't know if Israeli men are different from other men by virtue of using the Holocaust against Jewish women, for sexual excitement. I do know that the use of Holocaust sex is unbearably traumatic for Jewish women, its place in the Israeli mainstream itself a form of sadism. I also know that as long as the Holocaust pornography exists, only male Jews are different from those pitiful creatures on the trains, in the camps. Jewish women are the same. How, then, does Israel save us?

All the Other Good Things

Of course, Israel has all the other good things boys do to girls: rape, incest, prostitution. Sexual harassment in public places, on the streets, is pervasive, aggressive, and sexually explicit. Every woman I talked with who had come to Israel from some other place brought up her rage at being propositioned on the street, at bus stops, in taxis, by men who wanted to fuck and said so. The men were Jewish and Arab. At the same time, in Jerusalem, Orthodox men throw stones at women who don't have their arms covered. Palestinian boys who throw stones at Israeli soldiers are shot with bullets, rubber-

coated or not. Stone throwing at women by Orthodox men is considered trivial, not real assault. Somehow, it's their right. Well, what isn't?

In Tel Aviv before my lecture, I talked with an Israeli soldier, maybe nineteen, part of the occupying army in the West Bank. He was home for Sabbath. His mother, a feminist, generously opened her home to me. The mother and son were observant; the father was a secular liberal. I was with the best friend of the mother, who had organized the lecture. Both women were exceptionally gentle people, soft-spoken and giving. Earlier, I had participated with about 400 women in a vigil in Jerusalem against the occupation. For a year, feminists in Haifa, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv had held a vigil each week called Women in Black, women in mourning for the duration of the occupation. The father and son were outraged by the demonstrations. The father argued that the demonstrations had nothing to do with feminism. The son argued that the occupation had nothing to do with feminism.

I asked the son about something that had been described to me: Israeli soldiers go into Palestinian villages and spread garbage, broken glass, rocks in the streets and make the women clean up the dangerous rubble bare-handed, without tools. I thought the son would deny it or say such a thing was an aberration. Instead, he argued that it had nothing to do with feminism. In arguing, he revealed that this kind of aggression is common; he had clearly seen it or done it many times. His mother's head sank; she didn't look up again until the end. What it had to do with feminism, I said, was that it happened to women. He said that was only because Arab men were cowards, they ran and hid. The women, he said, were strong; they weren't afraid, they stayed. What it had to do with feminism, I said, was that every woman's life, for a feminist, had the same high value. Feminism meant that the Arab woman's life was worth as much as his mothers. Suppose the soldiers came here now, I said, and made your mother go out

on the street, get down on her knees, and clean up broken glass with her bare hands?

I said feminism also had to do with him; what kind of man he was or was becoming, what hurting other people would do to him; how callous or sadistic it would make him. He said, with perfect understanding: you mean, it will be easier to rape?

He said the Arabs deserved being shot; they were throwing stones at Israeli soldiers; I wasn't there, I didn't know, and what did it have to do with feminism anyway? I said that Orthodox men were throwing stones at women in Jerusalem because the women's arms weren't covered down to the wrist. He said it was ridiculous to compare the two. I said the only difference I could see was that the women didn't carry rifles or have any right to shoot the men. He said it wasn't the same. I asked him to tell me what the difference was. Wasn't a stone a stone—for a woman too? Weren't we flesh; didn't we bleed; couldn't we be killed by a stone? Were Israeli soldiers really more fragile than women with bare arms? Okay, he said, you do have a right to shoot them; but then you have to stand trial the same way we do if we kill Arabs. I said they didn't have to stand trial. His mother raised her head to say there were rules, strict rules, for the soldiers, really there were, and she wasn't ashamed of her son. "We are not ashamed, " she said, imploring her husband, who said nothing. "We are not ashamed of him."

I remember the heat of the Jerusalem sun. Hundreds of women dressed in black were massed on the sidewalks of a big public square in Jerusalem. Women in Black began in Jerusalem at the same time as the intifada, with seven women who held a silent vigil to show their resistance to the occupation. Now the hundreds of women who participate each week in three cities are met with sexual derision and sometimes stones. Because the

demonstrations are women-only, they are confrontational in two ways: these are Israelis who want peace with Palestinians; these are women who are standing on public ground. Women held signs in Hebrew, Arabic, and English saying: END THE OCCUPATION. An Arab vendor gave some of us, as many as he could reach, gifts of grapes and figs to help us fight the heat. Israeli men went by shouting insults—men called out insults from passing cars—the traffic was bumper to bumper, with the men trying to get home before Sabbath eve, when Jerusalem shuts down. There were also men with signs who screamed that the women were traitors and whores.

Along with most of the demonstrators, I had come from the post-conference organized by the grassroots, secular feminists. The post-conference was chaired by Nabila Espanioli, a Palestinian woman who spoke Hebrew, English, and Arabic. Palestinian women came out of the audience to give first-person testimony about what the occupation was doing to them. They especially spoke about the brutality of the Israeli soldiers. They talked about being humiliated, being forcibly detained, being trespassed on, being threatened. They spoke about themselves and about women. For Palestinian women, the occupation is a police state and the Israeli secret police are a constant danger; there is no "safe space. " I already knew that I had Palestinian blood on my hands. What I found out in Israel is that it isn't any easier to wash off than Jewish blood—and that it is also female.

I had met Nabila my first night in Israel, in Haifa, at the home of an Israeli woman who gave a wonderful welcoming party. It was a warm, fragrant night. The small, beautiful apartment open to the night air was filled with women from Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa—feminists who fight for women, against violence. It was Sabbath eve and there was a simple feminist ceremony—a breaking of bread, one loaf, everyone together; secular words of peace and hope. And then I found myself talking with this Palestinian woman. She talked a mile a minute about pornography. It was her field of study and she knew it inside out, recognized herself in it, under it, violated

by it. She told me it was the focus of her resistance to both rape and sexualized racism. She, too, wanted freedom and it was in her way. I thought: with this between us, who can pull us apart? We see women with the same eyes.

In Israel, there are the occupied and the occupied: Palestinians and women. In the Israel I saw, Palestinians will be freer sooner. I didn't find any of my trees.

Gate A-4 Naomi Shihab Nye

Wandering around the Albuquerque Airport Terminal, after learning my flight had been delayed four hours, I heard an announcement: "If anyone in the vicinity of Gate A-4 understands any Arabic, please come to the gate immediately."

Well—one pauses these days. Gate A-4 was my own gate. I went there.

An older woman in full traditional Palestinian embroidered dress, just like my grandma wore, was crumpled to the floor, wailing. "Help," said the flight agent. "Talk to her. What is her problem? We told her the flight was going to be late and she did this."

I stooped to put my arm around the woman and spoke haltingly. "Shu-dow-a, Shu-bid-uck Habibti? Stani schway, Min fadlick, Shu-bit-se-wee?" The minute she heard any words she knew, however poorly used, she stopped crying. She thought the flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for major medical treatment the next day. I said, "No, we're fine, you'll get there, just later, who is picking you up? Let's call him."

We called her son, I spoke with him in English. I told him I would stay with his mother till we got on the plane and ride next to her. She talked to him. Then we called her other sons just for the fun of it. Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic and found out of course they had ten shared friends. Then I thought just for the heck of it why not call some Palestinian poets I know and let them chat with her? This all took up two hours.

She was laughing a lot by then. Telling of her life, patting my knee, answering questions. She had pulled a sack of homemade *mamool* cookies—little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts—from her bag—and was offering them to all the women at the gate. To my amazement, not a single woman declined one. It was like a sacrament. The traveler from Argentina, the mom from California, the lovely woman from Laredo—we were all covered with the same powdered sugar. And smiling. There is no better cookie.

And then the airline broke out free apple juice from huge coolers and two little girls from our flight ran around serving it and they were covered with powdered sugar, too. And I noticed my new best friend—by now we were holding hands—had a potted plant poking out of her bag, some medicinal thing, with green furry leaves. Such an old country tradition. Always carry a plant. Always stay rooted to somewhere.

And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and I thought, This is the world I want to live in. The shared world. Not a single person in that gate—once the crying of confusion stopped—seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women, too.

This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost.

CHAPTER FIVE

The One-State Solution

The Palestine–Israel conflict has traditionally been presented in the West, especially by Zionist commentators, as extremely complicated. Views predicated on this premise have served not only to obscure the actual situation, but have also forcibly led to the conclusion that the solution to such a problem was bound to be no less complex and probably impossible to achieve. In reality, nothing was further from the truth. The issue is in essence quite simple: a European settler movement ineluctably displaced an indigenous population and wilfully denied its basic rights, inevitably provoking resistance and recurrent strife.

The obvious way to end that strife would have been to redress the injustice done to the indigenous people as far as practically possible, and find a reasonable accommodation for the needs and rights of everyone involved. The parameters of such a solution are clear, and the only difficulty was how to implement them, not because of their complexity, but because of Israel's obdurate clinging to its settler colonialist ideology, Zionism, and the Western support that allowed or even encouraged it to do so.

This chapter is concerned with the question of what constitutes a durable and just settlement between Palestinians and Israelis, irrespective of how attainable it was at the time of writing. The fact that something is right or wrong is independent of what can be done about it. Israel had no new ideas for solving the conflict, only re-workings of the old Zionist formula for maintaining a Jewish state, that is, one with a Jewish majority. In three-quarters of a century, Israel never managed to resolve its original dilemma with the Palestinian presence. Its attempts at obliterating the Palestinians in

myriad ways – from their original dispersion, to the denial of their history and existence, to their political marginalisation, to their imprisonment in ghettos – had failed to eradicate them as a physical and political reality.

Yet the Israeli fantasy persisted that it was still possible to pursue a policy against the Palestinians that would simply make the problem go away. This can be summed up as a 'more of the same' strategy: nullifying Palestinian resistance by overwhelming force, confining the Palestinians in small, isolated enclaves so as to prevent their forming any sort of meaningful state, strangling their economy and society, and thus pushing them to emigrate (to Jordan or anywhere else, as long as it was outside what Israel considered to be its borders), and ignoring the rest – the refugees in camps, the other dislocated Palestinians, and those treated as unequal citizens of Israel. The difficulties of managing such scattered Palestinian groupings in order to ensure that none of them bothered Israel would have been a daunting prospect for anyone. But it seemed not to have deterred successive Israeli leaders from trying to make it happen.

The alternative – accepting the Palestinian presence as a reality that had to be addressed through genuine negotiations and a mutually agreed settlement – was not one that Israel wanted to contemplate. The desire on the part of ordinary Israelis for 'peace' was widespread after the Oslo Accords, but it was not accompanied by an acceptance (or even an understanding) of the requirements that such a peace would demand from them. Most of those who accepted the need for Palestinians to have their own state were unclear about the Palestinian state's exact geography, and unprepared to relinquish land they had come to regard as theirs. In fact, as the Israeli commentator Gideon Levy pointed out in *Haaretz* (19 March 2006), had Israelis seriously supported the creation of a Palestinian state, they would soon have realised that it was not compatible with the carve-up of the West Bank they and their government had brought about. He identified this situation as 'Israel's national disease, to have their cake and eat it'.

Reconciling these opposites had been a central preoccupation of Israeli leaders ever since the acquisition of the 1967 territories and the emergence

of the two-state proposition. Israel had been able to ignore this solution for decades until it gathered such inexorable momentum over time as to make it impossible to reverse. Moreover, by its relentless policy of settling Jews in the Palestinian territories (140 settlements dotted all over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with 100 illegal outposts in 2021), Israel was helping to bring about a situation it desired even less: the inextricable mixing of the two peoples so as to preclude their future separation.

Israeli fears of Palestinians as a 'demographic threat', openly discussed by Israeli politicians and leading figures, were regarded uncritically in the West as legitimate, as if it were acceptable for a nation to define itself exclusively by reference to ethnicity or religion, and seek to exclude those who did not qualify on those counts. It was such ideas of course that had led to the expulsion of the non-Jewish (Palestinian) population from the country in the first place, and which continued to fuel the impetus to expel even more, including those who are citizens of the state. Meanwhile, the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza were segregated inside their own areas. These Israeli attitudes clearly reflected a combination of the anti-Arab racism that was an inevitable concomitant of Zionism and a feature of the Jewish state from the beginning, and the more recent Israeli fear of 'terrorism' – that is, resistance – for which the mass disappearance of Arabs was seen as the only remedy.

Accordingly, ambitious scenarios for a future Israel, shorn of its Palestinians and safe for Zionism, were much discussed at one time. 'Our future in 2020', published in 2005, envisaged a demilitarised Palestinian state possibly federated with Jordan, with the right of refugee return abrogated, and full normalisation with the Arab and Islamic states. Joint Israeli/Arab projects would be dominated by Israel with the Arabs providing the land and the manpower; the Arab trade boycott would be terminated, and Israel would become the local agent for multinational companies in all parts of the region.[1] A year later, Giora Eiland, a former head of Israel's National Security Council, who did not believe that a Palestinian state in the 1967 territories was viable and might become unstable for that reason, proposed several grand measures to enhance

Israel's future security. According to these, Israel would annex 12 per cent of the West Bank and ask Jordan to donate 100 sq. km of its own land to compensate the Palestinians; 600 sq. km of Northern Sinai would be taken from Egypt and joined on to Gaza to make it more viable, and Egypt could be compensated with 200 sq. km of Israel's Negev Desert. A tunnel would be dug under Israeli territory to connect Egypt with Jordan.[2] Eiland did not explain why either Jordan or Egypt should accept these encroachments on their land and security. Yet in 2022, after nearly two decades, versions of these proposals were still being considered.

The Jordanian option, where the Palestinian enclaves would be formally attached to Jordan, had gone into abeyance following Ariel Sharon's death in 2014. Jordan had always struck Sharon as the natural home for Palestinians, although he realised that Jordan would not be willing to go along with this. He therefore envisaged that, given time, the Palestinian entity created by Israel's fragmentation policy in the West Bank, would itself agitate for a federation with 'the artificial kingdom', as he called Jordan. He foresaw it as inevitable that the West Bank Palestinians would meld socially and economically with Jordan (where approximately 60–70 per cent of the population was Palestinian), and together they would form the 'Palestinian state'. The advantage of this outcome for Israel was that the transition would happen peaceably and not appear to have been imposed by force, Amman might replace Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state, and the refugee problem could be solved there. In other words, the Israeli plan was to promote this solution by knowingly creating a fragmented, non-viable entity in the West Bank which was bound to look towards its Jordanian neighbour for a solution.

This plan was not as fanciful as it sounded. Many exiled Palestinians living in Western countries owned second homes in Jordan, went there regularly to see friends and relatives, arranged for local marriages for their children, and aimed to retire there. Since a considerable number held Jordanian nationality – a leftover from the days when the West Bank was annexed to Jordan – it made those moves all the easier. One could see how

plausible, even natural, it seemed for the Jordanian state to become the substitute homeland for Palestinians denied any other.

The intense striving for an independent Palestinian state post-Oslo, however, put the Jordanian option out of mind. But it did not vanish from Israel's political thinking. Meanwhile, Israel's only strategy for Palestinians was repression and more repression. Undoubtedly, many Israelis were genuinely afraid of Palestinians, especially after the Second Intifada, and hence their support for the building of the separation wall. But at bottom, there was also the ever-present fear that whatever acknowledgement was made of the Palestinians as a political presence, even a denuded one, could signify the beginning of an unstoppable unravelling of the Jewish state itself.

As ever, the real problem lay with Israel's governing ethos and its inability to evolve. Zionism, which had been so resourceful in its early stages, ingeniously exploiting every opportunity to further its aims and intelligently considering its every move, showed itself in the end to be unimaginative and unable to adapt to new realities. The 'Iron Wall' philosophy of Vladimir Jabotinsky, articulated in the early decades of the twentieth century, remained more than eighty years later Israel's only answer to the problem.[3] To deal with the Palestinian threat by building a wall, both physical and political, that would shut the Palestinians out was the only solution Israel could think of to forestall the inevitable consequences of its project. Basing Zionism inside another people's land without ensuring their effective annihilation, on the model of what happened, for example, in the settler colonialisms of Australia or the US, was a foolish mistake. This omission returns us to Benny Morris's regret, set out at the beginning of this book, that Israel did not expel the whole of the Palestinian population in 1948 and safeguard Zionism's long-term future.

But this did not happen and Israel should have evolved ways over the decades of its existence to address the problem it had created other than by recourse to crude strategies of repression and brute force. Where the global trend was towards pluralism and the integration of minorities, Israel's

struggle for ethnic purity was regressive and counter-historical. Nor was it likely that such strategies would work even on the practical level, for, as already discussed, the difficulties of removing so many Palestinians and ensuring that they did not return or resist the fate Israel had assigned to them, were formidable. Pursuing the same 'iron fist' policy Israel had always adopted actually limited its options in the long run. The more Israel repressed the Palestinians, the harder they resisted. Gaza was a case in point where constant bombing and policing was militarily costly, and had not succeeded in quelling its Hamas and Islamic Jihad leadership.

The dead-end route that Israel's ideology had condemned it to is eloquently described in a 2006 *Haaretz* piece by Amir Oren, 'Living by the sword, for all time'.[4] Referring to a recent Israeli Army assessment of the conflict which concluded that it was 'irresolvable', he wrote, 'This is our life (and our death) as far as the eye can see. Endless bloodletting until the end of time.' While Israel clung to a Zionism that precluded any relationship with the Arabs other than one of master and slave, no comfortable outcome for Palestinians, Arabs, or Israelis themselves was possible.

Towards the one-state solution

The twenty-first century is in its third decade, at the time of writing, and the Palestinian situation could be judged to have deteriorated to its worst point since the *Nakba*. Israel had successfully broken up the Palestinian people into fragmented communities living in different localities and under different conditions. Those under occupation in the post-1967 territories are being subjected to hardships that would have destroyed a less tenacious people; the refugees remain in their UN-supported camps in and around Palestine; millions of other exiles have made homes in various countries around the globe, and the Palestinian citizens of Israel are living anomalous lives amongst their usurpers. What had been an effective leadership in such a fragmented situation is largely defunct. The PLO has dwindled into a

semblance of its old self, having been adopted by the ever more discredited PA leadership to give itself legitimacy.

Worst of all, an ever more assertive and powerful Israel, heavily backed by Western states, has been left to wreak all this damage without let or hindrance. It is free to pursue its life-long ambition to erase the physical presence and history of the people it has replaced so effectively as to eventually leave no credible witness to what happened, and no one to cast doubt on its legitimacy.

Yet at the same time, the Palestinians are in the process of attaining a global level of support unprecedented in their history. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, the populations of many of the very countries whose governments held pro-Israel positions, were going in the opposite direction. The Palestinian struggle resonated with many ordinary people, especially younger generations in the West, who saw it as a paradigm for what was natural and just. It became the emblem of anti-colonial struggles and anti-racist protests, like the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, twinned with their own. Britain's second main political party, the Labour Party, under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership from 2015 to 2019 openly espoused the Palestinian cause. Had he gone on to become Britain's prime minister in 2019, the UK government would have placed that cause at the centre of a major European country's foreign policy.

This is not to say that Palestinians had won the battle for public opinion in the West. But there was undoubtedly more sympathy for their cause than at any time previously. This was especially the case in the wake of Israel's massive military attacks on Gaza, Operation Cast Lead in 2008–09, and Operation Protective Edge in 2014. Reporting and TV footage of these ferocious assaults on a besieged people made a significant impact. Israel's unlawful use of white phosphorus in Operation Cast Lead had visible and horrific effects on civilians in Gaza, many children among them, and the vast differential in the death toll on each side told its own story. In the 2008–09 assault, the Palestinian Ministry of Health numbered 1,440 Palestinians dead, as against the Israeli Defence Forces' (IDF) figure of just 13 Israelis. In 2014, the UN estimated at least 2,104 Palestinians had been

killed, and 66 Israelis. More than half of the Palestinian casualties were civilians, in contrast to a majority of soldiers on the Israeli side. In the aftermath of the May 2021 uprisings, with Gaza attacked again, international support for Palestinians rose to new heights.

A YouGov opinion poll conducted in Britain, France and the US at the end of Operation Protective Edge in August 2014 reflected the effect of these assaults. Public sympathy for the Palestinians doubled in Britain, and increased in France, though to a lesser extent. It remained unchanged in the US, where support for Israel is traditionally high. But even in the US, a later Gallup poll in 2020 found a modest increase in support for Palestinians among groups previously known to be unsympathetic, that is, older, white Americans, those with some college education, conservatives and moderates.

Other US opinion polls have reinforced this picture. Gallup's World Affairs surveys indicated a more favourable US trend towards Palestinians from 2001 onwards, and a 2016 Pew Research Center survey noted growing support amongst young Americans, up from 9 per cent in 2006 to 27 per cent. None of this seriously dented support for Israel, consistently higher at 50 to 60 per cent, but the increase was significant.

Public opinion worldwide in 2018 was assessed to be overall more sympathetic towards the Palestine cause, and less so towards Israel.[5] The BBC's 2012 poll of 22 countries showed Israel to be near the bottom of those most negatively viewed, only just above Iran, Pakistan and North Korea. These modestly favourable changes in opinion polls should be seen alongside the striking situation on student campuses in Britain, and even more so in the US. Students in both countries were active in solidarity with the Palestinians to such an extent that campuses were seen by some Jewish students as intimidating for them. It became commonplace for Israeli speakers, however distinguished, to face disruption to their lectures by pro-Palestinian students.

As with opinion polls, flare-ups of pro-Palestinian student support tended to occur especially at times of Israeli aggression against Palestinians. Following the 2008–09 assault on Gaza, students at British universities up

and down the country, including Oxford, the London School of Economics and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), staged sit-ins and occupations of university buildings. They called on university leaders to divest from arms companies dealing with Israel, provide free visas for students from Gaza, establish scholarships for Palestinian students, and other supportive acts. By 2015, the Student Union at SOAS was demanding that the university, which had close ties with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, sever its links with all Israeli institutions. The University and College Union, representing college teachers and staff, was working to help Palestinian students gain UK scholarships

This increasing popular pro-Palestinian support could carry the seeds of a future different to the dismal outlook now envisaged. That possibility will be discussed in the Conclusion of this book.

Support for Palestinian statehood

The positive position on Palestinian statehood in the early twenty-first century appeared quite persuasive, almost a done deal. After 2012, when 138 out of the 193 UN member states recognised 'the State of Palestine', Palestine was granted UN non-member observer status. From there, the new state was able to join a number of international bodies; already a member of the League of Arab States, Palestine became a member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the International Olympics Committee, the Group of 77 developing nations (of which it was made chair in 2019), and UNESCO. In 2014, the International Criminal Court recognised Palestine as a state, permitting it to bring cases before the Court.

In conformity with UN Security Council Resolution 242, the UN recognised the territory of this state to be 'based on the 1967 borders', with East Jerusalem as its capital. The geographical borders of the new state have never been defined any more exactly than that, and a stipulation that there should be a mutually agreed 'land swap' is just as unclear. According to this, West Bank territory occupied by the Israeli settlements would be annexed to Israel in exchange for equivalent Israeli territory for the

Palestinians. But the exact parameters of this land swap were never defined or agreed upon, though it was understood that the area of land exchanged would be between 1 and 3 per cent.

The Palestinian state, which these moves were helping to create in concrete form, is an essential component of the two-state solution. This solution is currently seen as the only realistic option for the future of Israel and the Palestinians. It is approved by the international community, and has no serious competitor except in the wishful thinking of idealists and activists who dream of a single democratic state replacing the present arrangement in Israel-Palestine. President Biden's new administration in 2021 reaffirmed its commitment to the two-state solution, and intended to re-engage the international community through activating the dormant Middle East Quartet.[6] This US determination was strongly reiterated following the uprisings in Israel and the occupied territories during May 2021.

The two-state solution

In 2022, and despite much criticism and disappointment at its lack of success, the two-state solution enjoyed wide international support. A sizeable percentage of Palestinians, especially those under Israeli occupation, also backed this solution, although in decreasing numbers as it became more and more unattainable. For those in the Palestinian diaspora, 'Palestine', after the Oslo Accords had made such a concept possible once again even though so little of it had been liberated, became the focus of their efforts as a place of hope and the potential start of the journey back home.

It is probable that no greater illustration of the triumph of hope over reality exists than the two-state solution. It should be clear to the reader that, given the reality on the ground, there was in 2022 no possibility of a state coming into being that would satisfy the Palestinians' minimal demands. Nor, after 55 years of Israeli occupation, could one envisage a partition of the country as it stood. These facts had been clear for decades,

but yet the two-state solution remained on the books at the UN, the League of Arab States, the European Union, the US, the Palestinian Authority, and, as already pointed out, for many Palestinian individuals and communities.

Recognition of the Palestinian state was supposed to be the first step on the way to a lasting resolution. Most Palestinians initially anticipated a growing exchange with Israelis in the context of two neighbouring states at peace, and that this friendly contact would lead in time to a melting of the border between the two and a true mixing of populations. In this way, there could even be a sort of return for the refugees, but not as a way of taking over Israel. Some Palestinians believed strongly that the national quest for an independent state had to be coupled with a genuine and sincere acceptance of Israel's permanence, not a ruse for undermining it.[7]

It was not that these ideas were articulated as such, or even at the forefront of Palestinian preoccupations, in the demand for statehood. The dominant need was to have the occupation lifted and normal life regained, even though it meant dividing what had been Mandatory Palestine into two states, Israeli and Palestinian. This two-state aim is probably the best known and most internationally accepted solution of all for the conflict. Its support amongst Palestinians did not stem initially from any belief that it was in itself an ideal or even a desirable solution, but rather that it was the *only* way, as they saw it, of saving what little was left of Palestine, a place in which to recoup Palestinian national identity and social integrity.

Israel's ghettoisation of Palestinian society had led to a social fragmentation and national disorientation that could only be reconstituted in a Palestinian state free of Israeli interference. Many Palestinians believed that without this crucial phase of healing and reintegration, there could be no advance for the national cause. In addition, and given the massive power imbalance on the one hand and the international support for the creation of a Palestinian state on the other, the two-state solution acquired a 'most we can hope for' character that was indisputable. The fact that for a while it also looked to be potentially attainable added to its attraction.

The Oslo Accords had nurtured in Palestinians both inside and outside the occupied territories an aspiration to statehood, encouraged by Western-

funded ‘state-building’ projects, no less staunch than that which had animated the first Zionists (and with far greater legitimacy). In fact, many wealthy Palestinians consciously emulated the Zionist model by zealously investing in the Palestinian towns Israel had vacated after the Oslo Agreement in order to build their state by incremental steps (though, as they said, without displacing anyone in the process). Prominent among these was the Palestinian entrepreneur, Munib al-Masri, whose monumental palace built commandingly atop a hill in Nablus struck me when I saw it as a statement of possession meant to defy the Jewish settlements encroaching on his city, which were all deliberately sited on hilltops in a crude bid to claim the Arab land below them for Israel.

Palestinians have always rejected the idea of partition, although it was a familiar one in Palestine’s history as a device used by Britain and later the UN for accommodating Zionist ambitions in the country. The Zionists first proposed it to the Mandate authorities as far back as 1928 when their numbers in the country were very small.[8] In 1937, the Peel Commission set up by the British Government to find a solution for the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Mandate Palestine, recommended that the country be divided into Jewish and Arab states. In 1947, UN General Assembly Resolution 181 made the same recommendation and for the same reason. The story of how this resolution, which the UN was not legally entitled to table in the first place, was pushed through to a vote in its favour is an ignoble one.

It is no secret that it took vigorous US and Zionist arm-twisting and intimidation to overturn the majority of states that would have voted against it.[9] The resolution was passed against strong Arab opposition (though some Palestinian communists accepted it, hoping it would put a brake on Zionist colonisation), not least because it was the first international recognition accorded to what was a blatantly unjust, settler colonialist enterprise in an Arab country, and which the Zionists used subsequently to legitimise their presence. It was seen as an extension of the original injustice perpetrated in 1921 by the League of Nations in conferring on Britain a mandate to encourage Zionist settler colonialism in the first place. For the people of

Palestine, partition was an outrageous assault on the integrity of their country and a gift to the Jewish immigrants of a statehood they did not deserve. This remained the Palestinian position after 1948, when the aim of the newly formed PLO in 1964 was Palestine's total liberation, 'the recovery of the usurped homeland in its entirety', as the Preamble to the 1964 Palestine National Charter phrased it.

In 1974, however, the question of partition returned, at least implicitly, to the national agenda. At its twelfth meeting, the Palestine National Council (PNC) formally resolved to set up a 'national, independent and fighting authority on every part of Palestinian land to be liberated' from Israeli occupation. Although there was no mention of a Palestinian state and no recognition of Israel, the resolution paved the way to a new thinking about the future. This was reflected in the next PNC meeting in 1977, which called for 'an independent national state' on the land, without referring to its total liberation. By 1981, the PNC had welcomed a Russian proposal for the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the idea of a two-state solution was becoming increasingly familiar.[10] In 1982, the Saudi-inspired Fez Plan, which called for the creation of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories and an implicit adoption of a two-state solution, also won guarded Palestinian endorsement. Jordan began to feature as the other part of a possible Palestinian/Jordanian confederation in the PNC meetings after 1983. This was accompanied by an increasing emphasis on the attainment of Palestinian goals by diplomatic means, including for the first time an endorsement of ties with 'democratic and progressive' Jewish and Israeli forces and the internationalisation of efforts to find a peaceful solution.

The outbreak of the First Intifada and the PLO's isolation following its expulsion by Israel from Lebanon in 1982 were important factors in accelerating the trend towards the two-state solution. Palestinian awareness of the realpolitik of Israel's power and the futility of military struggle against it convinced the PLO to adopt a political programme that reflected this reality. Hence it was the PLO which came to recognise Israel and propose the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside it as the aim of the Palestinian struggle. This was a recognition that what was just

was a separate issue from what was possible and attainable under the circumstances, and a decision to pursue the latter at the expense of the former.

What would have been just was for the whole of Mandate Palestine to revert to the dispossessed Palestinians, thus solving the refugee problem for good, and for Israel to compensate them for their losses over the years. But the PLO saw this was impossible to realise and so opted for what was, they believed, attainable. At its eighteenth meeting in November 1988, the PNC accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for negotiations with Israel. It also and most significantly accepted the previously rejected and humiliating UN Partition Resolution 181, finding itself acquiescing 41 years later to the division of Palestine and recognising Israel as a legitimate state. The Declaration of Independence that was the hallmark of this meeting set down the notion of a Palestinian state, implicitly to be established within the 1967-occupied territories, with East Jerusalem as its capital. A month later, the PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, reinforced this recognition of Israel in an affirmation of 'the right of all parties to the conflict to live in peace and security'.

The PNC was the dispersed Palestinian people's best attempt at a representative body in exile through which to reflect the broad range of their views. Even so, the 1988 decision voted in by the PNC was not uniformly welcomed, and the idea of a 'statelet' on 23 per cent of the original Palestine's territory was met with derision by many individuals and groups. The retreat from the original PLO goal of Palestine's total liberation, which had become evident since 1977, was regarded by this constituency as a craven capitulation to Israeli hegemony. I remember how angry my fellow activists in London felt at this betrayal of principle. They convened meetings, wrote defamatory articles and made speeches denouncing the 'statelet' and demanding a return to the PLO's original charter. The first London PLO representative, Said Hammami, posted there in 1975, strongly supported the creation of a Palestinian state and responded to these accusations with fierce condemnation. I recall him telling me with a chilling prescience he could not have been aware of at the time, 'So, you

don't approve of what we [the PLO] are doing? Believe me, the day will come when all of you will rend your clothes with regret you did not fight for the "statelet", because even this small thing will be denied us, you will see!'

After the 1993 Oslo Accords made implicit the goal of creating a Palestinian state, which Palestinians and international agencies started to prepare for in the occupied territories with enthusiasm, the two-state solution dominated the international political discourse, even, as we saw, amongst Israelis. It was affirmed by UN resolutions, at one time formed part of George W. Bush's vision for the future of the region and was central to the 'Road Map', laying out the path to an international peace proposal. Sharing the fate of all other peace proposals for this conflict, however, it was never implemented. Barak Obama's Secretary of State John Kerry made indefatigable peacemaking attempts in 2014 to make the two-state solution a reality, but to no avail. As Obama left office in 2016, he was still trying to work out a way to leave an outline for the two-state solution, possibly through the UN.[11] His successor, Donald Trump, also supported the two-state solution, although in a form so distorted by pro-Israel bias, it was scarcely recognisable as such.[12]

However, in 1993, the international consensus was not *whether* a Palestinian state would be created but *when* and in what territory. The Palestinian doubters went into abeyance, waiting to see what would happen or half-believing that their fears had been misplaced, and the return of Yasser Arafat and the PLO leadership to Palestine seemed to herald a new dawn.

But it was a false dawn. Israel's policy of 'creating facts' on the ground, the single most effective foil to these plans, put the creation of a sovereign, viable Palestinian state out of reach, and thereby spelled the end of the two-state solution. As Israeli colonisation and segmentation of the West Bank proceeded unimpeded throughout the years since 1967, up to and including the period after the Oslo Agreement, the Palestinian territories supposed to form the state were rendered unusable for that purpose by the jigsaw of Jewish colonies, bypass roads and barriers.

Jerusalem was judaised beyond the possibility of its becoming the Palestinian capital, and Gaza was left stranded in an Israeli sea, unconnected to the rest of Palestine, its single shared border with Egypt not under its control. These logistical obstacles in the way of a viable Palestinian state became so extreme over the decades that many observers, including the most ardent supporters of the two-state solution, started to fear that it was not going to happen. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories was forced to conclude as far back as 2006 that 'this vision [of a two-state solution] is unattainable without a viable Palestinian territory. The construction of the wall, the expansion of settlements, the de-Palestinisation of Jerusalem and the gradual incorporation of the Jordan Valley are incompatible with the two-state solution.'[13] Numerous studies and commentaries appeared, analysing this problem and drawing the conclusion that a two-state outcome had been superseded.[14] The head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), Jeff Halper's concept of Israel's occupation as a triple-layered 'matrix of control' – military, territorial and bureaucratic – is probably the most graphic of these and the best illustration of Israel's tenacious and irreversible hold on Jerusalem and the West Bank.[15] The geographer Jan de Jong's maps of the occupied territories vividly demonstrated the impossibility of a Palestinian state arising in these segmented lands.[16]

Given this situation, Palestinian Authority officials indicated that they would be forced to abandon the two-state solution and press for equal citizenship with Israelis.[17] The need to dissolve the PA and force Israel to deal with the Palestinians directly as a people under occupation rather than shielding behind the fiction of an independent government was openly debated.[18] Ahmad Qurei, the Palestinian prime minister at the time, announced in January 2004 that if the two-state solution were made impossible to achieve, then the Palestinians had no alternative but to aim for one state, a tactic meant to 'scare' the Israelis and their US sponsors into checking the growth of settlements and other obstacles to the creation of a

Palestinian state. These assertions have been made several times subsequently.

But they scared no one, since Israel had no intention of ever letting a viable Palestinian state come into being. Its colonisation programme and studied avoidance of serious peace agreements or meaningful negotiations were all designed to ensure that nothing other than a truncated entity incapable of becoming anything more would ever exist alongside the Jewish state. Had Israel conceded on this point and a sovereign Palestinian state been created within the whole of the 1967 territories, a period of tranquillity might well have ensued. But sooner or later, the basic issues would re-emerge and call for resolution, namely, the initial dispossession that had led to the loss of most of Palestine and the expulsion of its people. Israel could no more abandon the West Bank settlements to allow for a Palestinian state there than it could leave Tel Aviv. As the left-wing Israeli activist Haim Hanegbi put it, 'Any [Israeli] recognition that the settlements in the West Bank exist on plundered Palestinian land will cast a threatening shadow over the Jezreel valley and over the moral status of Beit Alfa and Ein Harod [places in Israel pre-1967].'[19]

These issues would not be resolved in a territory comprising only one-fifth of the original Palestine and in the absence of a just solution for the refugees, who could not be absorbed into such a small area. The proposed state was scarcely viable as it was, without a further influx of refugees. But it could form the bridgehead for an eventual refugee return. Israelis knew this as well as any Palestinian, which was why they resisted the creation of a sovereign, viable Palestinian state so fiercely and fought against any affirmation of the Palestinians as a people with a national cause. It was also why they needed almost just as much to set up a non-viable entity they would call a state, as a fig-leaf to satisfy the international community. In reality, it would be both a dustbin for dumping unwanted Palestinians who could threaten Israel's demography, and a way of preserving Zionism.

Israel was not wrong in its apprehensions. Those most anxious to bring about this version of the two-state solution were Israel itself and the Western powers, which wanted to save a project they had unwisely backed

from the start and could not now abandon. To these may be added the pro-Western Arab states whose chief concern was a quiet life free from Western pressure to accommodate Israel and the wrath of their own populations for doing so. It was true that, in addition, there had grown amongst many Palestinians a genuine desire for a separate state, feelings nurtured by years of deprivation under occupation and, as we have mentioned, the fear of losing the rest of Palestine if they held out for anything more ambitious.

In recent years, a concern with recouping Palestinian identity and society fractured by Israel's separation and closure policies has added powerfully to the desire for independence. Decades of cruel treatment at the hands of Israel also led to considerable hostility towards Israelis, and a longing to separate from them for good. This antipathy only grew with time, provoked by the siege and recurrent bombing of Gaza.

Those understandable reactions aside, what did the Palestinians really gain from a settlement that left the lion's share of their original homeland and its resources in the hands of a Zionist state that had robbed them of it in the first place? And what of the majority of their people, the millions of refugees and displaced, who had no access to that homeland? Why would anyone assume that such obvious injustice could be forgiven or forgotten? In a research study I carried out in 1999/2000, just before the outbreak of the Second Intifada, I interviewed 42 randomly selected Palestinian Arabs and 50 Jewish Israelis about the conditions for reconciliation between them.[20] These were people who came from various walks of life and, had it been a larger sample, might have been reasonably representative. Some twenty opinion-formers from both sides (academics, politicians, journalists) were also questioned about the same topic. The results predictably showed that the greatest differences of view were over the issues considered basic to the Palestinians: the right of refugee return, Israel's acknowledgement of responsibility for their expulsion and the right to compensation.

A 'historic reconciliation' with Israel, as the Palestinian respondents termed it, would require an Israeli apology and acknowledgement of its responsibility for the *Nakba* and accepting the right of return with compensation as basic conditions. (The Israeli respondents, with a few

exceptions, were unwilling to accept any of these terms.) Two-thirds of Palestinians were willing to accept the two-state solution, but only as a stage, and all of them considered the area pre-1967 to be Arab land. Was it possible, therefore, that such people could accept a Palestinian state, even had it been available, as anything other than a first stage to a retrieval of the rest of Palestine? Even if it took decades to accomplish, the return of the whole country had to be their final destination.

The two-state solution and the right of return

The refugee issue is possibly the most cogent argument against a two-state solution. The 5 million refugees and their descendants, living in camps, most but not all run by the UN, since 1948 formed the core of the Palestinian problem. They cherished the memory of the lost homeland and reared their descendants on a detailed knowledge of their towns and villages of origin in the old Palestine. On a visit to Bourj al-Barajneh refugee camp in Beirut in 1998, I was astonished to hear small children, aged 4 and 5, reciting the names of places they called their hometowns in what is now Israel. The children all said they were 'going back' there when they grew up. Listening to them, I was both saddened and awed at the tenacity with which the Palestinians held on to the idea of return, despite decades of exile in the worst of conditions and the apparent hopelessness of their cause.[21] I wondered why they were allowed to indulge their dreams in this way, if it were the case that the international community had no intention of implementing the refugees' right to return.

It is no accident that these camps provided the fighters of the PLO formerly and those of Gaza's Hamas activists latterly. The refugees, representing the bulk of Palestine's displaced population in 1948, also delivered a majority of the workforce that helped to build up the Gulf States from the 1950s onwards, and many went on to become successful entrepreneurs, journalists and other professionals. The prominent former editor of the London-based *al-Quds al-Arabi*, and media commentator

frequently cited in these pages, Abdel Bari Atwan, for example, started life in a Gaza refugee camp.

The right of return on which all these displaced people's hopes were pinned was a *cause célèbre* for Palestinians. Had there been no refugees and the Palestinian problem merely one of Israeli occupation, the conflict would have been easier to solve. But the 1948 dispossession was a fundamental part of Palestinian history, the legal backbone of the Palestine cause, and the crucial basis on which the Jewish state was built. Few people in the West appreciated the importance of the right of return for Palestinians, which should have been enforced from the beginning, and it became customary for Western policymakers to view the Palestinian refugees as commodities that could be moved about when required, and not as human beings with needs and desires. The fact that this issue was of core importance to Palestinians was constantly ignored. But if there were to be a settlement, the refugee issue would reassert itself forcefully for all Palestinians, and a deal that did not address this would not be considered just, legal, or an end to the conflict.

The two-state solution stood no chance of solving this problem on any count. And strictly speaking, as some have argued, the creation of two states in itself logically ruled out a refugee return to the area within the Israeli state.[22] The two-state solution required the Palestinians to recognise Israel *as a Jewish state*, that is, one with a Jewish majority, and therefore incompatible with an influx of non-Jews. That left the putative Palestinian state as the only option, but it could not hope to accommodate the number of returnees, whatever Israel feared, and especially not as the tiny, segmented entity Israel had in mind. Nor was it fair that people expelled from Haifa or Safad should have to make their homes in Ramallah or Jenin. Had the Palestinians, who were aware of all this, been less desperate for a way out of the dire situation of rapid Israeli encroachment on their land and existence, they would not have accepted a solution that abandoned the refugees to their fate. Their logic in doing this was to live to fight another day, for the basic injustice of the situation would remain and resurface at a later date. None of the convoluted arrangements devised by Israel and the

Western powers to dispose of the refugee issue could make Palestinians forget that it was their homes and land that had been usurped by a people who had no right to them and whose self-righteous ownership of a country that was not theirs was a constant affront.

The one-state solution

The obvious alternative to the two-state proposal was the one-state solution. It is important to understand this was not simply a matter of logic, but of a fundamental difference in approach to solving the conflict. The two-state solution and its variants have as their sole object – no matter what the rhetoric about a 'just and comprehensive settlement' – the termination of Israel's occupation and its damaging consequences for Palestinian civil life in the occupied areas. It leaves untouched the issue of the nature of the Israeli state and its dangerous ideology, Zionism.

A whole literature exists that analyses Zionist ideology, its meaning and significance, in ways that have mystified it into a quasi-religion, an identity, and a badge of honour for Jews. Yet, in its application to historic Palestine, Zionism was a simple, practical programme to take the land but not the people. Palestine, denuded of its Arab inhabitants, would become Jewish owned and so attain the Jewish 'ethnic purity' Zionism longed for. These aggressive and racist aims never changed over time, and no matter how much Palestinian land the state of Israel acquired, in Zionist terms, it was still short of the ultimate goal.

In line with this, many Jewish Israelis saw a continuing need to expel Arabs. In 2006, a prominent Israeli leader was publicly calling for such expulsions from the West Bank.[23] Ten years later, a Pew Center survey found (Reuters, 8 March 2016) that nearly half of Jewish Israelis wanted Arabs expelled or transferred; 79 per cent believed that Jewish citizens deserved preferential treatment; and eight out of ten Arabs interviewed complained of 'heavy discrimination' against them by Jewish Israelis.[24] In 2021, the US-based Human Rights Watch released a detailed report of what it called Israel's apartheid practices, whose effect could be construed as a

means to make Palestinian life intolerable and thus encourage outward emigration.[25]

At the same time, the Jewish state remained a foreign body in the Arab region, an anomaly no more ready to integrate with its Arab neighbours than it had been in 1948. That is not to say Israel gained no official Arab acceptance in its 75 years of existence. In 1979 and 1994, it signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan respectively; and in 2020, its relations were normalised with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco. But these formal alliances were based on Israel's superior power and its standing as a conduit to US favour. In no way did these treaties integrate Israel into the Arab region. Israel remained a state committed to a hostile ideology that could only feed continuous conflict.

In its essence, the one-state solution aimed to address these problems by going to the heart of the matter: the existence of Israel as a Zionist state. If it was the case that the imposition of Zionism on the Arabs had been the cause of the Palestinians' dispossession, the rejection of their rights and the constant state of conflict between Israel and its neighbours, it made no sense for a peace agreement to preserve that status quo. The key date in the genesis of this conflict was not 1967, as the two-state proponents implied, but 1948. Israel's occupation of the 1967 territories was a symptom of the disease, not its cause.

The problem was that the two-state solution did not just confine itself to dealing with the symptoms; it actively helped to maintain the cause. The roots of the conflict, as has frequently been reiterated in this book, lay in a flawed and destructive project that never changed. It refused to adapt to its environment or accept any limitations on its aspirations. Indeed Israel's very success encouraged this process: the more it took and escaped retribution, the more it wanted to take, and so on in a self-perpetuating cycle of aggression and expansionism. Only by bringing the Zionist project to an end, proponents of the one-state solution argued, would the conflict also be ended. Such an approach was a radical challenge to decades of Arab 'pacification' and coercion at the hands of those concerned to preserve the Zionist project.

The one-state solution meant the creation of a single entity of Israel/Palestine in which the two peoples would live together without borders or partitions. An equitable division of a small country like Palestine with resources that respect no borders, especially not artificially constructed ones, was logistically unworkable. All the partition proposals previously devised had discriminated heavily in Israel's favour. The one-state solution was unique in addressing this and all the other basic issues that perpetuated the conflict – land, resources, settlements, Jerusalem and refugees – within an equitable framework. As such, it answered to the needs of common sense and justice, the *sine qua non* of any durable peace settlement.

According to the adherents of the one-state solution, in a single state, no Jewish settler would have to move and no Palestinian would be under occupation. The country's scarce resources could be shared without Israel stealing Palestinian land and water, or Palestinians left starving and thirsty. Jerusalem would be a city for both peoples, not the preserve of Israel to the anger of Arabs, Muslims and Christians, and the detriment of international law. Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return to their original homeland, if not to their actual homes. Their long exile and blighted existence would end, and the states that had played host to them could be relieved at last of a burden they had carried for more than seventy years. The long-running sore of dispossession that had embittered generations of Palestinians and perpetuated their resistance could heal at last.

With the outstanding issues thus resolved, no cause for conflict between the two sides would remain, and the Arab states could then accommodate the Israeli presence in their midst with genuine acceptance. Such an outcome would by extension also dampen down the rage against Israelis and Jews that had come to fuel violence and terrorism. Arab hostility, real or imagined, which Israelis constantly faced and which forced them to maintain their state by superior force of arms and US patronage would end. Israel, which had become the most unsafe place on earth for Jews, could, when transmuted into the new, shared state, be a place of real refuge for them. A normal immigration policy, once the returning Palestinian refugees had been accommodated, would operate, under which Jews and others who

wanted to live in Palestine/Israel could do so according to fair and agreed rules.

On this analysis, the one-state solution was the most obvious, direct and logical route to ending an intractable conflict that had destroyed the lives of so many people and damaged the Middle East region so profoundly. And for that reason it should have been the most actively pursued of all the options, but especially by the Palestinians, for whom it meant a reversal (as far as that was practically possible) of a process that had robbed them of their land and made them stateless refugees.

People often discussed the one-state solution as if it were a revolutionary idea. But it was no forward-looking innovation: rather more a way of going back, of restoring a land deformed by a near-century of division, colonisation and plunder to the whole country it had been before 1948. It was a healthy rejection of disunity in favour of unity and a humane desire for a life based on cooperation rather than confrontation. How much better for Israeli Jews to learn to live together with Palestinian Arabs in a relationship of friendship and collaboration that had the potential to be excitingly productive, rather than be condemned to the barren and dangerous dead-end future that Israel was driving them towards.

Can the one-state solution ever happen?

The foregoing account has shown how difficult it would be to implement the one-state solution. Yet that should not have been the starting point of the discussion. The question of whether this solution was *feasible* was frequently confused with whether it was *desirable*, and it was here that the struggle for hearts and minds should have started. Prolonged concentration on the two-state outcome as the only solution for the conflict had made it into a mantra that discouraged imaginative thinking. If one set aside the issue of feasibility, the advantages of the unitary state made it unarguably desirable. No other solution was able to satisfy the needs of justice for the Palestinians, including the refugees, and the needs of security for Israelis. Though these needs were frequently derided by Arabs who wondered why a state armed to the teeth and supported to the hilt by the world's one superpower should ever have felt insecure, Israeli Jewish fear was real.

Whatever its source – and most of my Palestinian survey respondents put it down to the fact that, as they said, thieves never rested easy while their victims were close by – Israeli insecurity is an important factor. Indeed, it was frequently invoked by Israel to justify its attacks on neighbouring states. My father, who had lost everything through the creation of Israel and yet who mainly blamed the British for allowing the tragedy to happen, viewed Jewish anxieties with empathy. He saw the whole Zionist project as nothing more than a product of this Jewish fear. Arabs did not understand that, he often said, and it was one reason for their inability to deal with Israel.

Making the one-state solution happen was going to be hard and its supporters looked to a far distant future for its fulfilment. 'Not in my lifetime,' many of them said, or 'it will take a hundred years or more', or 'my children may see it, but their children more like', and so on. Whatever the truth, this solution could not come about in a rush or by a miraculous conversion to the view that it was the only way forward. Nor could it be imposed by force of circumstance (as will be discussed later). It has to be seen as a slow process of evolving political and social awareness,

campaigning and preparation, all of them entailing arduous struggle.[95] It could not be otherwise, given the monumental task of dismantling the structure and institutions of a state built on Zionism and replacing it with a genuinely democratic dispensation of equal rights and non-discrimination.

The leap for Israelis from a worldview of supremacy and exclusivism imposed by force to a humanist philosophy of peaceable coexistence and opposition to racism and violence would be a huge one. As would the leap for Arabs, from their position of rejection of any rights in Palestine for people they see as nothing more than colonisers, and enmity towards Israelis developed over decades, to an unqualified acceptance of them as equal partners. It also requires of Arabs the difficult task of re-defining their own national identity and a readiness to embrace a new and unique entity in the region, a Palestinian-Israeli state without precedent. The role of those Arab regimes that had based their *raison d'être* on hostility to Israel with all the military and economic developments that that entailed would need to be revised. As such, the consequences for the region would be profound.

It is not the purpose of this book to set out a blueprint for building the unitary state. One could write out a list of the traditional steps well known to all activists as to how one carries a political idea forward. This would include such things as political education, the creation of cadres and constituencies, enlisting the support of top politicians and decision-makers, and so on. But the main plank of the campaign was to start a debate amongst Palestinians and Jews about the one-state solution, to unify them around the concept, while at the same time ensuring that it became a part of the mainstream discourse. A two-state interim phase in which Palestinians replenished their shattered identities, regained normality and generally recovered from the Israeli occupation was a possible route to the end result, at least in theory (since the Palestinian state looked an unlikely eventuality, as discussed above). It was also a necessary aspiration to maintain in the short term so as not to create splits amongst the Palestinians. Too many of them had become attached to the idea of having their own state and too many still believed that the international community would help them achieve it, to throw away the chance. And indeed, in the unlikely event of

its happening and with a policy of open borders, growing exchange and collaboration between the two states, that could have led to their eventual integration and, eventually, a one-state outcome. Likewise, a bi-national stage, reassuring Israelis and Palestinians that their national identities would not be subsumed in a single state before they were ready, was another possible route to the same end point.

An equal rights strategy

The foregoing has been a presentation of common-sense arguments for what is the only logical solution to this long-running conflict. But logic and common sense mean little in a situation of unequal power, where the stronger side has succeeded for over seventy years in imposing its will on the weaker side. Nor would persuasion, organisation and popular mobilisation, however promising they appeared, be sufficient to make it happen in time. And time is of the essence for the Palestinians, as their land is progressively eaten away by Israeli colonisation, their capital city, Jerusalem, increasingly judaised, and the return of refugees indefinitely delayed.

And yet, the way forward is at hand. By the start of 2022, the basic conditions for achieving a one-state solution in Israel/Palestine were in place. Not everyone recognised this fact, or wanted to, even though the reality on the ground was staring them in the face. Accustomed for decades to think in terms of the two-state solution, one that would deliver the longed-for state of their own, most Palestinians ignored anything that contradicted this vision. If they had not, they would have realised that from 1967 onwards Israel/Palestine had become a single state in all but name.

The real-life position was that the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea was one single entity, under the administration of one sovereign government, that of the state of Israel. The so-called Green Line, marking the 1949 armistice, that used to separate 1948-Israel from Jordanian-ruled East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Egyptian-administered Gaza, had disappeared for all intents and purposes. Israel's

resounding victory in the Arab–Israeli War of June 1967 enabled it to seize Palestinian (and Syrian) territory, which have been under military occupation to this day.

The result is that Israel/Palestine in 2022 was already one state, but it was an unequal one with differential rights and classes of citizenship. Its population comprised 6.6 million Israeli Jews with full citizenship and rights, 1.8 million Israeli Palestinians, also with citizenship but restricted rights, and 4.7 million Palestinians with no citizenship and no rights. This last group, as we saw above, was further handicapped by years of Israeli military rule, and myriad discriminatory practices. These were detailed in a damning 2017 UN report, quickly withdrawn from the UN's website following an outcry from Israel and the US,[96] that documented what it called the apartheid system imposed on the Palestinians by Israeli policy and its devastating effects. Two newer reports documented the same apartheid reality, the first by the Israeli human rights organisation, B'tselem, in January 2021,[97] and the second by Human Rights Watch in April 2021.[98] The latest on the same topic was Amnesty International's report, unequivocally titled 'Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: A cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity', released in February 2022.[99]

All of these were powerful critiques of Israel's discriminatory practices against the Palestinians under its rule. Unsurprisingly, several World Bank reports, the latest in 2019, found that Israel's occupation of the West Bank had led to an 'unsustainable' economic situation, with zero growth and two out of three young people unemployed. Meanwhile, Israel's near-total blockade of Gaza's land, sea and airspace was causing chronic shortages of essential foods, medicines and construction materials. To punish Gazans for throwing incendiary devices over the barrier with Israel, Gaza's fishermen, on whom many depended for sustenance, were restricted in 2021 to a fishing limit of ten nautical miles, down from the twenty miles that were agreed under the Oslo Accord. A 2012 UN study had predicted that by 2020, Gaza's coastal aquifer would be damaged beyond repair, leaving its people without potable water, and the majority only kept alive by the support of external funding.

This man-made situation was the inevitable result of a long-standing Western policy of permissiveness towards Israel that allowed it to flout international law with impunity. How else could Israel have been left to rule over a population to which it had offered no citizenship or rights, while also denying them the protection of the Fourth Geneva Convention to which they were entitled as occupied people? Israel's pretext, that the 1967 Palestinian territories were 'disputed', not occupied, is not accepted in international law. But that did not deter Israel from behaving as a sovereign state in the occupied territories, considering itself free to act as it wished 'in its own land'.

Had it not been for the existence of the Palestinian Authority, set up by the Oslo Accords in 1996, this anomalous situation would have come to light decades ago. The illusion that the PA created in people's minds (the Palestinians included), of an independent government of a state-in-waiting, was extraordinarily effective in presenting the Israeli-Palestinian relationship as one of near equivalence. It obscured the glaring inequality of occupier and occupied, and the reality of Palestinians as a people under colonial rule without legal rights. The internationally supported two-state solution which promised to create an independent Palestinian state, soon to join the community of nations, put the finishing touches to this false portrayal.

A smart PR campaign that accused Israel's critics of antisemitism was run to help Israel escape censure for its illegal system. This campaign was already working well in Europe and the US, where legislation against anti-Israel activities was being formalised in several countries. US backing for Israel had never been stronger, and as we saw, several Arab states reversed their previously hostile positions on Israel, and were making alliances with it.

It was for the Palestinians to draw the correct inference from the inequitable, one-state reality in which they lived. The American Jewish commentator (and former liberal Zionist), Peter Beinart, did just that in two remarkable articles. In the first, 'I no longer believe in a Jewish state' (*New York Times*, 8 July 2020), he recognised the one-state reality of

Israel/Palestine and put forward a thesis of equal rights in that state. He described Israel as an unequal bi-national state, and recommended it become an equal state as the only way to gain stability. In a later article for *Jewish Currents* (27 April 2021), he went further and stated, 'There is no [Jewish] right to a state', an analysis of the right to self-determination used by Zionism to justify its seizure of Palestine. But that self-determination came at the cost of basic Palestinian rights.

Jewish self-determination violated Palestinian rights on a massive scale. It violated the rights of individual Palestinians living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip by denying them citizenship in the country under whose rule they lived. It violated the individual rights even of those Palestinians who held Israeli citizenship by denying them equality under the law. And it violated the rights of Palestinian refugees and their descendants by preventing them from returning to the places from which they were expelled. For these reasons, Beinart concluded that the best solution is the creation of an 'equal state'.

For that to happen, Palestinians in their turn need to set aside the failed strategies of the past and examine the real options before them. Whatever long-term ambition they had nurtured for themselves, currently they lived unequal lives in a system that oppressed them. And that had to end. Only a demand for equal civil and political rights with the rest of the population ruled by Israel could address this immediate oppression and open a route to restoring their rights. At one stroke, an equal rights demand would put the ball in Israel's court: either it must vacate the Palestinian territories it occupied, or give their population equal rights with the rest – a straightforward, logical choice it would be interesting to see Israel refute.

There are some honourable antecedents to a Palestinian equal rights campaign. The South African freedom struggle aimed from the start for equality of rights of all citizens in a new democratic South Africa, and after 1948, for the overthrow of apartheid. Its message inspired an international anti-apartheid movement in 1960 that helped to end South Africa's system of discrimination against non-whites. For a time, it used armed struggle, but its tactics were mostly non-violent. A Palestinian Freedom Charter

modelled on South Africa's was a good start. Though the parallels with the Palestine case are not exact, the struggles were alike enough for Nelson Mandela to say in a 1977 speech in Pretoria, 'We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.'

The civil rights movement of the mid-1950s in the southern United States makes another uplifting model for Palestinians to follow. Its origins in a long-standing American history of slavery are different, but its strategy to attain equal rights for African Americans was an object lesson in peaceful, effective civil action for Palestinians to study. The movement's use of litigation, mass media publicity, boycotts, people's marches, sit-ins and civil disobedience inspired huge national support, that eventually forced the federal government to pass major civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965.

The advantages for the Palestinians of an equal rights system are many: equal legal status, equal government representation – through which refugee repatriation could become policy, equal access to education, employment and social services, and the multiple benefits of a normal civic life that they never had under occupation. Above all, such a system would enable Palestinians to remain on their land. As Israeli journalist Gideon Levy pointed out in his article 'The single-state is already here' (*Haaretz*, 10 April 18), only a system of equal rights for everyone can make Israel a true democracy, with the prospect that it could be headed one day by a Palestinian president and a Jewish prime minister, or vice versa.

The obstacles in the way of implementing this idea are immense, and overlap with much that has already been mentioned. Zionists would see in it the end of Israel as a majority-Jewish state, and so the end of Zionism. Jewish Israeli citizens reared on a diet of supremacy and entitlement, and conditioned to hate and fear Arabs, would reject any attempt at equivalence with them. The Israeli state, accustomed to exploiting Palestine's land and resources, while subjugating its people, would not be prepared for an equal relationship with them.

The Palestinians for their part would regard an equal rights proposal as a defeat of the national project and the end of resistance to Israel. Whatever

the rhetoric about equality, they would fear becoming second-class citizens, alongside the current Palestinian citizens of Israel. Those whose lives had been blighted by Israel's occupation wanted only to live in a separate state of their own. After the Oslo Accords, when hope of an independent state was running high, many Palestinians were encouraged to believe it would happen. I remember seeing dozens of foreign NGOs in Ramallah busily preparing the Palestinians for 'statehood'. They helped to entrench the idea to which many still cling.

Not least, all those who espoused the two-state solution would reject the idea as a negation of an internationally agreed position. Having secured United Nations backing for a Palestinian state on the 1967 territories as part of a two-state solution in several General Assembly resolutions, and recognition in 2012 of 'the State of Palestine' by a majority of 138 member states, they argued, why throw away those gains? Especially when, on the strength of it, Palestine was now accepted as a member of several international bodies like UNESCO and the International Criminal Court. In addition, opinion polls among Palestinians (and Israelis) had consistently shown support for two states, even though it fell to 43 per cent in 2018 (down from a high of 70 per cent in a 2013 Gallup poll). Lastly, the Palestinians' own formal representative, the PLO, was at the forefront of support for this solution, and would also oppose its overthrow.

No one could deny these were genuine objections. But by the same token, the reality on the ground was undeniable too. A glance at the map showed the logistical impossibility of a viable state in what remained of the 1967 territories, and a moment's reflection would underline the impossibility of trying to clear Israel's settlements out of them. Without a giant upheaval in the balance of world power, or a miraculous change of heart on the part of Western states, the two-state solution would remain out of reach. Unless some of those who espoused this solution could come up with an effective way of making it happen, continuing to push for it could be regarded as time-wasting and irresponsible.

Yet, as we have pointed out, the two-state solution, even if it did become reality, could not offer the Palestinians full justice. Only an equal

rights system, grounded in equal respect for the needs of all citizens, could give the Palestinians the basic right to live decent lives in their own homeland, and eventually to repatriate those of their compatriots who were expelled in 1948 and thereafter. At the time of writing, there was no real constituency for this solution on either side, although the idea had started to attract interest amongst political thinkers and those who already supported a one-state solution. The PA's late senior negotiator, Saeb Erekat, was never one of those, but in 2017, after the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, he announced the end of the two-state solution. 'Now is the time to transform the struggle for one state with equal rights for everyone,' he said.[100]

It will be difficult to accomplish, and can only be done in stages. The Palestinian Authority must first be persuaded to convert itself from a pseudo-government of a non-existent state with unrealistic aims into a campaigning body that leads the equal rights project. If that happened, a wide-ranging campaign would be instituted involving civic education, use of mass media to promote the idea internationally, recourse to international law, and networks of connection with like-minded individuals, organisations and states such as South Africa. This list is not exhaustive, but shows what might be done once the political decision over equal rights is made.

Supporters of Palestinian rights everywhere must swing behind this demand. Jewish Israelis who share this vision need to join the Palestinians in a joint struggle for equality. Creating a just society in place of Israel's current system that privileged one group over others is the only moral and realistic option for the future. It is also the best way to rectify the terrible wrong done by Zionism to Palestinians, and also to Jews.

Remove

Fady Joudah

You who remove me from my house are blind to your past
which never leaves you,
yet you're no mole
to smell and sense what's being done
to me now by you.
Now, dilatory, attritional so that the past is climate change and not a massacre,
so that the present never ends.
But I'm closer to you than you are to yourself and this, my enemy friend,
is the definition of distance.
Oh don't be indignant,
watch the video, I'll send you the link
in which you cleanse me item after limb thrown into the street to march where
my catastrophe in the present
is still not the size of your past:
is this the wall
you throw your dice against?
I'm speaking etymologically, I'm okay
with the scales tipping your way,
I'm not into that, I have a heart that rots, resists, and hopes, I have genes,
like yours, that don't subscribe
to the damage pyramid.
You who remove me from my house
have also evicted my parents
and their parents from theirs.
How is the view from my window?
How does my salt taste?
Shall I condemn myself a little
for you to forgive yourself
in my body? Oh how you love my body,
my body, my house.

— 2 —

After I had finished hanging the curtains over the windows, I lay down on the bed. At that moment, a dog on the opposite hill began to howl incessantly. It was past midnight and I couldn't sleep, despite how thoroughly exhausted I was. I had spent the whole day arranging and cleaning the house; I dusted the furniture, swept the floor, and rewashed the bedsheets and towels and most of the dishes, even though, in principle, the house was clean before I began cleaning it so thoroughly; the landlord told me he'd brought in a woman especially. I'd started renting this house a few days earlier, right after getting my new job. On the whole, the house is good and the job is good and my colleagues are nice. But none of this was enough to help me overcome the anxiety and fear that the dog's endless howling awakened in me that night, not even a little. Regardless, I realized that when I woke up the next morning, I'd feel an overwhelming sense of satisfaction, its main source being the cleanness of the house, and perhaps the curtains hung over its windows. I had placed my table by the biggest window, where I would sit every morning and drink my coffee before going to my new job, and the neighbors and their three children would pass by and wave to me, all of which would imply that I lived a peaceful life, overlooking a back garden hidden from view.

The borders imposed between things here are many. One must pay attention to them, and navigate them, which ultimately protects everyone from perilous consequences. This grants a person a sense of serenity, despite everything else. There are some people who

navigate borders masterfully, who never trespass, but these people are few and I'm not one of them. As soon as I see a border, I either race toward it and leap over, or cross it stealthily, with a step. Neither of these two behaviors is conscious, or rooted in a premeditated desire to resist borders; it's more like sheer stupidity. To be quite honest, once I cross a border, I fall into a deep pit of anxiety. It's a matter, simply put, of clumsiness. Once I realized that I inevitably fail whenever I try to navigate borders, I decided to stay within the confines of my house as much as possible. And since this house has many windows, through which the neighbors and their children can easily see me and catch me trespassing borders even when I'm in my own house, I hung the curtains, although I'll inevitably forget to close them sometimes.

In any case, since I'm always alone when I'm in my house, I'll sit at my table, nowhere else, and that's all the outside world will see of me, to the extent that when a few days pass without me doing so, the neighbor's middle son will tell me he missed seeing me sitting at my table every morning, "working." Indeed, I justify my extended mornings sitting there by telling others that I'm "working." And I usually "work" before going to my new job, which will forever be "new" to me, since I don't know at what point my "new job" should simply become my "job." I often work until late at night, outlasting even the security guard, since I'm often late getting to the office to start my shift, because the dog on the opposite hill usually wakes me up at night, and I don't manage to fall back asleep until dawn, so I wake up late, then get to my new job late. And when none of this happens, I stay in my house until the last hours of morning, sitting at my table "working," but on what exactly?

On the whole, I realize that this might seem exaggerated, but this is due to the issue I previously mentioned, namely my inability to

identify borders, even very rational borders, which makes me overreact sometimes, or underreact at other times, unlike most people. For instance, when a military patrol stops the minibus I take to my new job, and the first thing that appears through the door is the barrel of the gun, I ask the soldier, while stuttering, most likely out of fear, to put it away when he's talking to me or asking to see my identity card. At which point the soldier starts mocking my stutter, and the passengers around me grumble because I'm overreacting; there's no need to make things so tense. The soldier isn't going to shoot at us, and even if he does, my intervention won't change the course of things; quite the opposite. Yes, I realize all that, just not in the moment, but rather hours, days, or even years later. That's one example. But this same behavior can be observed in various other situations, from undressing during a security inspection at a checkpoint, to asking an amateur vegetable seller sitting in Ramallah's vegetable market, which is otherwise closed on Fridays, about the price of some wilting lettuce, and being quoted three times the normal price of normal lettuce. Since I lack the ability to evaluate things rationally, situations like these have a severe impact on me; they shake and destabilize me to the point that I can no longer fathom what is permissible and what is not, and I end up trespassing even more borders, worse ones than before. Yet all my fear and anxiety and internal turmoil dissipates when this trespassing occurs within the confines of my solitude. Solitude is so forgiving of trespassed borders; it was only thanks to my time spent alone, sitting at my table in the mornings, "working" on something, that I was able to make my discovery.

By the way, I hope I didn't cause any awkwardness when I mentioned the incident with the soldier, or the checkpoint, or when I reveal that we are living under occupation here. Gunshots and

military vehicle sirens, and sometimes the sound of helicopters, warplanes, and shelling, the subsequent wail of ambulances; not only do these noises precede breaking news reports, but now they have to compete with the dog's barking, too. And the situation has been like this for such a long time that there aren't many people alive today who remember little details about what life was like before all this, like the detail about the wilting lettuce in an otherwise closed vegetable market, for example.

So, one morning when I was reading the newspaper, and happened across an article about a certain incident, it naturally wasn't the incident itself that began to haunt me. Incidents like that aren't out of the ordinary, or, let us say, they happen in contexts like this. In fact, they happen so often that I've never paid them much attention before. For instance, on another morning when it was raining, I woke up late, which meant I couldn't sit and "work" at my table in front of the big window; instead I had to go straight to my new job. When I arrived at my stop, and got off the minibus a bit before the clocktower, I found the street empty of people and cars, and I saw a military vehicle stopped in front of al-Bandi grocery. But since there was nothing out of the ordinary in that, I kept walking in the other direction, toward my new job. And when I arrived at the top of the street that leads to my office, a passerby, the only one I had encountered until that moment, pointed out that the area was under curfew, and the army was besieging a building nearby. Nothing struck me as unusual about this either, and I continued on my way. Then, there in the middle of the street, in front of the main entrance to the building where my office is, I glimpsed two soldiers. And by now I've learned my lesson, that I must remain calm and composed in situations like this, and so I waved at them, saying in a clear, confident voice that I worked in the building they were standing in

front of. At that, one of them bent his right knee to the ground and propped his left elbow on his other knee, aiming the barrel of his gun at me, and immediately I leapt behind a thorn acacia tree, using its prickly branches to shield myself from gunshots, which, in any event, never came. And while his action, by which I mean him pointing his gun at me, cannot be described as humane, it was enough for me to understand what he meant, and that I had to find another way to my new job. Up until this point, I had not found the situation to be unusual, or not so unusual that I should turn around and go back to my house. So I jumped over the walls and borders dividing the houses and buildings, and I do believe that jumping over borders is fully justifiable in a situation like this, is not it? Anyhow, I carried on in that fashion until I reached the back of the building where I work. And since only three of my colleagues had come to the office that morning, I got to work without anyone disturbing me, carrying out my responsibilities diligently, and very well, until a colleague came into my office and opened the window without my permission, and when I protested, he said the glass would shatter if he did not do so. The army had informed the residents in the area that it was going to bomb one of the neighboring buildings where three young men had barricaded themselves, which is exactly what happened a few minutes later. There was one window this colleague had forgotten to open, and the glass shattered the moment the building was bombed. Still, the result of him opening the window in my office was unbearable, since right after the explosion, which shook the office a great deal, a thick cloud of dust burst in, some of which landed on my papers and even on my hand, which was holding a pen, forcing me to stop working. I absolutely cannot stand dust, especially that kind, with its big grains that make a shuddersome sound when dusty papers rub against each other, or when one marks on them with a

pen. And so only after eliminating every last mote of dust from my office was I able to return to my papers. Here, some might think that my dedication to work reflects a desire to cling to life, or a love for life despite the occupation's attempts to destroy it, or the insistence that we have on this earth what makes life worth living. Well, I certainly cannot speak for anyone else, but in my case it's rather that I am unable to evaluate situations rationally, and I don't know what should or should not be done. All I can do without risking calamitous consequences is work at the office, or sit in my house at my table in front of the big window, which is how I ended up reading that particular article, where the specific thing that caught my attention was a detail related to the date of the incident it described. The incident took place on a morning that would coincide, exactly a quarter of a century later, with the morning of my birth. Of course, this may seem like pure narcissism, the fact that what drew me to the incident, what made it begin haunting me, was the presence of a detail that is really quite minor when compared to the incident's major details, which can only be described as tragic. It's completely plausible, though, for this type of narcissism to exist in someone. It's an innate tendency, one might say, toward a belief in the uniqueness of the self, toward regarding the life one leads so highly that one cannot but love life and everything about it. But since I do not love my life in particular, nor life in general, and at present any efforts on my part are solely channeled toward staying alive, I doubt that a diagnosis of narcissism would fully apply to me here. It's something else, something related more to that inability of mine to identify borders between things, and evaluate situations rationally and logically, which in many cases leads me to see the fly shit on a painting and not the painting itself, as the saying goes. And it is possible, at first glance, to mock this tendency, which could compel

someone, after the building next to their office at their new job is bombed, to be more concerned about the dust that was created by the bombing and that landed on their desk than about the killing of the three young men who had barricaded themselves inside, for instance. But despite this, there are some who consider this way of seeing, which is to say, focusing intently on the most minor details, like dust on the desk or fly shit on a painting, as the only way to arrive at the truth and definitive proof of its existence. There are even art historians who make these same claims. All right, they don't exactly claim to notice fly shit on a painting, but they do make a point of focusing on the least significant details, not the most significant ones, in order to determine, for example, whether a painting is an original or a copy. According to them, when art forgers imitate a painting, they pay attention to major, significant details, like the roundness of the subject's face or the position of the body, and these they reproduce precisely. However, they rarely pay attention to little details like earlobes or fingernails or toenails, which is why they ultimately fail to perfectly replicate the painting. Moreover, others claim, based on the same idea, that it is possible to reconstruct something's appearance, or an incident one has never witnessed, simply by noticing various little details which everyone else finds to be insignificant. It's the kind of thing that happens in old fables, like the tale where three brothers meet a man who has lost his camel, and immediately they describe the lost beast to him: it is a white camel, blind in one eye, carrying two skins on its saddle, one full of oil and the other of wine. You must have seen it, shouts the man. No, we have not seen it, they reply. But he does not believe them and accuses them of stealing his camel. So the four men are brought before the court, where the three brothers prove their innocence by revealing to the judge how they were able to describe

an animal they had never seen before, by noticing the smallest and simplest details, such as the camel's uneven tracks across the sand, a few drops of oil and wine that spilled from its load as it limped away, and a tuft of its shedding hair. As for the incident mentioned in the article, the fact that the specific detail that piqued my interest was the date on which it occurred was perhaps because there was nothing really unusual about the main details, especially when compared with what happens daily in a place dominated by the roar of occupation and ceaseless killing. And bombing that building is just one example. Even rape. That doesn't only happen during war, but also in everyday life. Rape, or murder, or sometimes both; I've never been preoccupied with incidents like these before. Even this incident in which, according to the article, several people were killed, only began to haunt me because of a detail about one of the victims. To a certain extent, the only unusual thing about this killing, which came as the final act of a gang rape, was that it happened on a morning that would coincide, exactly twenty-five years later, with the morning I was born. That is it. Furthermore, one cannot rule out the possibility of a connection between the two events, or the existence of a hidden link, as one sometimes finds with plants, for instance, like when a clutch of grass is pulled out by the roots, and you think you've got rid of it entirely, only for grass of the exact same species to grow back in the same spot a quarter of a century later. But, at the same time, I realize that my interest in this incident on the basis of a minor detail such as the date on which it occurred is a sign that I'll inevitably end up trespassing borders once again. So, every day since I learned about it, I try to convince myself to forget it entirely, and not do anything reckless. The date on which it occurred cannot be more than a coincidence. Besides, sometimes it's inevitable for the past to be forgotten, especially if the present is no less horrific; that

is, until I'm awoken at dawn one morning by the dog barking, followed by the wail of a strong wind. I rush to close all the windows until I get to the big window, through which I see how mercilessly the wind is pulling at the grasses and trees, shaking their branches in every direction, while the leaves tremble and writhe back and forth, nearly ripping off as the wind viciously toys with them. And the plants simply don't resist. They just surrender to the fact of their fragility, that the wind can do what it wishes with them, fooling around with their leaves, passing between their branches, penetrating their boughs, and all the while it carries the dog's frantic barking, tossing the sound in every direction. And again, a group of soldiers capture a girl, rape her, then kill her, twenty-five years to the day before I was born; this minor detail, which others might not give a second thought, will stay with me forever; in spite of myself and how hard I try to forget it, the truth of it will never stop chasing me, given how fragile I am, as weak as the trees out there past the windowpane. There may in fact be nothing more important than this little detail, if one wants to arrive at the complete truth, which, by leaving out the girl's story, the article does not reveal.

The dog's barking continues to echo in the air until the last hours of morning; sometimes the wind carries it closer to me, and sometimes further from me, until I have to leave for my new job. But before I do, I call the author of the article, an Israeli journalist, and try to pass myself off as a self-confident person. I introduce myself as a Palestinian researcher, while trying as hard as possible not to stutter, and explain the reason for my call. Neither the introduction nor the explanation thrills him. I ask if he would share with me the documents in his possession which relate to the incident. He replies that everything he has is there in the article. I add that, even so, I would like to look at them myself, and he says that if that's what I'd

like, I can go and look for them myself. Where? I ask him. In museums and archives of the Israeli military and Zionist movements from the period, and those specializing in the area where the incident occurred. And where are they? He replies, in a tone betraying that his patience has nearly expired, that they're in Tel Aviv and in the northwest Negev. Then I ask him if, as a Palestinian, I can enter these museums and archives? And he responds, before putting down the receiver, that he doesn't see what would prevent me. And I don't see what would prevent me either, except for my identity card. The site of the incident, and the museums and archives documenting it, are located outside Area C, according to the military's division of the country, and not only that, but they're quite far away, close to the border with Egypt, while the longest trip I can embark on with my green identity card, which shows I'm from Area A, is from my house to my new job. Legally, though, anyone from Area A can go to Area B, if there aren't exceptional political or military circumstances that prevent one from doing so. But nowadays, such exceptional circumstances are in fact the norm, and many people from Area A don't even consider going to Area B. In recent years, I haven't even gone as far as Qalandiya checkpoint, which separates Area A and Area B, so how can I even think of going to a place so far that it's almost in Area D? Even the people from Area B cannot do that, and probably also those from Area C, including people from Jerusalem, whose very existence constitutes a security threat if they utter a word of Arabic outside their areas. They're permitted, of course, to be in Area A, as are residents of Area B, who frequently visit it, and sometimes move there, despite the fact that it's tantamount to a prison now. At my new job, for instance, in addition to people, like me from Area A, many of my colleagues are from other Areas, all very nice people. One day at work, I confide in a colleague from Area

C, from Jerusalem, that I need to go to her Area, or perhaps a bit further, to take care of a personal matter; after all, it's not unusual for people from Area A to need to go to Area C for personal matters, and for people from Area C to need to go to Area A for personal matters. On hearing that, my colleague offers to lend me her blue identity card, since we're all brothers and sisters in the end, and we look similar too, at least in the eyes of the soldiers at the checkpoint. Besides, they don't closely inspect women in the first place, so they'll never notice the difference between me and the photo on her identity card. They hardly look at the people standing at the checkpoint anyway, given their contempt, and what's more, people typically look different from the photos on their identity cards, which could have been taken when they'd just turned sixteen. Honestly. Yes, I can easily use her identity card, do what I need to do and return it when we arrive at work at the beginning of next week. No rush at all. And she'll spend the weekend in Ramallah with friends. Of course, if I'm discovered, I'll say that I stole the identity card from her bag, so as not to implicate her. At any rate, I have to be cautious. And I'll certainly make every effort not to be reckless. So, on the afternoon of the last day of the working week, I stop by her office, borrow her identity card and head to a car rental company to rent a car with a yellow number plate, without which one cannot travel to areas beyond Area C. But as I'm about to sign the agreement it becomes clear that I need a credit card, which I don't have. And because I don't want to further burden that colleague, I call another colleague from my new job and ask for his help. He comes to the rental office right away and rents a car for me using his credit card, after listing me on the agreement as an additional driver, as the company employee advises us, and then I get the key. Really, my colleagues are so nice. And now I don't see any reason that would prevent me

from embarking on my mission to discover the complete truth about the incident, except that, as soon as I sit down behind the steering wheel of the little white car I've just rented, and turn the key to start the engine, what appears to be a spider begins spinning its threads around me, tightening them into something like a barrier, impenetrable if only because they're so fragile. It's the barrier of fear, fashioned from fear of the barrier. The checkpoint. I've often heard that today, Saturday, is the worst and most difficult day to cross through the Qalandiya checkpoint. Not only is everyone from Jerusalem coming to Ramallah, to buy fresh vegetables from the market there, or to take care of personal matters, but the soldiers are in a vindictive mood, resentful of everyone passing through the checkpoint, everyone who obliges them to work on what should be their weekend, Saturday, the day on which God Himself rested. In any case, Israeli museums and archives are all closed on Saturday for the same reason, which means that I cannot embark on my research immediately anyway. Not today, at least. So I drive the little white car back to my house, where I'll have the opportunity to reconsider my undertaking; maybe I'll finally stop chasing after these reckless ideas, with their inevitably perilous consequences, and rid myself of the conviction that I can uncover any details about the rape and murder as the girl experienced it, not relying only on what the soldiers who committed it disclosed, as the author of that article did. This type of investigation is completely beyond my ability. And the fact that the girl was killed twenty-five years to the day before I was born doesn't necessarily mean that her death belongs to me, or that it should extend into my life, or that it should be my duty to retell her story. As a matter of fact, I'm the last person who could do that, because of all my stuttering and stammering. In short, there's absolutely no point in my feeling responsible for her, feeling like

she's a nobody and will forever remain a nobody whose voice nobody will hear. Besides, people have to deal with enough misery in the world today; there's no reason to go searching for more and digging into the past. I should just forget the entire thing. But then, as soon as darkness spreads into every corner of the house, I'm racked by the dog's howling again; it robs me of sleep until the dawn hours, when I finally nod off, and then wake up late, quickly drink my coffee, grab all the maps I have in the house, and leave. At the far end of the backyard, I find the little white car waiting for me, rays of sunlight drenching the front windshield, and when I open the door and get in, a tender warmth like I haven't felt for a very long time embraces me, soothing my frightened, sleepless self. I start the engine, then head toward the entrance gate where I stop, waiting for the right moment to turn onto the street, as the sound of the right indicator pervades my pounding heartbeats. To the right, then. I haven't gone right, not even on foot, for years. I notice that some landmarks on either side of the road have remained the same since the last time I passed through the area, like the wheat mill in Kufer Aqab, and across from it Abu Aisha's butcher shop in Semiramis, then the row of dusty cypress trees that conceal the Qalandiya Vocational Training Center building, opposite the camp entrance. Many other features have changed, however, which makes the drive feel unfamiliar. There are far more speed bumps and potholes in the road now, which I try to avoid as best as I can, exactly as the cars in front of me are doing, and the cars behind me too, until I come to a halt a bit past the entrance to the Qalandiya camp, at the end of a line of cars waiting to cross the checkpoint. I immediately raise my gaze to the rearview mirror, trying to evade the fear that the sight of the checkpoint ahead will prompt, when I discover that I'm no longer last in the line of cars. There are at least seven cars behind me now, preventing me from

changing my mind and turning around. I take a deep breath and look to my left, where I see a car tire shop. And to my right, a big dump site. The dump site is new, and so is the Wall behind it. In the past, there was a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire here, which once let passersby see the runway at Qalandiya Airport as it extended toward the horizon. Now it is the Wall that extends to the horizon, covered by all sorts of graffiti including quotes from the Code of Hammurabi, a telephone number for a cooking gas cylinder vendor and a painting by Banksy. This is the first time I've seen the graffiti in real life, although I've seen them in newspapers and magazines before, sometimes with important people standing in front of them. By the time the line of cars moves forward a couple of meters, I've studied all the slogans and paintings on the Wall, where hardly any spot remains bare, and have fended off large numbers of children trying to sell me things I haven't any need for. The last one is a little girl with tousled hair, a brown face and mucus running from her nose, who is selling chewing gum. I open my bag, take out a tissue, and offer it to her, asking her to wipe her nose, and immediately she snatches it from my hand and disappears from sight. Then, even before fear can seize me, several children reappear, this time trying to sell me tissues. I ignore them by gazing at the view to my right; specifically, at the new dump site with its endless jumble of colors. Not much can be excavated and reused from the folds of this dump site. Indeed, what ends up here is the very essence of garbage; elsewhere, empty cans of food sit on balconies and stairways in houses, sprouting plants of various kinds, or sit on hobs with boiling water inside, while empty bottles line refrigerator shelves, filled with cold water to quench people's thirst in this intense heat. Leftover food is set before chickens or cows at the end of the day, then given to the dogs guarding them, until the cats finish it off. Newspaper

pages, after performing an additional role covering tables or floors, shielding the surfaces from overflowing plates of food, are eventually devoured in the ovens' fire, along with any cardboard boxes not used to store as many potatoes, onions, and garlic heads as they can, not to mention bottles of oil and pickled olives and other such pantry supplies. And, finally, plastic bags keep fulfilling their duty of holding all kinds of bits and pieces, until, in their final act, they're eventually used to hold garbage. Only two cars have crossed by the time the girl returns, and she chases away the children who stuck alongside the car in her absence, pulling me out of my dump site reverie. With a clean nose now, she picks up where she'd left off, begging me to buy chewing gum from her. I contemplate her face then her skinny body, and glimpse the edge of the tissue, which she's shoved into her little pants pocket. It appears that she plans to keep using it until there's not a clean spot left. I raise my eyes to her face, and repeat what I told her earlier, that I don't like chewing gum. But my words may as well be dust, and she keeps begging me to buy chewing gum from her. I respond that I'm more stubborn than she is, and that I won't buy any chewing gum from her no matter how hard she tries, but my words have no apparent effect; she keeps begging me to buy chewing gum from her, while shifting her gaze from my bag to my clothes, then to the inside of the car. Finally, I tell her that she should be in school, not selling chewing gum at the checkpoint. And only when she replies that it's the summer holiday am I sure she's not deaf or slow. Yes, that's right, I had forgotten. Then she goes back to begging me to buy chewing gum from her. I ask about her marks in school. Enthusiastically, she tells me they're good, before repeating her request that I buy chewing gum from her. I ask her what she does with the money she earns from selling chewing gum, if she gives it to her parents, for instance, and she says of

course not, she keeps it for herself. I ask how she's going to spend it. She tells me she's going to buy herself presents during the festivities, then goes back to begging me to buy chewing gum from her. I search for my wallet in my bag, take out a few coins, and offer them to the little girl, adding that I don't want any chewing gum. She takes the money, tosses two packs of chewing gum onto the passenger seat next to my bag and runs away. And only now do I realize that I've come quite close to the checkpoint, so close in fact that I can see a soldier examining somebody's papers, and a bolt of pain strikes my heart, then numbness spreads through my body, as the spider of fear crawls across my skin, slowly paralyzing me. I look around frantically, hoping to see the little girl, begging for her to come back, for her company to ease the fear that's sweeping through me, but she's vanished, so instead I fix my gaze on the people waiting to go through the checkpoint on foot, watching as they pass behind the narrow metal bars of the turnstiles one by one, while I try to take deep, slow breaths. These are the lucky ones, lucky enough to pass through the checkpoint, even if they're forced to stand and wait; they're allowed to move from one Area to another whenever they want, without needing to borrow an identity card from their nice colleague at their new job. Then I yawn. I'm completely exhausted, since I barely slept last night. I'm so tired of my reckless behavior and of the state I get myself into, the fear, anxiety, and agitation. It'll be a disaster if they discover what I'm doing, the consequences are so enormous I can hardly imagine them, but if what I'm doing isn't discovered, I will go straight back to my house, right after the checkpoint; yes, it's the only way to put an end to this state I'm in. I promise myself this then I yawn again, and in the middle of my yawning a soldier approaches the car. I watch my hand as it extends the blue identity card toward him. The two packs of chewing gum are

still sitting on the seat next to me. The brand is called “Must,” made by the Sinokrot company in al-Khalil. I turn my head, stare straight ahead, and see nothing. Then the soldier hits the roof of the car as if to wake me up. I’m alert. He gives me back the identity card and orders me to move. And I move. Forward. More. And more, since I’m afraid of turning around right away, or else the soldier and all the security forces at the checkpoint will notice me. But the road past the checkpoint is blocked by the Wall, as is the road to the left. As such, my only choice is to turn right, where there’s a narrow road stretching off into the distance, one I’ve never taken before, and I’m not sure if I should, but I let the car keep going, onto this road, where to the right is the Qalandiya Airport runway, running parallel to the road, and to the left is empty land, intersected here and there by narrow roads, and I don’t dare take any of them, but then I quickly regret the decision not to when another checkpoint appears in front of me. Damn! Fear crushes my heart, and I’m gripped by a strong desire to sleep. And just as I approach the checkpoint and slow down, I let out a powerful yawn, opening my mouth as wide as it can go. I rush to cover it with my hand, and the soldier waves back at me, gesturing for me not to stop, so I keep going, until I arrive at an intersection with several signs in Hebrew and Arabic and English, including one pointing to the left, toward “Jerusalem (al-Quds),” and one pointing to the right, toward “Tel Aviv — Yafo.” I turn right. After about a hundred meters, I pull over to the side of the road to catch my breath. My body is trembling. I try to calm down, but I cannot calm down; fear has settled into every part of my body, making it feel practically weightless. Oh, how pitiful I am. I don’t know where I am, and if I stay here for long it will start to look suspicious. I take the maps I brought with me out of my bag and spread them over the passenger seat and across the steering wheel. Among these maps are

those produced by centers for research and political studies, which show the borders of the four Areas, the path of the Wall, the construction of settlements, and checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza. Another map shows Palestine as it was until the year 1948, and another one, given to me by the rental car company and produced by the Israeli ministry of tourism, shows streets and residential areas according to the Israeli government. With shaking fingers, I try to determine my current location on that map. I haven't gone far.

Despite that, there is no going back now.

I take a deep breath. Well, no going back now, not after crossing so many borders, military ones, geographical ones, physical ones, psychological ones, mental ones. I look back at the Israeli map, searching for the first location I wish to head to. It's a medium-sized black dot, not far from where I am now, crowned with the word "Jaffa" written in small but thick English letters. There are a few military museums and archives there, where, as the author of the article had informed me, I can find basic information about the incident. I start trying to determine the best route there, relying on the various maps I have with me. While, in principle, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, in practice I cannot chart a course like that, not because the roads aren't straight but because, as several maps confirm, there are at least two checkpoints on the shortest route leading to Yafa. And neither the maps I have in my possession nor the ones I don't have indicate the locations of flying checkpoints, or are updated with the ongoing construction of the Wall, which continually leads to more road closures. In fact, it's been years since I've heard anyone mention the road that would take me on the shortest route; for instance, that they witnessed a traffic accident there, or that they bought a box of vegetables from a roadside vendor. It can't have dropped from conversation by chance.

Rather, it probably means that no one is able to travel on that road any longer. So if I want to continue with my investigation, and on the safest route possible, it's best to choose the longer but faster road, the one Israelis take to the coast. I start the engine and pull back onto the road, slowly, calmly, and cautiously. A few meters ahead and to the right is the road that once led to Ramallah through the village of Beitunia, which I had taken dozens of times en route to Yafa or Gaza. Now it is blocked, closed off. On its right I can see several eight-meter-high concrete slabs, exactly like the ones used to construct the Wall, and which I've seen around the Qalandiya checkpoint, but here they form what looks like a fortress. "Ofer Prison," the sign on the roadside indicates. I've heard a lot about this prison in recent years, but this is the first time I've seen it. It's relatively new, built in 2002, during the wave of invasions that took place in the spring of that year, when the army rounded up anyone over the age of sixteen and under fifty in public squares and brought them here. Among them was a colleague from my new job, who's very nice, originally from Rafah. One time at the office, he recalled the smell of freshly poured bitumen which shoved its way into his nose as he slept on the asphalt during the months of his detention. On the other side of the prison is a military base hiding behind a row of cypress trees. In the past one could glimpse tanks and military vehicles lurking inside massive hangars through the dusty cypress trunks, branches, and needles. At the intersection, I turn the car back in the direction of Jerusalem on Road 443; I have to turn right on Highway 50 after that, then another right on Highway 1 toward Yafa. I continue driving on Road 443, still on the alert, and before long I catch sight of another checkpoint ahead; my heartbeats echo in my skull, and something akin to a torn spiderweb dances in front of my eyes. I get closer to the checkpoint. I have to cross it. The soldiers

lined up around it do not seem concerned with stopping anyone, probably including me. I shouldn't slow down very much. I must trust that I'll get through. And I do! After the checkpoint, however, my confidence dissipates completely and I'm no longer sure where I am. I can't tell whether I've taken this road before, as I'd thought at first, or not. The road I'd been familiar with until a few years ago was narrow and winding, while this one is quite wide and straight. Walls five meters high have been erected on either side, and behind them are many new buildings, clustered in settlements that hadn't existed before or were hardly visible, while most of the Palestinian villages that used to be here have disappeared. I scan the area with eyes wide open, searching for any trace of these villages and their houses, which were freely scattered like rocks on the hills and were connected by narrow, meandering roads that slowed at the curves. But it's in vain. None of them can be seen any more. The further I drive, the more disoriented I become, until, off to the left, I see another road that has been closed. And at this point I realize that I've taken that road before, dozens of times; it's blocked off now by a mound of dirt and several massive concrete blocks, but it once led to al-Jib villages. I stop the car where the roads intersect, step down, and approach the heap of dirt and concrete blocking it, to be completely sure that it exists and cannot be moved, and that neither my car nor any other car can drive around it. It's pretty, the road to al-Jib, the way it leans left and right, crossing hills dotted with olive trees and little villages wrapped in quiet, to Beit Iksa. I go back to the car, open the Israeli map, and again study the route that Israelis usually take to the coast. So, after descending to the bottom of the valley on Highway 50, one must turn right onto Highway 1, and stay on it for a long time, without turning right or left. I examine the area along Highway 1, which, according to the map, appears to be

primarily populated by settlements. The only two visible Palestinian villages are Abu Ghosh and Ein Rafa. I go back and open the map, which depicts Palestine until 1948, and let my eyes wander over it, moving between the names of the many Palestinian villages that were destroyed after the expulsion of their inhabitants that year. I recognize several of them; some of my colleagues and acquaintances originate from there, from the villages of Lifta, al-Qastal, Ein Karem, al-Mallha, al-Jura, Abu Shusha, Siris, Innaba, Jimzu, and Dair Tarif. But the majority of the names are unfamiliar to me, to the extent that they invoke a feeling of estrangement. Khirbat al-Ammour, Bir Ma'in, al-Burj, Khirbat al-Buwayra, Beit Shanna, Salbit, al-Qubab, al-Kanisa, Kharrouba, Khirbat Zakariyya, Bariyya, Dair Abu Salama, Al-Na'ani, Jindas, Hadatha, Abu al-Fadl, Kisla, and many others. I look at the Israeli map again. A very large park called Canada Park now extends over the area where all these villages used to be. I fold the maps, start the engine, and set off toward Highway 50, and encountering no barriers this time, I turn onto the really long highway. And after continuing on it for a while, I start to descend the mountains of Jerusalem, heading, according to the signs, toward the Ben Shemen Interchange, whose original name may have been Beit Susin, named after a nearby village which appears on the map from 1948 and which no longer exists. All that is left, all that hasn't been destroyed, is a single house, and I catch a glimpse of it on my left, surrounded by cypress trees and with grass growing through the stones.

The car cuts through the landscape at high speed. The road is nearly perfectly straight, but even so, I keep glancing at the Israeli map unfurled across the seat next to me, fearing that I may get lost in the folds of a scene which fills me with a great feeling of alienation, seeing all the changes that have befallen it. It's been a long time since

I've passed through here, and wherever I look, all the changes constantly reassert the absence of anything Palestinian: the names of cities and villages on road signs, billboards written in Hebrew, new buildings, even vast fields abutting the horizon on my left and right. After a disappearance, that's when the fly returns to hover over the painting. Little details drift along the length of the road, furtively hinting at a presence. Clothes hung out to dry behind a gas station, the driver of a slow vehicle I overtake, a thorn acacia tree standing alone in the fields, an old mastic tree. A few shepherds with their livestock on a distant hill. I look back at the Israeli map for a moment, to check that I should take the Kibbutz Galuyot exit to the right, and a moment later it's announced by several giant signs, just as new high-rise buildings emerge from the horizon. From there, I'll turn left onto Salama Road, where I'll continue toward Yafa, or "Yafo," as the signs directing me there declare, until the horizon materializes as a blue line. The sea! There it is, in real life, after years of absence, years in which it was nothing more than pale blue on a map. And now the sea, not the signs, begins to lead me toward the city, and as I drive on this bleak road, passing factories and auto repair shops, I cannot resist glancing at its trembling blueness every few seconds, until I almost cause an accident. During a brief glance at its rippling surface under the midday sun, I realize suddenly, but too late, that I'm driving through a red light, into a four-way intersection where each road has three lanes, and that all the cars are jolting to a stop to let me go through. Damn! What did I just do! After I pass through the intersection, I pull over on the side of the road to catch my breath, and a numbness extends into every part of me, making me feel heavy. I'm so clumsy; this is exactly the kind of border I cannot trespass. I can't seem to calm down. But I can't stay here either; my car is still obstructing traffic. I turn back onto the

road, and my hands are trembling, they feel weightless now, while my feet barely manage to press the accelerator, the clutch, or the brake, and I make it to the end of the road, turn left, continue for a few meters, not much more, and arrive at my first destination, the Israel Defense Forces History Museum. When I arrive, I find that the parking lot is almost empty, which eases my anxiety, but also makes the task of deciding where to park the car a somewhat difficult endeavor. I'm not sure whether it's better to park in the shade, or as close to the entrance as possible, or in a visible spot to prevent the car from being broken into or stolen, or somewhere no one else wants to park, where it's less likely to be scratched, even a bit. When I finally park, after a not-so-insubstantial moment of hesitation, I put all the maps in my bag, as well as the shirt I'd taken off in the heat, and the two packs of chewing gum from the seat beside me, but not before opening one, taking two pieces of chewing gum, and tossing them into my mouth. Aside from coffee, I haven't had anything to eat or drink since this morning, so at the very least I'll absorb some sugar.

I get out of the car and walk calmly toward the museum entrance, then I cross the threshold into the lobby, heading straight for the ticket desk, when I discover a soldier standing there. He looks up at me with a smile. I walk over to him. He doesn't ask to see my nice colleague's identity card, so I leave it in my bag. I hand him the money for a ticket. And he takes it, gives me the ticket, and tells me I must leave my bag in a locker. That's all. His military uniform must be part of the exhibition. I remove my wallet, and a little notebook and pen so that I can take notes, since photography is prohibited inside, as he also informs me. But I don't have a camera with me anyway. I walk out of the lobby and into an open-air courtyard, which visitors must pass through to enter the sixteen exhibition

rooms, as indicated in the brochure which the soldier gave me along with my ticket. When I step into the courtyard, I'm instantly met by a sharp, blinding light reflected toward me by the white gravel covering the ground, which also makes a terrible ear-piercing sound as I walk across it. To be quite honest, I have no more tolerance for gravel than for dust. So I keep walking across the gravel, carefully, trying to keep the sound from growing, and through eyes half-closed against the glare I see silhouettes of several old military vehicles positioned around the courtyard, until eventually I realize that this is the sixteenth and final stop in the exhibition, according to the brochure, meant to be visited after all the rooms inside. I feel a wave of nervousness when I realize that I've wandered in the opposite direction to the route suggested by the museum, which might ruin the whole experience for me, so I immediately head to the first exhibition room. And as soon as my feet cross the threshold, leaving the sticky heat that weighed heavily on the courtyard behind me, shivers rise through my body, in response to the cold air being expelled toward me by the air conditioning. I use my hands, which are still holding my wallet and notebook, to cover my arms, trying to warm them up, since I left my long-sleeve shirt with my bag in the locker. But it's in vain. Shivers grip my body again as I wander through the room, which is completely empty of people, aside from a soldier on guard. I try hard to control my shivering, so as not to attract his attention while wandering leisurely in the room among the displays. In one, I find a map of the south and several telegrams sent between soldiers stationed there in the late forties, filled with heroic and encouraging phrases. But the shivering doesn't stop. I take a deep breath, then turn to look at the guard, who I find staring in my direction. I turn away nonchalantly and keep walking, on toward the second room. There, my shivering gradually fades when I

stop in front of a collection of photographs and propaganda films, a few of which, the labels indicate, were produced in the thirties and forties by pioneers of Zionist cinema. The films show Jewish European immigrants in Palestine, focusing on scenes of them engaged in agricultural work, and of cooperative life in the settlements. One film in particular gives me pause. It starts with a shot of a barren expanse, then abruptly a group of settlers in shorts and short-sleeve shirts enter the frame. They start constructing a tall tower and wooden huts, working until these are complete, and the film ends with the settlers gathered in front of the finished buildings, with joined hands, dancing in a circle. In order to watch it again, I rewind it to the beginning. The settlers break the circle, then go back to the huts they've just finished building, dismantle them, carry the pieces off in carts, and exit the frame. I fast-forward the tape. Then I rewind it. Again and again, I build settlements and dismantle them, until I realize that I shouldn't waste any more time here; I have to visit several other rooms and inspect their displays, and there is still a long trip ahead. I continue my tour until I reach the sixth room, where I end up spending more time than in the previous rooms. This display features wax soldiers wearing various kinds of military attire and accessories. According to the labels, most of the items were used during the forties. I notice that military uniforms from that period differ from military uniforms today. Contemporary ones are a dark olive-green, while the old ones were gray and came in two styles, long pants or shorts, each held up by a wide fabric webbing with a leather gun holster, small pouches for magazines, and a place to hang a water bottle. There are different kinds of webbing sets, too, some worn around the waist, others across the chest. The wax soldiers also wear kit bags on their backs and have caps on their heads, some large and others small. As for their boots, these very much resemble the

ones worn by soldiers today. In the middle of the room are huge glass cases, inside which are displayed various types of equipment and mess kits used at the time, including small rectangular tin bowls connected to a chain with a spoon, fork, and knife. There are other types of equipment too, such as shaving kits and bars of soap and so on. Next to all this is a little scale model of the tents used for soldiers' quarters, mess halls, and command meetings. I continue to the next rooms, which contain displays that don't deserve much attention, that is, until I reach the thirteenth room. The thirteenth room contains various models of small firearms that were used until the fifties. I circle them apprehensively, contemplating the different sizes and shapes, and the size of the bullets displayed alongside the guns in the glass cases, reading the accompanying explanations attentively, before pausing in front of a Tommy gun. The label explains that this is an example of a US-made submachine gun, developed in 1918 by John T. Thompson, thus the name "Tommy," and widely used during the Second World War by the Allied Powers, especially by noncommissioned officers and patrol commanders, and then in the War of 1948, and subsequently in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and many others. This weapon excelled, the label adds, at hitting a target even at great distance, while also being effective in close combat. I make a sketch of it in my notebook. I've become bad at drawing. In the old days I used to be able to draw and reproduce shapes very precisely. Now, however, my lines are sharp, agitated, and unsteady, which distorts the weapon I've sketched so that it no longer really resembles the weapon used in the crime on the morning of August 13, 1949. Suddenly, a loud roar rises through the room, and I jump and start shivering again. I leave room thirteen and step into the courtyard before the air conditioner's chill extends over the entire room. In the courtyard, I stumble upon the military

vehicles used during that period, which I'd seen when I first entered, and am met by a thick wave of heat and blinding white light for a second time. Against this, the dark green shirt of the soldier on guard, whom I saw in the first room and who is now also wandering around the courtyard, soothes my eyes. But not my mental state. At the first sign of fear, I leave the courtyard, head to the lobby, retrieve my bag from the locker and walk to my little white car, which is still alone in the parking lot. Actually, there's no need for me to spend any more time in this city. Official museums like this really have no valuable information to offer me, not even small details that could help me retell the girl's story. I open my little notebook to study my distorted sketch of the Tommy gun, which looks more like a rotten piece of wood than a lethal weapon. I put the notebook in my bag, then pick up the Israeli map to determine my route to my next destination. I must get on Highway 4, which leads south, then, after Askalan and before Gaza, I'll turn left onto Road 34, then right at Sderot onto Road 232, and I'll continue on that until I reach my next destination. I toss the map onto the seat next to me, take the chewing gum from my mouth, drop it in the car ashtray, and depart.

There are other maps lying under the one I've tossed there, including ones that show Palestine as it was until 1948, but I don't open them this time. I'm acquainted with enough people who are originally from this area to have a sense of how many villages and cities there used to be between Yafa and Askalan, before they were wiped from the earth's face not long ago. Meanwhile, names of cities and settlements appear along the road, as do shapes of houses, fields, plants, streets, large signs, and people's faces; all of this accompanies me on my journey while rejecting me too, provoking an inexplicable feeling of anxiety, until I catch sight of a checkpoint where police are inspecting the identity cards of passengers on a white bus just

outside Rahat. There they are! And there is a policeman standing on the side of the road as well, ready to select a vehicle, stop it, and subject it to inspection. My heart beats faster at the base of my throat. I must turn my gaze away. I quickly glance at my bag, then plunge my right hand inside, searching for the packs of chewing gum, and when I find one I take out a piece, toss it into my mouth and begin chewing it, while letting my gaze hang on the ridgeline of the hills scattered on the left side of the road. I have to calm down. Although the car had been moving at ninety kilometers an hour, the closer it gets to the checkpoint, the more it slows down, nearly to a complete stop at the checkpoint itself; I swallow some saliva, still chewing the gum, and just as the car crosses the checkpoint it leaps back up to speed. I take a deep breath when the scene appears in the rearview mirror: the policemen busy examining the identity cards of passengers on the white bus, and another policeman standing nearby, considering the cars passing in front of him, still about to select one and stop it for inspection.

I continue sitting behind the wheel until exhaustion pounces on me again, and I lean my head back. There's much less traffic now, and I have come far enough south that the sandy white hills dotted with small stones have been replaced by hills of yellow sand that look soft to the touch. Scraggy, pale green plants grow on some of the hills, reminiscent of the wilting rotten lettuce the amateur vegetable vendor tried to sell me for three times the price of normal lettuce in Ramallah's closed vegetable market. I decide to stop the car by some fields to rest for a bit. I take the chewing gum from my mouth and deposit it in the ashtray, then close my eyes, hoping to nap in my seat for a few minutes. But I can't manage to fall asleep; I feel as if anxiety is lashing at me, keeping me awake. Eventually, when I've lost all hope of resting, I pick up the maps from the seat next to me. First, I

open the Israeli one and try to determine my position, relying on the number that appeared on the last sign I saw along the road. It seems I simply have to drive on a straight course, albeit a short one, and I'll soon reach my next destination, which appears on the map as a small black dot, practically the only one in a vast sea of yellow. Next, I pick up the map showing the country until 1948, but I snap it shut as horror rushes over me. Palestinian villages, which on the Israeli map appear to have been swallowed by a yellow sea, appear on this one by the dozen, their names practically leaping off the page. I start the engine back up and set off toward my target.

“WHO REMEMBERS THE ARMENIANS?”

I remember them
and I ride the nightmare bus with them
each night
and my coffee, this morning
I’m drinking it with them

You, murderer---
Who remembers you?

Najwan Darwish
Translated from Arabic by Kareem James Abu-Zeid

1

The Last Resistance*

A Marrano is a Jew, forcibly converted to Catholicism in Spain or Portugal at the time of the Inquisition, who cultivates her or his Jewishness in secret. The Marranos cherish their identity as something to be hoarded that also sets them irrevocably adrift. Jacques Derrida liked to compare his Jewishness with theirs, because they do not belong, while still remaining Jewish, even if they reached the point where they 'no longer knew in what their Jewishness consists'.[1] Today, according to an article in *Ha'aretz*, descendants of the Marranos in South America are returning to their Jewish faith. They do not want to convert – they do not wish to repeat their history in reverse. But they do want to belong to an ancestral community that many of them, deep in the interior of the continent, have been quietly performing for more than 500 years in the rituals of family and domestic life (today, their journey is from the mountains and out of the interior, to the cities from the plains). They want the status of people 'returning to the religion of their forebears'.[2] An expert on the Inquisition at São Paulo University in Brazil describes one such descendant as carrying 'history in his flesh and blood'.[3] And yet there is also here a tragedy in the making. There is virtually no court to which they could declare their allegiance that is sure to be honoured by Israel should such a descendant decide to take what might seem to be the logical next step of their destiny and make the ancestral land of Palestine their home.

'Flesh and blood' suggests our most intimately held forms of allegiance. It brooks no argument one might say. And yet, as this story suggests, it can

be contested, subject to the injunctions and restrictions of competing national identities and state laws. There is an irony here since Israel claims its allegiance to the land of Palestine precisely on the grounds of blood-transmitted descent. 'It is impossible to say', Freud wrote to the German author Arnold Zweig when Zweig had just returned from a visit to Palestine in 1932, 'what heritage from this land we have taken into our blood and nerves.'[4] Yet, if Israel founds its identity on the notion of return, it will not grant these Marranos citizenship, even while it converts Native Indian Peruvians and Catholic Croatians who claim no such historical affinity to Jewishness, in order to people the settlements.[5]

The term 'flesh and blood' is of course ambiguous. As well as the most intimate, visceral form of belonging, it also denotes flesh torn and blood spilt in times of war. If I start with the tale of the modern-day Marranos it is because it offers such an inflated, almost grotesque, version of the painful twists which flesh and blood are heir to. Derrida, I imagine, would have been truly horrified by this story. First as a type of betrayal – 'I feel myself the inheritor, the depositary, of a very grave secret to which I myself do not have access', he stated in the same interview in which he mentions the Marranos a few months before he died in 2004.[6] It seems unlikely therefore that he would have welcomed the attempt by these descendants to consolidate their identity and faith. But secondly, and no less, I think he would have been appalled to watch this yearning collide with the fierce and defensively drawn parameters of the modern nation state. Either way, our story suggests that flesh and blood, as intimate cherished belonging, cannot today escape – perhaps has never truly escaped – the fate of nations.

The Marranos stand for a form of identity that is at once precarious, creative and threatened. The question they pose – the question that frames this and many of the essays to follow – is: what does it mean to be 'one of a people' in the modern world? Throughout the 1930s, in his extraordinary correspondence with Arnold Zweig, Freud finds himself asking the same question. It carries with it, as we shall see, that of the future and destiny both of psychoanalysis and of the Jewish people.

In a letter to Zweig of August 1930, near the start of their correspondence, Freud expresses an uncharacteristic confidence in the future of psychoanalysis. 'I have never doubted', Freud writes, 'that long after my day analysis will finally win through.'[7] Overjoyed, Zweig reminds Freud in

his reply of the 'bitter words of deep disappointment' Freud had uttered at their last meeting. 'I am now happy to learn', Zweig writes, that these words belonged 'more to a passing gloom in your feelings than to a Freudian judgement' – although no one is 'more entitled to feel this gloom than you […] we are delighted to see it dispersed.'[8] But by the end of the same paragraph, as if forgetting his own euphoria, Zweig's conviction has started to slip. 'We are only sorry,' he continues, that 'you do not feel that so vital, dynamic and revolutionary a principle as yours, once launched upon the world, will continue to be effective, until it has finally overcome all the blunt resistance the world can offer.'[9] For Zweig, in the 1930s, the world is the patient. Resistance is blindness. It is the strongest weapon or bluntest instrument the mind has at its disposal against the painful, hidden, knowledge of the unconscious. But in Zweig's reading, resistance stretches its meaning into the farthest reaches of public, political life. Freud is a revolutionary and it is the world that is resisting, although psychoanalysis will be victorious in the end. Without so much as a blush of theoretical embarrassment, he fearlessly lays the terms of the private clinical psychoanalytic encounter across the world of nations. By 1934, in a subsequent letter, he is even more emboldened. 'Freud and Tyranny (capital T) together – impossible', he declares: 'Either one follows your profound teachings and doctrines, controls one's emotions, adapts them to serve as positive forces in the world, and then one must fight for the liberation of man and the dethronement of national states […] or one must impose upon mankind as ideal for the future his gradual suppression in a fascist system.'[10] The choice is clear – psychoanalysis, or fascism.

Freud and Zweig's correspondence opens in 1927, when Zweig writes to Freud requesting permission to dedicate his book on anti-Semitism to him. His debt to Freud, he writes, is threefold – for reintroducing the 'psyche into psychology', for the 'obeisance' that anti-Semitism owes to Freud, for the 'restoration' of Zweig's 'whole personality' (there is, and will be, no qualification – this is the utmost devotion).[11] But note how even here, in this first humble approach to a figure who unmistakably bears all the features of the master, Zweig can effortlessly fold his own personal debt to psychoanalysis into the world of politics. On the subject of anti-Semitism the world 'owes obeisance to Freud'. Zweig's acute personal debt is that of the world. By the time the correspondence ends, it is clear that the world's

debt has not been, and will not be, paid, not in their lifetime at least. Zweig's last letter to Freud is dated 9 September 1939, the day of the outbreak of the Second World War.

Zweig's equivocations have the strongest resonance for today: which Freud should we believe, or with which of Freud's two moods, as laid out by Zweig in the 1930s, should we concur? Freud confident of the final victory of his science, or Freud watching darkness descend over Europe? Should we today read Freud's words of despair as 'passing gloom' or indeed as the profoundest and still relevant 'Freudian judgement'? After all the legacy of the 1930s is still with us – we are no closer, we might say, to Zweig's confidently proclaimed 'liberation of man and the dethronement of national states'. Anti-Semitism, which provides the opening occasion for their correspondence, still forms part of the fabric of Europe; except that today, as the story of the Marrano descendants suggests, it is linked, in complex and multidetermined ways, to the Jews' entry into the world of nations, one of the most immediate legacies of the crisis Freud and Zweig were witness to in their times. How those links should be thought about, whether there is any connection between a rise in European anti-Semitism and the actions of the state of Israel has become one of the most contested issues of our time. Few would dispute, however, that the 1948 creation of Israel was decisively affected, if not decided, by the Nazi genocide. In November 1938, shortly after fleeing Nazi Austria for London, Freud declines to contribute to a special issue of *Time and Tide* on anti-Semitism on the grounds that he has been too personally implicated, and that the task should fall to non-Jewish people. At the end of his letter to the editor, he asks somewhat disingenuously: 'Ought this present persecution not rather give rise to a wave of sympathy in this country?'[12]

Of all people Freud should know that hate most often does not give rise to love, but to more hatred. 'Our hate', writes Joan Rivière in 1937, 'is distributed more freely than our love.'[13] Hatred propagates, feeds on itself. None of this has gone away. In *I Have Heard the Mermaids Singing*, part two of psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas's extraordinary novella trilogy on the life and thoughts of an analyst, a group of characters sit in a café in Hampstead in London (unmistakably Giraffe on Rosslyn Hill) and muse about the world post the 'Catastrophe', as 9/11 is termed. They are discussing an essay by analyst Rosalind Ryce and musing on her thoughts: 'she would state that the unconscious reason why people go to war with one

another – like Superpower's beating up of other countries, or Israel's military domination of the Palestinians – is that hate is pleasure'.[14] 'The pleasure of hating others', comments the analyst on whom the book turns, 'exceeds the national interest in befriending the world.'[15] Hatred is one of the psyche's most satisfying emotions. In the face of such hatred, Zweig moves to Palestine in 1933, Freud finally and reluctantly as an exile to London at the very last moment in 1938. From Vienna to Haifa, they offer one version – from the heart of the battle as one might say – of what psychoanalysis can tell us about the fate of nations in the modern world.

Zweig's confident assertion that psychoanalysis will finally overcome 'all the blunt resistance that the world has to offer' is worth pausing at. In the most common political vocabulary, resistance is tied to liberation, it represents the break in the system where injustice gives way to freedom. You resist tyranny, you resist oppression, you resist occupation. More important, perhaps, you resist 'resistance' being described as anything else (for example in post-war Iraq, you resist struggle against US occupation being described as nothing more than foreign-backed opposition to new democratic freedom). The conference at the London School of Economics which provided the original occasion for this essay was entitled: 'Flesh and Blood: Psychoanalysis, Politics, Resistance'. 'Resistance' came at the end, after politics, one step away from psychoanalysis, declaring its progressive allegiance – as if to suggest that the link between psychoanalysis and resistance, if you are thinking politically that is, might be remote or precarious to say the least. What would it have looked like if 'resistance' had appeared midway or caught between the two? It is, I would suggest, the most troubled term in the triptych – hence the title of this essay and book. If in political vocabularies, resistance is the passage to freedom, for psychoanalysis, it is repetition, blockage, blind obeisance to crushing internal constraint. For Zweig, only the overcoming of resistance in this psychoanalytic sense will allow the world to be saved. The aim of psychoanalysis, he states firmly in another letter, is to release energy into the world 'against the forces of reaction'. Instead of festering inside the mind, or being dissipated in writing – he is a writer so this is harsh self-condemnation – such forces 'should express themselves in real life, there creating order, establishing connections, overcoming inhibitions, making decisions, surmounting resistances'.[16] In this, the private and public aims concur. It is of his resistances that Zweig most urgently desires to be cured:

'Things are going marvellously well', he writes in a letter addressed to 'Dear and revered Mr Freud' in 1932, 'as far as resistance and resolution are concerned.'[17] ('Warmest greetings and best wishes for the overcoming of your resistances', Freud ends a letter of 1934.)[18] In this vocabulary, then, resistance is not the action of the freedom fighter, the struggle against tyranny, the first stirring of the oppressed; it is the mind at war with itself, blocking the path to its own freedom and, with it, its ability to make the world a better, less tyrannical, place.

For these two Jewish writers, charting the inexorable rise of fascism in their time, tyranny (or un-freedom) and resistance therefore go hand-in-hand. They are brothers-in-arms. Fascism is a form of resistance, a carapace against what the mind should, ideally, be able to do with itself. Something shuts down, closes cruelly into its allotted and unmovable place. The 'vicious mean world', Zweig writes in 1934, is grown as 'rigid as a machine'.[19] 'Is not the frightful struggle you have been waging for about forty years (or more?) against the fallacies, taboos, and repressions of our contemporaries', he writes to Freud in 1932, 'comparable with the one the prophets waged against the recalcitrant nation of their day?'[20] It is the task of the psychoanalytic prophet to rail against the nation.

In the letters that pass between Freud and Zweig, psychoanalysis therefore appears, perhaps more boldly and prophetically than anywhere else, as a critique of national self-enchantment. Nationalism is the supreme form of resistance to the pain of psychoanalytic insight, because it allows a people to believe absolutely in love of itself (national passion would then be one of the chief means of at once denying and performing the pleasures of hatred). Zweig writes as a German and a Jew. As a German, he cannot bear 'to see this nation carrying around with it a false, trashy, vain image of its great and frightful achievements and suffering'; as a Jew, he defends himself against the offshoot of such vain, trashy self-love in anti-Semitism.[21] Unlike Freud, Zweig will move to Palestine – indeed that move forms as much the backdrop or core of their correspondence as the rise of fascism. But although Zweig makes the move to Palestine, he cannot bear it. He cannot make the transition from the violent abuse and disabuse of national identity in Europe to renewed national passion which will be the story of so many Jews in Palestine. Zweig's disillusionment with the 'flight-flight' into 'Rousseauist' or 'Imperialist' Zionism, as he terms it, is total: 'I

have established quite calmly', he writes to Freud in 1935, 'that I do not belong here.'[22] 'All our reasons for coming here were mistaken.'[23] Against the whole drift of the Jewish people who migrate massively from Europe to Palestine immediately after the war, Zweig leaves Palestine for Germany at the invitation of the GDR government in 1948 on the eve of the establishment of the state of Israel. Already in 1934, Zweig had been doubly disaffected – caring no longer for Germany, 'the land of my fathers', unenthusiastic about living in Palestine with the Jews.[24] 'Such a passion', Freud writes in response, 'is not for the likes of us.'[25] Freud welcomes the fact that Zweig is 'cured' of his 'unhappy love' for his 'so-called Fatherland'.[26]

If we return to Freud's famous letter on Zweig's return to Palestine, quoted above, we then find that it is heavily qualified: 'our forebears lived there for perhaps half or perhaps a whole millennium', he writes but then adds in parenthesis '(*but this too is just a perhaps*)'. He continues: 'and it is impossible to say what heritage from this land we have taken over into our blood and nerves', and then qualifies again in parenthesis: '(*as is mistakenly said*)'.[27] With these two rarely quoted asides, Freud dismantles the twin pillars of the Jewish claim to Palestine. Perhaps we lived there, perhaps not; it is a mistake to claim that the land flows in our blood. As far as nationhood is concerned, flesh and blood – or in Freud's formula 'blood and nerves' – is a suspect form of belonging.

It is of course a strikingly modern critique. As Neal Ascherson pointed out in an article which appeared in the London *Observer* on the sixtieth anniversary of Hitler's defeat in April 2005, it seemed perfectly acceptable to Churchill, for example, that millions of people should be shunted around the world—roughly ten to twelve million by the time the war was over – in the search for purity of the nations. Like so many of his contemporaries, 'he believed that a nation state should be racially homogeneous to be secure and healthy'.[28]

Freud is often branded a conservative politically for his suspicions about Communism, his views of women, and the often autocratic nature of his procedures (one might wonder what is left). It is nonetheless crucial that for nationalism in its most venerated form he had neither time nor space. It was Dostoyevsky's great failure, he writes in his essay 'Dostoyevsky and

Parricide', that he landed 'in the retrograde position of submission to both temporal and spiritual authority', blindly in thrall to the Tsar, the God of the Christians, and to 'a narrow Russian nationalism', a position which, he comments dryly, 'lesser minds have reached with smaller effort'[29]. Dostoyevsky, he pronounces, with an uncharacteristic finality of judgement, 'did not achieve freedom', he became a 'reactionary'.[30] None of this of course detracts from Dostoyevsky's achievement as a writer, but it too implies, as Zweig suggests, that energy 'dissipated' into writing can leave the subject powerless as a political agent, vulnerable to the false promises of autocracy. In this analysis, nationalism is resistance at large. Like submission to the Tsar and to God, it requires a drastic narrowing of internal horizons.

Although, as we shall see, the formula is finally too blithe, Zweig is right to start at least from the premise that psychoanalysis pitches itself against tyranny inside and outside the mind. More than once, Freud himself runs a line straight from one to the other. It is because we are creatures of the unconscious that we try to exert false authority over ourselves. Autocracy is in itself a form of resistance, a way of staving off internal panic. The news that reaches our consciousness, he writes in 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis' of 1917, is deceptive and not to be relied upon, but we submit all the more willingly to its dictates. We do not want to hear the internally unsettling news that might come from anywhere else. We are never more ruthless than when we are trying to block out parts of our own mind. 'You behave like an absolute ruler who is content with information supplied him by his highest officials', Freud addresses a fictive audience, 'and never goes among the people to hear their voice.'[31] Like Tony Blair, for example, who regularly boasted of being the listening Prime Minister, notably in the 2004 election campaign, but who never allowed the people – a million on the streets against the Iraq war – to affect him. Blair, we could say, wanted the form, without the potentially self-decaying stress, of democracy. Beware of the political leader who will not listen – or who boasts of listening, or appears to be listening, but hears nothing. You can be sure that he is spending a huge amount of energy, energy that could fruitfully be used otherwise, in warding off unconscious, internally dissident, messages from himself.

To the question, Why did Blair so unequivocally offer his support to George Bush? David Clark, Labour government adviser before he became

one of Blair's strongest critics, has suggested that many of Blair's policies and most of his mistakes, notably on Iraq, could be explained by weakness of will, that he is 'mesmerised' by power. According to this argument it was not the boldness or courage of his convictions that led Blair to war, but the 'calculation that, whatever the risks, it would ultimately prove to be *the line of least resistance'*.[32] Here resistance is associated with weakness, the easy option, choosing a path that may seem unlikely, difficult, or even self-defeating but which, in this case because of a counter-pull, the pull of power in Clark's analysis, is in fact the easiest, if not the only, path to take. Freud uses the same phrase when he is trying to explain the choice of hysterical symptom at the very beginning of his work, when he suggests that an unconscious thought, struggling to evade the censor and achieve expression, will follow the easiest path it can take, and attach itself to a pre-existing bodily complaint. Anna O suffered from tetanus in one arm. As she watched over her dying father, prey to contrary passions of grief and revolt, she tried to stretch it out to ward off a hallucinated snake, only to find that her arm had gone to sleep. From that point on, the tetanus pain would be provoked by the sight of any snake-like object. The arm was the part of the body most amenable to her inner distress. The discharge of affect, Freud writes, follows 'the path of least resistance'.[33] Something has been prepared in advance and the unconscious seizes on it to make its presence felt. In these early thoughts then, resistance drops its guard at the slightest provocation. Resistance, as in Clark's analysis of Blair, is weak and willing. Like Dostoyevsky, in thrall to God and Tsar, Blair submits to Superpower and goes where he is led.

But while this analysis may seem supremely tempting, it will not take us far enough. It makes life, just as it made the process of analysis, too easy. Freud does not stay here for long. Even while he is offering this view of resistance as gentle, yielding, temporary obduracy – something that silently makes way for the unconscious – his thoughts on the matter are starting to follow a very different drift. Resistance hardens. Slowly but surely, it takes up its full meaning as struggle against the unconscious, and from there, as canny, resourceful and above all stubborn refusal to cooperate. Freud has to abandon his early hypnotic procedure, because it conceals the resistance; it does not do away with it but merely evades it 'and therefore yields only incomplete information and transitory therapeutic success'.[34] By bringing the unconscious so effortlessly to the surface, hypnosis leaves the patient,

when they return to their normal state, more or less exactly as they were before. From this point on, as much as resistance of the conscious to the unconscious, resistance means resistance to the psychoanalytic treatment. 'The task [of analysis]', Freud writes in 1907, 'consists of making the unconscious accessible to consciousness, which is done by overcoming the resistances.'[35] Without resistance, no analysis. There can be no access to the unconscious, hence no analytic treatment, without a fight.

Once Freud makes this move, once resistance becomes the core of psychoanalysis, everything gets far more difficult. So much so that the difficulty of resistance will in some sense dominate the rest of Freud's work and life. And once this happens, then Zweig's blithe conviction that psychoanalysis can defeat resistance, in the mind and in the world of nations, will become harder to sustain. In today's political climate, with no sign of diminution in national passion and its dangers, I believe that we have to understand why. Zweig's starting exhilaration – that the world's resistance to unfreedom will be undone – has not been borne out by events (it was not borne out by the events that immediately followed). We need to follow the path leading Freud to redress his own optimism in the way that so dismayed Zweig in 1933. For Zweig, as we have seen, Freud was a prophet, and a prophet's vision is rarely actualised in the real world. *Prophets Outcast* is the title of an anthology edited by Adam Shatz of *The Nation* that includes all the dissident Jewish voices, past and present, in Palestine.[36] Calling Freud a prophet, Zweig may have been closer to the truth than he would have liked, at least consciously, to think. But it is not only Freud's writing that issues a caution to the belief that psychoanalysis will finally triumph, sway the world and dethrone the nations. Zweig's own fiction offers no less a challenge, and nowhere more clearly than in the extraordinary, but little known, novel – the offspring in many ways of his correspondence with Freud – which he writes from the heart of Palestine.

When Zweig returns from his first visit to Palestine in 1932, he plunges into a depression. 'I am deep in my work', he writes, 'and equally deep in depression.'[37] Physically exhausted by his journey, dispirited by the terrible political situation in Berlin, it is nonetheless to his work that Zweig ascribes the greater part of his despair. Zweig is writing a short novel about the Dutch-Jewish writer Jacob Israel de Haan, who was murdered in Jerusalem in 1924. 'The figure of this Orthodox Jew who "reviled God in Jerusalem"

in clandestine poems and who had a clandestine love-affair with an Arab boy – this important and complex character', he writes to Freud, 'gripped my imagination while the blood was still not dry in the whole affair.'[38] The trip to Palestine brought the 'old plan' to life again and he sketched away at the novel while in the country itself, making a plan he describes as useful and 'indeed fascinating'.[39]

But the plan falls apart when Zweig discovers a 'flaw at the most vital spot': de Haan, it turns out, was not murdered by Arabs at all, as he had believed for seven years, but by a political opponent, a radical Zionist 'known to many people and still living in the country today'.[40] De Haan had started out an active Zionist – indeed as a lawyer he had defended Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the subject of Chapter 4, who was the founder of Revisionist Zionism, when he was arrested by the British in 1920. But he slowly lost faith and turned against the Zionists in Palestine. A member of the Orthodox movement Agudath, he made himself hated when he headed a delegation to the press baron Lord Northcliffe to protest at the tyranny of official Zionism in 1922. Although Zweig does not name him, it is now believed that Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, a member of the highest council of the socialist Zionist Haganah who would become the second President of Israel, was involved in contracting the murder of de Haan. He was killed by a *chalutz*, a Jewish emigrant to Palestine who worked as a pioneer in the early settlements, 'because his hatred of political Jewry had turned him into a traitor and informer'.[41]

At first Zweig receives this discovery as a 'frightful blow', but then he realises that this fact was 'far better than the old': 'it compelled me to see many things accurately without pro-Jewish prejudice and to examine the political murder of one Jew by another exactly as though it were a political murder in Germany'.[42] It compelled him, he continues, 'to tread the path of political disillusionment yet further, as far as necessary, or possible – further than was good for me'.[43] What Zweig has discovered – and in this he is way ahead of his time – is that Jewish nationalism is not, cannot by very dint of being nationalism be, innocent. Because of the opposition from the indigenous peoples which it was bound to encounter (as Jabotinsky acknowledged), but also because it enlists and requires such passionate identification, Zionism cannot help, although it will go to great lengths to this day to repress this internal knowledge, but be a violent – that is,

internally, as well as externally, violent – affair. The discovery is a blow to Zweig, yet it is – he writes to Freud – precisely through the 'collapse' of his original plan that his novel, which 'condemns nationalism and political murder even among Jews', finds its 'true dimension'.[44]

Zweig could of course have dropped the novel when he realised his mistake. He could have chosen not to offend Jewish sensibilities by probing this case too deeply. Instead, rather like his hero whom he names de Vriendt – the novel is called *De Vriendt Goes Home* – he chooses to pursue his path to its painful, violent, end, and thereby to court the wrath of the Zionists among whom he is living in Palestine. Disillusioned with Jewish nationalism, announcing that disillusionment to the world by writing the novel, Zweig, we could say, boldly repeats de Haan's original offence. For this he too, like de Haan although not so dramatically, will be ostracised: 'I am a Jew – heavens, yes,' he writes in 1936, 'but am I really of the same nationality as these people who have ignored me ever since *De Vriendt* came out?'[45] (in his correspondence with Freud he admits to the profoundest, most troubling, identification with his character).

But it is not just in its critique of nationalism that Zweig's novel offers a type of Freudian text for our times. It is as if the first shock to his system, the fatal flaw in his original plan, leaves Zweig free to demolish, not just one, but all false gods. There is no boundary – of religious, national, sexual identity – that de Vriendt does not cross. Zionism is, in his view, a mistake. The hubris of man usurps the role of God (this was the classic critique of Zionism by one section of Orthodox Jews). De Vriendt dreams of the 'fall of Zionism' and, in what is surely a deliberate parody of Theodor Herzl's largely failed diplomatic initiatives, he has fantasies of a recruiting campaign across Eastern Europe ending with a congress in Vienna where 'the claim of the Zionists to stand as representatives of the Jewish people would be explicitly denied'.[46] And although he is Orthodox, the fiercest critic of Zionist secularism, he pens blasphemous poems, discovered by his horrified religious supporters after his death, which have this to say about God:

> Prophets and saviours – we await them still;
> With earthquake, famine, strife, we fight in vain;
> There is no work to make us men again;
> Thou gav'st us but the arts to hate and kill.
> […]

Wool and wadding and wax have stoppered Thine ears,
Thy hands are too smooth to help, like the smooth skin of fish;
Thou art far above our labours and troubles and tears;
As a God for the white man Thou art all that the white man could wish[47]

This God – blind, privileged, white – could have been lifted straight out of Freud's onslaught against the delusions of religious faith, *The Future of an Illusion*, where he refers, not favourably, to 'our present-day white Christian culture' (and indeed probably was) (or perhaps Tariq Ali's *Clash of Fundamentalisms*). Finally – adding insult to injury we might say – if homosexuality is de Vriendt's guilty secret, the curse of a capricious God, it is also ecstatic release into freedom, the repository of his utopian dreams, the place he goes in pursuit of a better world. By roughly half a century Zweig anticipates the idea advanced by psychoanalytic critic Leo Bersani, that homosexual passion provides the only possibility of a narcissistically shattering but utopian liberation from the constraints of the ego, the over-controlling and proprietorial self: 'It was a terrible and shattering experience […] That is his deep impulse: to fling away the twisted self, to be rid of the false fortuitous embodiment, and set its atoms free for fresh embodiment under a more fortunate star, in a better hour.'[48]

Pushing his novel much further than he needed to go (and too far, as he himself says, for his own good), Zweig has created a true Freudian anti-hero. As an anti-Zionist and friend to the Arabs, he betrays the Jews; as a homosexual, he betrays the Arabs (his lover's brother also wants to kill him); he betrays the religion of his fathers as a reviler of the faith. Zweig, we could say, leaves no stone unturned. For this he suffers terribly, not just as one of the *Verlatene* or the forsaken, as de Haan became known, but in his own mind (it is, he writes to Freud, a 'kind of self-analysis').[49] Reading the correspondence it feels that he would not have been able to write this novel, which he eagerly and anxiously sends to Freud on the eve of publication, if the founding spirit of psychoanalysis had not presided over its conception, if he had not been able to guarantee its safe passage into Freud's hands. 'Now it really is out; you have it in your hands,' Zweig writes to Freud after a halt in the publication due to misprints, 'and you will feel how much it owes to you.'[50]

One could read the message of this novel quite simply as the one Edward Said lifted out of Freud's last work on Moses in his 2001 talk 'Freud and the Non-European': in order to save the new nation from too

rigid and self-regarding an identity, to modulate the certainties of Zionism and open it up both from without and within, in order to stop the tragedy that will unfold in Palestine, Zionism needs Freud.[51] Or to put it in the rather different words of de Vriendt: to confuse 'the Lord's people of Israel with modern Nationalism […] means paralysis and weakness at the heart'.[52] The new nation will not be able to tolerate the vision of this sexually complex, sceptical, blaspheming Jew. Zweig kills off his own prophet. In this rendering, Jewish nationalism entails violence, not only against the Arabs, but also by Jew against Jew. This does not involve denying Arab violence against the Jews in Palestine (as the novel's portrayal of the Arab riots of 1929 makes clear). But in the spirit of psychoanalysis, which sees moments of failing or slippage as the path to unconscious truth, it is the basic flaw, the collapse of the original plan, that gives to this novel its true dimension. Deftly Zweig shifts the dramatic centre from the curse of homosexuality to the curse of nationhood. Note that in this he also anticipates the development of psychoanalytic studies which has likewise shifted from the politics of sexuality to the politics of nation states over the past decade. Once Zweig makes his discovery that de Haan was murdered by Zionists, then he can write the story of his disillusionment with nationalism into the body – across the flesh and blood – of the nation-in-waiting. Near the end of the novel, an old Jew lies dying in a remote village where de Vriendt's assassin finds himself as he flees the arm of the law. To save the old man's life, he offers his blood, but the dying man will not take it. There will be no redemption for this crime.

Although Zweig – and indeed Freud in his essay on Dostoyevsky – suggests that writing can dissipate the energies needed to transform the world, and, in the latter case, make the writer prey to autocracy, love of God and Tsar, in this novel Zweig has suggested a rather different role and destiny for fiction. And that is, that literature can give a public shape and audience to realities which the dominant view of the world – what de Vriendt terms despairingly 'the spirit of the time' – needs terribly to include in its vision, but which it cannot tolerate or bear to see.[53] For this relationship between fiction and the unconscious, Zweig offers one of the most graphic metaphors, seized from his own flesh and blood. He suffers from a visual complaint that will eventually blind him. 'Through the gap in the retina', he writes to Freud of hallucinations provoked by his disorder, 'one could see

deep into the unconscious.'[54] 'My right eye', he continues, 'is playing a trick on me […] in the act of seeing a small bubble is produced in the retina, as a camera, so that in the centre of my field of vision I see a dim round gluten, which is more or less opaque, surrounded by a dark ring.'[55] Within this frame, grimacing faces have started to appear, day and night 'literally at every moment, both when my eyes are closed and when they are open'.[56] Changing more or less with the rhythm of his pulse beats, these faces are first unmistakably Jewish, then recumbent men, dying and decomposing, until they mutate into death's heads and often too 'something like the portraits of intellectuals wearing the clothes of remote centuries, complete with skull-cap and pointed beard' (on one solitary occasion he sees a decomposing female face).[57] Offering these images to Freud – a trick 'I cannot conceal from you as a psychologist' – Zweig shows the darkness of his mind peopled by Jewish faces in decay (the faces he had lovingly charted in his 1920 *The Face of Eastern European Jewry)*.[58] Was he anticipating horror, reaching back to his forefathers, or simply registering in the depths of his unconscious a vision of mortality as the ever-present underside (or pulse beat) of nations?

By the time Zweig writes this in 1930, Freud knows that access to the unconscious is far harder than he had originally envisaged. The unconscious does not take the path of least resistance, to use that early phrase; it chooses the path where resistance most strenuously does its work. By the end of his life Freud will talk, not of resistance *to* the unconscious, but resistance *of* the unconscious, as if the unconscious had become active in refusing knowledge of itself.[59] The mind, like the world of the 1930s and I would say today, is a frightening and fortified place. Zweig's final disillusion with Zionism comes when he joins a demonstration with left-wing workers only to have them 'keep up the nationalistic fiction that they did not understand me when I spoke German'.[60] They had his speech translated into Hebrew 'as though', he continues wryly, 'all 2500 of them did not speak Yiddish at home'.[61] 'And', he continues, 'all this took place with the left-wing Paole Zion [the Zionist Socialists], who are attacked by the other "righter" Social Democrats as being international.' It is the last nail in the coffin, the moment that precipitates his decision to leave: 'So we are slowly thinking of leaving but it will take some time.'[62] Zionism in 1935 shuts out the

clamour of the world, represses its own international dimension, silences the voices or languages it does not want to hear.

As Edward Said pointed out in his talk on Freud's *Moses*, the international does not just include Europe, but needs to expand still further to include the Egyptian component of Israel's own past. 'The misunderstanding of Egyptian pre-history in Israel's religious development', Freud writes to Zweig in 1935, 'is just as great in Auerbach as in the Biblical tradition. Even their famous historical and literary sense can only be an Egyptian legacy'[63] (a quote which confirms Said's reading). 'Europe', as Zweig writes to Freud in 1938, 'is now such a small place.'[64]

At the beginning of this essay, we saw Zweig battling to retain his faith in the future of psychoanalysis in the face of Freud's despair. It would seem, then, that this was no 'passing gloom' on Freud's part, but the profoundest confrontation of psychoanalysis with the outside world, a world it is so often – and so wrongly – seen to ignore. Nor does it seem to be a coincidence that Freud's and Zweig's dismay about the world of nations, together with Freud's despondency about the future of his science, intensify when Freud realises the increasing difficulty of psychoanalysis in the consulting room. As soon as Freud defines the task of psychoanalysis as the struggle against resistance, he recognises the new challenge that faces him. We aim, he writes in 1907, to arrive 'at the distorted material from the distortions'.[65] But inevitably, he acknowledges, with reference to his magisterial failure in the case of Dora, 'a portion of the factors that are encountered under the form of resistance remains unknown'.[66] As with mourning, as with femininity, both of which he famously describes as a great 'riddle', as indeed with the unconscious itself, Freud has to allow that there are limits to psychoanalytic knowing, places where it cannot, finally, go. 'It is not so easy', he writes in the same year, 'to play upon the instrument of the mind.'[67] Shakespeare gives him his cue. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are set upon by Hamlet to solve the riddle of his despair, but when Hamlet invites them to play the fiddle, they refuse even when he begs them and tells them it is as easy as lying. Hamlet's response, which Freud quotes, is scathing: 'You would pluck out the heart of my mystery […]' *Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played upon than a pipe?*'[68] Although Freud is mocking those who claim they can cure neurosis without

submitting to the rules of his craft, the one to whom he is issuing the caution is, surely, himself.

So what is the last resistance? Appropriately perhaps, we reach it, as Freud did, only at last. In 1926, in an addendum to *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud lists no fewer than five types of resistance (resistance has multiplied). Three stem from the ego: repression, transference and the gain from illness. The fourth is the resistance of the unconscious itself. But the fifth arises from the superego – 'the last to be discovered', (hence my title), 'also the most obscure though not always the least powerful one'.[69] Last but not least, as one might say (Derrida referred to himself as 'le dernier des juifs' which can translate as 'the last of the Jews' but also as 'last but not least' or 'last and least', depending on your ideological inflection). Crucially, this is not the force that Freud describes as resisting recovery because it clings to the advantages of being ill – like the neglected, exploited and subjugated wife whose illness subordinates her inconsiderate husband to her power.[70] Sadly, this is not a force that calculates so wisely, so cleverly, so well. The force of this fifth and last resistance is far more deadly, because it arises out of the pleasure the mind takes in thwarting itself. 'It seems to originate', Freud explains, 'from the sense of guilt or the need for punishment and it opposes every move towards success, including, therefore, the patient's own recovery through analysis.'[71] There is almost a tautology here. Resistance arises from resistance. There is, Freud writes, 'a resistance to the uncovering of resistances'.[72] By the time he gets to his famous late essay of 1937, 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable', this force appears as more or less insurmountable: 'No stronger impression arises from the resistances during the work of analysis than of there being a force which is defending itself by every possible means against recovery and which is absolutely resolved to hold on to illness and suffering.'[73] We are dealing, he writes, with 'ultimate things'.[74] 'We must bow to the superiority of the forces against which we see our efforts come to nothing.'[75]

Freud is talking about the superego – the exacting, ruthless and punishing instance of the mind through which the law exerts its pressure on the psyche. In the correspondence with Zweig, it is also shadowed, as for example in this quote, cited earlier, when Zweig was in euphoric mood: 'Either one follows your profound teachings and doctrines, controls one's

emotions, adapts them to serve as positive forces in the world, and then one must fight for the liberation of man and the dethronement of national states, or one must impose upon mankind … his gradual suppression in a fascist system.' In fact the full quote reads: 'one must fight for the liberation of man and the dethronement of national states which are only substitutes for the Father-Moloch. Or one must *perpetuate this Father-Moloch and* impose upon mankind as ideal for the future his gradual suppression in a fascist system.'[76] Zweig's optimism, his yearning and willed conviction that psychoanalysis will triumph and dethrone the nations depends therefore on toppling the instance of the law inside the mind. There will be no more burnt offerings, no false idols. Children will no longer be sacrificed to assuage the wrath of the gods.

Despite the passion between Freud and Zweig, or perhaps as intrinsic to that passion, this forms the basis of the most profound difference between them, which is finally far more than a difference of mood. In Zweig's vocabulary, you adapt, you control. By a flick of the analytic switch, as it were, you turn emotions into a positive force in the world. By 1937, Freud is somewhere quite else. If the superego is the seat of the last resistance, it is because it is the place of tyranny inside the mind. Perversely it draws its power from the unconscious energies it is trying to tame (hence for Slavoj Žižek, after Lacan, the irreducible obscenity of the law). It is overwhelmingly powerful. 'There is often no counteracting force of a similar order of strength,' Freud had already written in 1923 in *The Ego and the Id*, 'which the treatment can oppose to it' (unless the analyst plays the part of 'prophet, saviour, redeemer' to which all the rules of analysis are opposed).[77] It is also, for Freud, tied irrevocably to the death drive, the instance of violence inside the psyche which, in the second half of his life – the half dominated by war – led him to revise his theory of mental life. We are not, as he puts it in his 1937 essay, 'exclusively governed by the desire for pleasure'.[78] There is a pleasure in subjugation; there is a pleasure – hence the last resistance – in pain. Idealisation of self and nation is a way of submitting to a voice that will never be satisfied. You may be able to soften the commands of the superego; indeed this will come to be defined as one of the most crucial aims of analysis. But you cannot overthrow it. Zweig's language of control – 'either one controls one's emotions' – repeats the edicts of the voice it is trying most earnestly to assuage. You are never more vulnerable to autocracy than when you think you have dispensed with the

law. Faced with this resistance, Freud's language darkens, takes on the colours of the crisis that has by now almost reached his door: 'we are reminded that analysis can only draw upon definite and limited amounts of energy which have to be measured against the hostile forces. And it seems as if victory is in fact as a rule on the side of the big battalions.'[79] (This is the year before the *Anschluss* when the Nazis will invade Austria and Freud leaves for England.)

'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' is famous, or rather notorious, for Freud's conclusion that the bedrock of the psyche is the man's fear of passivity, the woman's wish for a penis. Rereading it for today, this does not seem to be the most crucial, or 'ultimate' thing (times, or perhaps I, have changed). Or rather, although it is indeed where Freud ends, this is an instance where, as in most nineteenth-century novels, the so-called final moment or ending feels a bit like an attempt to tidy up, bring things to a finale that is trumped, or at least seriously confused, or challenged, by what has come before. What stands out in this essay is the force of resistance as a general principle, resistance as the canny, ever resourceful activity of the human mind. In the face of this resistance, Freud becomes not just speculative, as Derrida so convincingly showed him to be on the concept of the death drive, not quite or only defeated, but something more like cautious, humble almost (not his dominant characteristic). The whole field of enquiry, he writes, 'is still bewilderingly strange and insufficiently explored'.[80] A year later he will describe his own Moses project as built on feet of clay. But here he goes further, as his endeavour seems to be coming apart, almost literally, in his hands. Resistance is everywhere, spreading into places he can no longer specify. Either, he writes, the libido is too adhesive, in which case the analyst feels like a sculptor working in hard stone as opposed to soft clay; or it is too mobile, dissolving, washing away the imprint of analysis as if it had never been: 'we have an impression, not of having worked in clay, but of having written on water'.[81] In his famous essay on 'The Mystic Writing Pad', Freud had used as his analogy of the mind the child's game, where first you write, then you erase what you have written by lifting the top sheet leaving a clean page with the trace, or memory of what you have written underneath (he was trying to explain how the mind is fresh to receive impressions from the outside world while retaining the traces of the unconscious).[82] Now, however, Freud is writing

on water. There is no more precarious inscription than this. Psychoanalysis will continue to do its work but without illusions. It would be the direst form of pretension to claim, in 1937, but not only in 1937, that psychoanalysis could permanently dispose of the perils of the world or of the mind.

In fact Zweig, in other moments (other moods), is only too aware of the limits of analysis. He knows only too well that the mind only wants to pursue its own path. Writing *De Vriendt* is a terrible experience for him that brings his own repressed homosexuality to light: 'I was both, the Arab (semitic) boy and the impious-Orthodox lover and writer.'[83] But the knowledge, as he puts it, is 'to no avail'. It simply plunges him into depression. Controlling one's emotions is no solace: 'The liberated instinct wants to live its life right through emotionally, in phantasy, in the flesh and blood of the mind.'[84] 'Flesh and blood' points to the wily, recalcitrant force of the unconscious, as much as it does to the compelling, reluctant, intimacies of kinship and of war. The last resistance is in the flesh and blood of the mind.

For all that, Zweig's political analysis of his and Freud's moment was astute, and still relevant for our times. This passage could be read as a diagnosis of Zionism today:

> Fear of death and of spirits have made religions what they are, the 'salvation of the soul' has swallowed up the salvation of the living human being and has handed over the state to the armed forces, so that the custodians of the states and their inhabitants are today, as in the time of Saul, on the one hand priests and on the other soldiers, and our age which is so technically terrifyingly armed compels our thoroughly uncivilised fellow men to dwell in greater fear than our forebears did, but with the same basic emotions.[85]

To evoke once more the Marrano descendants, carrying history in their 'flesh and blood', who are trying to return to the Jewish religion of their forebears: they want to claim an allegiance unbound to orthodoxy, not as conversion, but one that can still perhaps bear the traces of their peculiar story – an affinity, not an identity in the custodianship of armed forces and of priests.

Nothing in this essay finally detracts from the necessity or indeed possibility of resistance in its more familiar political guise. Since the time of Freud's and Zweig's correspondence, resistance has mutated, shifted its location and shape, alighting in places and forms that neither of them could

have anticipated. ‘After about 10pm’, writes Rachel Corrie in *My Name Is Rachel Corrie*, staged at the Royal Court in 2005, ‘it is very difficult to move because the Israeli army treats anyone in the streets as resistance and shoots at them. So clearly we are too few.’ (The play was cancelled on the eve of its performance on 22 March at the Theatre Workshop in New York and then staged at the Minetta Lane Theatre in November 2006.)[86] Indeed, Palestinian resistance to Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, one of the longest-running occupations of our time, could fairly claim the title ‘the last resistance’ for itself. We would then be talking of resistance not as obduracy, but as challenge, like psychoanalysis one might say, to the powers that be, even while it has been the immense difficulty of such a challenge that has been the subject here. It is also a premise of psychoanalysis that the symptom is economically inefficient, too demanding; the carapace – the wall – will break. In his book *On the Border*, which describes a life of dissident activism in Israel, Michael Warschawski defines as his overriding aim: ‘To resist by all means any attempts to close up the cracks in the wall.’ But he too does not underestimate the difficulty: ‘we are talking about fighting for a redefinition of who we are’.[87]

Or to return to the heart of the history taking shape here: Resistance in one of its most famous incarnations – the very emblem of the word for many – as Resistance to Nazism itself (which Freud did not live to see, but which will be central to the life and work of Marcel Liebman, the subject of Chapter 12 in this book). ‘This word’, Derrida writes in his meditation on resistance to, and within, psychoanalysis, ‘which first resonated in my desire and imagination as the most beautiful word in the politics and history of this country […] charged with all the pathos of my nostalgia, as if what I would have wanted not to miss at any cost would have been to blow up trains, tanks and headquarters between 1940 and 1945.’[88] ‘Why’, he asks ‘has this word come to draw to itself, like a lover, so many other significations, virtues, semantic and disseminal opportunities?’[89]

The point of this first essay has been to issue a caution. Psychoanalysis remains for me the most powerful reading of the role of human subjects in the formation of states and nations, subjects as driven by their unconscious, subjects in thrall to identities that will not save them and that will readily destroy the world. I also believe that it offers a counter-vision of identity as precarious, troubled, uneasy, which needs to be invoked time and time

again against the false certainties of our times. But it is precisely *analysis*, and we should not ask too much of it. If we do, we risk, like Zweig does at moments, asking it to play the part of redeemer, prophet, saviour, which is, as Freud pointed out, to go against the spirit not to say the therapeutic rules of psychoanalysis itself. If psychoanalysis is persuasive, it is because – as Freud came more and more to acknowledge – far from diminishing, it has the profoundest respect for the forces it is up against.

Near the end of his life, when he is suffering from the throat cancer that will finally kill him, Freud offers to read his last great work, *Moses the Man*[90] to Zweig who, although not yet blind, already then in 1935 can barely read: 'I picture myself reading it aloud to you when you come to Vienna,' Freud writes, 'despite my defective speech.'[91] 'When can I read it to you?' he writes again the following month (it is his hardest work, written across the passage into exile, and will take another two years for Freud to complete).[92] 'I am writing by lamplight,' Zweig writes to Freud in 1937, 'when I should not really do this.'[93] It is one of the most moving moments or strains of their correspondence: the two men reaching out to each other through their physical failing. Perhaps this tentative encounter can serve as a graphic image for what might be involved – as the world darkened around them – in trying to make the unconscious speak. The point of this first essay has been simply to suggest that we should not underestimate the difficulty in the times ahead.

Toward the Poem II

Words, phrases, syllables, stars turning about a fixed center. Two bodies, many beings meeting in one word. The paper becomes covered with indeible letters, spoken by nobody, dictated by nobody, that burn and flame up and go out. This, then, is how poetry exists, how love exists. And if I do not exist, you do.

Everywhere those in solitary begin to create the words of a new dialogue.

The gush. A mouthful of health. A girl lying on her past. Wine, fire, guitar, tablecloth. A red blush wall in a village square. Cheers, glittering cavalry that enter the city, the people in flight: hymns! Eruption of white, green, fiery. The easiest thing, that which writes itself: poetry.

The poem prepares a loving order. I foresee a man sun and a moon woman, he free of his own power, she free of her slavery, and implacable love shining through black space. Everything must give way before these incandescent eagles.

On the battlements of your brow song finds its daybreak. Poetic justice sets fire to fields of shame: no place for nostalgia, for I, the proper noun.

Every poem is made at the poet's expense.

Future noon, an immense tree of invisible leaves. In the streets, men and women singing the song of the sun, a fountain of transparencies. Yellow surf covers me: nothing of myself is to speak through my own mouth.

When History sleeps, it speaks in dreams: on the brow of the sleeping people, the poem is a constellation of blood. When History wakes, image becomes deed, the poem is achieved: poetry goes into action.

Deserve your dream.

~Octavio Paz
trans Muriel Rukeyser

Notes on Craft: Writing in the Hour of Genocide
Fargo Tbakhi

What does Palestine require of us, as writers writing in English from within the imperial core, in this moment of genocide? I want to offer here some notes and some directions towards beginning to answer this question.

I.

Craft is a machine built to produce and reproduce ethical failures; it is a counterrevolutionary machine.

I use "Craft" here to describe the network of sanitizing influences exerted on writing in the English language: the influences of neoliberalism, of complicit institutions, and of the linguistic priorities of the state and of empire. Anticolonial writers in the U.S. and across the globe have long modeled alternative crafts which reject these priorities, and continue to do so in this present moment. Yet Craft still haunts our writing; these notes aim to clarify it, so we can rid ourselves of its influence.

Above all, Craft is the result of market forces; it is therefore the result of imperial forces, as the two are so inextricably bound up together as to be one and the same. The Craft which is taught in Western institutions, taken up and reproduced by Western publishers, literary institutions, and awards bodies, is a set of regulatory ideas which curtail forms of speech that might enact real danger to the constellation of economic and social values which are, as I write this, facilitating genocide in Palestine and elsewhere across the globe. If, as Audre Lorde taught us, the master's tools cannot dismantle the master's house, then Craft is the process by which our own real liberatory tools are dulled, confiscated, and replaced. We believe our words sharper than they turn out to be. We play with toy hammers and think we can break down concrete. We think a spoon is a saw.

In the title poem of Solmaz Sharif's collection Look, she writes:

> Whereas
> *Well, if I were from your culture, living in this country,*

said the man outside the 2004 Republican National
Convention, *I would put up with that for this country*;
Whereas I felt the need to clarify: *You would put up with*
TORTURE, you mean and he proclaimed: *Yes*;

In a lecture, Sharif describes the erasure and reduction the poem demanded of this moment, which we might also understand to be the demands of Craft. What the poem simplified into that brief section existed in real life as a prolonged encounter of violent rhetoric, and what the demands of the poem erased was the violence of a liberal protestor who stood by, ignored this encounter, and said to the Republican that while he didn't agree with what he said, he knew he was a good person. Sharif calls this "the most violent betrayal and politically destructive decision this poem made me make, making me question whether a good poem is forever in fact irreconcilable with the nuanced reckoning our lives actually depend on." All the qualities of Craft, the qualities which make a "good" poem, pressured this violence—the violence of the liberal American unwilling to put their body and their peace of mind on the line, a violence which might exist fundamentally outside the boundaries the lyric can address—into disappearing. Craft success is contingent upon ethical and political failure.

This is what Craft does to our writing: pressures and pressures until what matters, what we need to say, gets pushed to the margins or disappeared entirely. It is a Craft decision to describe Palestinians as human animals. It is a Craft decision to pressure U.S. officials not to use the word "ceasefire" or "de-escalation." It is a Craft decision to describe Israelis as "children of light" and Palestinians as "children of darkness." It is a Craft decision to begin interviews demanding Palestinians condemn violent resistance, a Craft decision to erase the perpetrators of bombings from headlines describing the bombings, a Craft decision to question the reliability of Palestinian death counts. These are Craft decisions because they are decisions which occur in language, and that language feeds and is in turn fed by policy. Somebody, with a name and an address, wrote, vetted, revised, and spoke aloud these words. The tools they used to do it, the ideologies which filled their vocabulary—these are Craft.

Craft is a machine for regulation, estrangement, sanitization. Palestine and all the struggles with which it is bound up require of us, in any and all forms of speech going forward, a commitment to constant and escalating betrayals of this machine. It requires that we poison and betray Craft at all turns.

II.

To write in solidarity with Palestine is to write amidst the long middle of revolution.

Between 1936 and 1939, Palestinian fellahin revolted against the economic deprivations imposed by the British Mandate and a growing Zionist movement in Palestine. Their revolt involved coordinated general strikes and violent resistance to the beginnings of ethnic cleansing and forced displacement. In response, the British instituted a set of policies which would become the 1945 "Defence (Emergency) Regulations", which allowed British officers to bring about the full repressive strength of empire to bear on Palestinian peasantry to brutally destroy the revolt. After the Nakba, these regulations served as the basis for much of the state of Israel's legal governmental structure.

For seventy-five years, then, Palestinians have existed—violent or not, political or not, active or not—in a state of revolt. We are legally defined as such; the law and its human enforcers across the globe act accordingly. This means that as long as Palestinians have lived under the colonization of the Zionist state, and until Palestinians are no longer subject to a state whose definitional contours are premised on their existence as essentially threatening others, the revolt has been, and is, *in progress*. It is a daily lived thing, and Palestinians have always labored to define its shape for themselves: the Great Revolt, the First Intifada, the Second Intifada, the March of Return, the Unity Intifada, the myriad forms of resistance both minute and maximal, spontaneous and organized, armed and unarmed—these are part of the long and ongoing essential Intifada, a long and ongoing revolution that has taken many forms and will continue to evolve, and whose endpoint is liberation.

The Freedom Theater in Jenin refugee camp was founded by

Juliano Mer Khamis and Zakaria Zubeidi in 2006, out of the rubble of the Stone Theater, which had been founded by Juliano's mother Arna and was destroyed by Israel. The Freedom Theater's work is premised in part on the notion that "the third Intifada will be a cultural one." Yet crucially, Juliano stressed: "What we are doing in the theatre is not trying to be a replacement or an alternative to the resistance of the Palestinians in the struggle for liberation, just the opposite. This must be clear." Palestine demands that all of us, as writers and artists, consider ourselves in principled solidarity with the long cultural Intifada that is built alongside and in collaboration with the material Intifada. We are writing amidst its long middle; the page is a weapon.

III.

The long middle is the state of the dailiness, oppression so pervasive as to form an atmosphere we move through.

The long middle is not a condition of time; we might be nearer to the end of revolution than the beginning, we might be nearer liberation than defeat, but our experience and our actions exist within the frame we can see, the frame of the long middle. Liberation is the end, but it is a geographical end rather than a temporal one, a soil and not an hour. We move *towards* it— sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, but always. It is the location by which we orient our movement. We know it because it gets closer, not necessarily because it comes sooner.

(And liberation moves too, it has its own sort of agency, it can dance a little, as you stare through the hole in the fence you've just cut you might feel a hand on your shoulder, someone standing by your side like a friend, liberation letting you know what it feels like, that you're going the right way.)

The long middle, then, is the affective experience of moving inside the dailiness, inside the structural and therefore constant violence that forms the machinery of genocide and greases its wheels. Yet this affective experience also is, or might be, one of a counter and opposing dailiness: the dailiness of resistance and unrelenting struggle. This counter-dailiness is modeled by Palestinians, whose struggle within the

long middle takes an astonishing diversity of forms—forms of care, of tenderness, of violence, of ingenuity, resource, and survival.

This constant Intifada is the path through the long middle. Intifada is a shaking off of oppression, shaking it off like a layer of dust. This is a bodily action, to shake, to convulse oneself in a constant motion of refusal, to be clean in the face of the world. We will get tired. Our muscles will tear, and then get stronger. Someone falls, we pick them up. We fall, we are lifted by others. We must continue.

IV.

We must ask: what does this require of us, then—to write amidst the long middle of Intifada? What might it mean for how we approach the page as a front of the long war?

The Brazilian antifascist theatermaker Augusto Boal wrote, in Theater of the Oppressed, that traditional Aristotelian narrative structures are coercive tools of the bourgeoisie, serving to purge an audience's revolutionary emotion and with it the obligation to intervene in an unfolding narrative as an active participant. This coercion is intended to make us feel as though world-historical events are beyond our grasp, that we have no agency within them and should remain within the status quo, which is only the dailiness. As Boal argues:

> "The poetics of Aristotle is the poetics of oppression: the world is known, perfect or about to be perfected, and all its values are imposed on the spectators, who passively delegate power to the characters to act and think in their place. In so doing the spectators purge themselves of their tragic flaw—that is, of something capable of changing society. A catharsis of the revolutionary impetus is produced!"

This catharsis makes witnesses of us, and nothing else.

(We should be suspicious of "witness," too. In the West, in English, a witness is only ever in service of the law, their testimony only meant to convince a judge. The words and the positions they require of us are already tainted; the law won't save us, the law is the one that kills us.)

Palestine requires that we abandon this catharsis. Nobody should get out of our work feeling purged, clean. Nobody should live happily during the war. Our readers can feel that way when liberation is the precondition for our work, and not the dream. When it is the place we stand, and not the place we shake ourselves towards.

In this way, what the long middle of revolution requires, what Palestine requires, is an approach to writing whose primary purpose is to *gather others up with us*, to generate within them an energy which their bodies cannot translate into anything but revolutionary movement. This is what Boal modeled for us in his theatrical experiments, which were dedicated to empowering audiences to *act*, to participate in a creative struggle to envision and embody alternatives. For Boal, theater was not revolution, but it was a rehearsal for the revolution, meant to gather communities together in that rehearsal. Creative work readies us for material work, by offering a space to try out strategies, think through contradictions, remind us of our own agency.

We must be engaged in this kind of writing, which calls others into mobilization, generating feelings within our audiences that cannot be dispersed through the act of reading, but must be carried out into collective action. You sit, you read something, you feel grief or anger or joy, you get it all out, you put it down, you go about business as usual—this is the coercive affective system that Craft insists upon. We must write in such a way that there is no business, there is no usual. We must write so that, as Boal says, "the action ceases to be presented in a deterministic manner, as something inevitable, as Fate… Everything is subject to criticism, to rectification. All can be changed, and at a moment's notice."

V.

The facilitation of this genocide is contingent upon the great discursive and material weapon of the West: the ontological categories of "terrorist" and "terrorism."

We must remember that terrorism does not describe an objective reality; it is, like other pieces of language weaponized to murder, an ideological

word used by ideological powers, with specific legislative and carceral bodies attached to its use.

C. Heike Schotten, in *Queer Terror: Life, Death, and Desire in the Settler-Colony*, offers us the only definition of terrorism that matters. She writes that the figure of the terrorist:

> "…can be understood as the contemporary settler state's moralized imperial name for the unthinkable indigenous remainder that, in the insistence on remaining, challenges the settler state's claim to sovereignty, security, and civilizational value. Indeed, indigenous peoples' continued existence not only challenges settler sovereignty's claim to legitimacy and 'first'-ness, but is the harbinger of that sovereignty's death insofar as they become legible to it as existing."

Terrorism is the great weapon of the West. It is used only against those who can fit inside its scope, and that is not everyone. It is the indigenous remainder, and those in solidarity with them, in the scope; no one else appears. Land defenders blocking Cop City appear in the scope, protestors fighting police brutality appear in the scope. Terrorism does only what it was designed to do only to those it was designed to target. Terrorism cannot be recuperated. We cannot use or weaponize it for our own purposes. It means nothing to call Israeli or American violence terrorist violence, because terrorism is a one-sided weapon and its bullets belong to the state. The state cannot appear in the scope. In trying to prove that we are not terrorists, or prove that someone else is a terrorist, we reify that the weapon of terrorism ought to exist at all, and that the problem is simply giving it the right target. We reload the weapon ourselves when we do this. Instead, as Schotten argues:

> "If the only options are… to side with a futurist, settler, and imperial 'us' (whether as avowed advocates of empire or its collaborationist liberal compromisers) or with a queered, 'savage,' and 'terrorist' other, the choice, I think, is clear: we must choose to stand with the 'terrorists.'"

This choice must shape our writing. No more conversation between the sword and the neck. No more attempting to prove that the oppressed are the neck and not the sword, to point the sword in a direction that will satisfy its blade. It doesn't matter. This applies to a multitude of other

words whose meanings are situated outside of our control. The language is poisoned already. There is no cure.

What does that choice make possible? In her short film "In the Future We Ate From the Finest Porcelain," Larissa Sansour has a character use the phrase "narrative terrorism." This can be our approach: to engage in a guerilla war on the page, to consider it an additional front in our solidarity with those who will always and forever be the targets of the state's weapons. One way to think of this is to consider what narrative means when it is firmly on the side of those rendered terrorists, on the side of the colonized and the oppressed, on the side of those in the scope. What tactics, shapes, strategies and necessities do their struggles demand of our narratives? How might our narratives serve the haunting of the indigenous remainder, eating away at the foundations of empire like termites? How might our writing, in the words of Palestinian intellectual and martyr Bassel Al-Araj, "live like a porcupine, fight like a flea"? And, perhaps most importantly, how can we refuse the integration of these choices and this language into a new neoliberal set of constraints that pay lip service to the struggle but work to neutralize it nonetheless? That is, how can we continue to globalize the Intifada without allowing it to be merely subsumed into the project of globalization?

We might escalate this narrative terrorism towards a constant aesthetic terrorism; we might pursue infrastructural damage to the arts and to the structures of publishing. This might mean, among other things, clogging submission portals, hijacking the space of the bio, as Rasha Abdulhadi has modeled, hijacking the interview and the podcast and the craft talk and the classroom and the call for submissions and the $75 payment via Venmo for the poem. It might mean writing things that are unpublishable and forcing publishers into doing it anyway; it might mean circumventing or ignoring the structures of publishing in favor of means of circulation outside the bounds of capital and therefore free from the grasp of the invisible hand. It might mean boycott, pressure, and refusing to allow the return of the oppressive dailiness in any space we inhabit. It might mean being loud, annoying, and resolutely steadfast in our refusals and our insistences. It might mean joining with writers who are extending solidarity beyond the page and into direct actions

against the complicity of our institutions, literary or otherwise. It might mean, too, building alternative and sustained networks of support for our fellow writers who lose jobs, opportunities, or face harassment. Like a net, we tie ourselves to one another to stop the dailiness from getting through; we tie ourselves tight enough so none of us get lost along the way. Maximal commitment, minimal loneliness, to paraphrase a comrade.

VI.

We should betray Craft by replacing it with political thought.

The PFLP's 1969 document, "Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine" (developed, in part, by the Palestinian writer, revolutionary, and martyr Ghassan Kanafani) notes:

> One of the basic conditions of success is a clear perspective of things: a clear perspective of the enemy and a clear perspective of the revolutionary forces. It is in this light that the strategy of the struggle is determined, and without this perspective, national action becomes an impetuous gamble which soon ends in failure. Revolutionary political thought is not an abstract idea hanging in a vacuum, or a mental luxury, or an intellectual hobby for the educated, which we can, if we wish, lay aside as an unnecessary luxury. Scientific revolutionary thought is clear thought whereby the masses are able to understand their enemy, his points of weakness or strength and the forces which support and ally themselves to the enemy.

If we are to consider our writing a space in which to fight, we'd better know who we're fighting, who we're fighting *with*, and why. Political thought and political education are the vital building blocks of that knowledge. Craft asks us to consider the language first and the politics second, tells us that a political education is not central but peripheral to being a writer. We must reject this. As Amiri Baraka argued in a 2004 lecture on art and politics:

> "You must raise the level of our understanding of the world… so that we understand the causal connections in the world, why it acts

> the way it does. So that we don't believe everybody who smiles at us and gives us a broom is our friend. So that we know who are our friends and who are our enemies, and right now so that we can build that united front. What is the artist's job? To make war. The artist's job is unrelenting war on evil."

Baraka tells us we are making war, and war requires strategy. Political thought is what provides the strategy for an artistic war. Political thought is the enemy of Craft; Craft is a machine to elide and foreclose political thought. This must be our constant betrayal, to know now that the lyric is not as valuable as the polemic. That the sonnet must give way to the photocopied and wheatpasted list of companies and individuals with financial ties to the genocide. That political thought is not only an option for artists but a duty, an obligation and a fundamental necessity. That it supersedes the line break, the marginalia, the invocation of the muse. Better to know what we're saying and why, and to say it with force, like a stone hurled from the river that reaches the sea.

VII.

The craft for the long Intifada is made and remade each day by resistance.

Iwrote all this because I needed it, or something like it. I have felt unable to write and needed a way back in. I was suspicious of writing, of what its powers really are in a moment of crisis, and I was equally suspicious of the more common ways we have to answer that question. I needed more than healing, witness, catharsis, community, imagining otherwise. I needed something that Craft does not contain, is in fact devoted to purging from "writing" in its professionalization and enforced respectability.

In September 2021, six Palestinian prisoners escaped from Gilboa prison by tunneling out with a spoon. Among them was Zakaria Zubeidi of the Freedom Theater, further reminding us that the cultural revolt is inseparable from the material one. One of the other escapees, Mohammed al-Ardah, said they did it to show "the occupation is a

mere illusion made of dust." This illusion of dust coating our bodies, drowning us in cruelty. We move with Intifada to shatter the illusion.

This is what I need. Not Craft, but the immeasurable creative force that breaks a prison using only the artifacts of bare survival which have been allotted to us, and the clarity of knowing why we did it. This is what life looks like. This is something we can do with spoons.

Above all, Craft is what keeps us polite while the boot is on our neck or on somebody else's. And we cannot afford that, not now and not going forward. As June Jordan wrote, in *Civil Wars*:

> "If you make and keep my life horrible then, when I can tell the truth, it will be a horrible truth; it will not sound good or look good or, God willing, feel good to you, either. There is nothing good about the evils of a life forced into useless and impotent drift and privation. There is very little that is attractive or soothing about being strangled to death, whether it is the literal death of the body or the actual death of the soul that lying, that the humiliation and the evil of self-denial, guarantees. Extremity demands, and justifies, extreme response. Violation invites, and teaches, violence. Less than that, less than a scream or a fist, less than the absolute cessation of normal events in the lock of abnormal duress is a lie and, worse than that, it is blasphemous ridicule of the self."

Craft is that lie. This Craft of the state, the Craft of the weapons manufacturing board members, the silent, silencing universities, the financially imbricated publishers, and the complicit awards bodies. We have to abandon it and write with sharper teeth, without politeness, without compromise. We have to learn, or build, or steal, or steal back, the craft we need for the long Intifada, which we carry with us to liberation and beyond.

ANTI-ZIONIST ABECEDARIAN

after you've finished
building your missiles & after your borders
collapse under the weight of their own split
databases
every worm in this
fertile & cursed
ground will be its own country. for us
home never was a place in dirt or even
inside the skin but
just exists in language. let me explain. my people
kiss books as a form of prayer. if dropped we
lift them to our lips &
mouth an honest & uncomplicated apology—
nowhere on earth belongs to us.
once a man welcomed me home as i entered the old city, so i
pulled out a book of poems to show him my papers—my
queer city of paper—my people's ink
running through my blood.
settlers believe land can be possessed
they carve their names into firearms &
use this to impersonate the dead—we are
visitors here on earth.
who but men blame the angels for the wild
exceptionalism of men?
yesterday a bird flew through an airport & i watched that border
zone collapse beneath its wings.

(sam sax)

23/08/2021
Mujaawarah (neighboring… sort of) as manifested in my life

I would like to start by asserting that *mujaawarah* for me represents a main hope in today's world – mujaawarah as a medium for learning, social action, and understanding; as a way to regain rootedness, spirit and ability of regeneration, sense of community, who we are as well as regain full attentiveness to inner callings and to what is happening around us; as a means to deal with oppression and heal from modern superstitions; as an alternative to institutions and institutional categories in relating to one another and understanding the world; as a social "structure" where relationships and well-being have priority over products and outcomes; as a main protector of diversity, abundance, and natural immune systems; as main weaver of the fabric in communities; and as an embodiment of equality, fairness, reciprocity, sharing, freedom, honesty, dignity, and multiple-valued logic. Mujaawarah is crucial in the gift culture where ideas (among other things) are shared freely, honestly, generously, with no control by any authority.

Simply put, a mujaawarah is a group of people who want and decide to be together, with no authority within the group and no authority from outside.

Most of my life, I was either in institutions or trying to live outside their dictates through mujaawarahs. Since meanings in life are contextual and experiential, I will write about my understanding of mujaawarah basing it mainly on my experiences and making sense of them. I have been increasingly convinced during the past 40 years that the opposite of progress (as it has been conceived and practiced in modern times) is not backwardness or underdevelopment but being rooted in place, culture, and community; i.e., the opposite of progress is rootedness. The main medium in rootedness and community is mujaawarah, and the core value is wisdom. Prior to modern civilization, the main medium for learning was mujaawarah, and the main check against corruption and greed was wisdom. A main conviction in today's dominant world is that there is a single undifferentiated universal path for progress. Modern civilization is governed by control, greed, and winning. Means of winning include controlling meanings and

measuring people along a vertical line. Thus, co-authoring meanings and living in harmony with Imam Ali's statement ["the worth of a person is what s/he *yuhsen*" – with the various meanings of yuhsen: what one does well, useful, beautiful, giving, and respectful] can turn things around and put us on the path of wisdom. Co-authoring meanings is a natural ability, a responsibility, and a right.

British occupation: transforming mujaawarah (neighboring) into muhaawarah (dialogue)

In his memoirs of Jerusalem during transition from Ottoman rule to British occupation, Wasif Jouhariyyeh mentions that a first regulation the British imposed was related to entering Aqsa mosque and its yard. Before that, the yard was open to people from different religions and backgrounds with no restrictions where, through mujaawarahs, they interacted and children played together. The British regulation assigned days for Muslims, others for Christians, and others for Jews – claiming it was to protect rights of all! That regulation transformed the yard from a place of hospitality and plurality into one which planted seeds of sectarianism.

That story reveals the role of mujaawarahs in learning and building community and in weaving the spiritual-social-intellectual-cultural fabric among people. It included collective memory that linked people with the past and with one another. The British replaced mujaawarahs (that bring people together) by muhaawarahs (that use words and concepts which usually pull people apart). The story reveals the "sweet" approach Britain usually uses in its "divide and rule" policy; how it uses words (rights, dialogue, regulations…) to control minds, actions, and perceptions.

Early roots of mujaawarah in my life, and during the 1970s

In 1948, at age 7, I (with my family) was uprooted from our home and community in Jerusalem and moved to Ramallah. For several years, eight of us (my parents, 3 aunts, two sisters and I) lived in one room. That room was where we slept, ate, played (especially in winter), and

where my mother and aunts worked sewing clothes. Despite conditions and limited resources, those years were full of love, caring, and sharing within family and with neighbors; they formed, for me, the basis of the meaning of mujaawarah (though no one used the term at that time). With no TV then, evening gatherings of relatives, neighbors, and friends formed mujaawarahs where we (children) learned about community, culture, and life, and where the social fabric was woven every evening, and wisdom was instilled in us through stories we heard. Jokes and songs filled us with joy and happiness. Current entertainment comes via lifeless devices that cannot replace face to face interactions; if machines add to them, fine; if they replace them, we need to be cautious.

In 1967, Israel occupied the rest of Palestine, and in 1971 the Palestine Liberation Organization was expelled from Jordan. At first, we felt we lost our base but, soon, tremendous spirit, energy, and aliveness were manifested across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where groups were formed spontaneously and creatively (without hierarchy, authority, or budget) and did what they felt needed to be done and they could do. Those mujaawarahs were self-formed, self-ruled, and self-supported and, at the same time, they interacted in a mutually enriching way. They protected us from feeling desperate, lost, and indifferent; they spread without planning (no think tanks, no brainstorming, or any such violent terms). That autonomy and spirit of regeneration started disappearing when the Palestinian-Jordanian Committee was formed in 1978 to take care of us! Every time someone came to take care of us (from above or outside, and not reciprocally), we ended up being robbed of something precious. That helped me realize that the opposite of institutions is not chaos or anarchy but mujaawarahs.

It was during the 1970s that mujaawarah became an integral part of my thinking and doing. Its first manifestation was “voluntary work” groups. For 10 years, we met and decided where to go and work that week. No membership, no budget, no authority. Again, that autonomous creative spirit started disappearing when the “higher council of voluntary work” was formed in 1981 linking the work with political parties. I followed the path of mujaawarah in my work in schools where I encouraged students to form “math & science clubs” and meet on Thursdays after school, where each student would come with a question

that s/he wanted to explore. They flourished until the Israeli military governor of the West Bank banned those mujaawarahs in 1976 (students continued their explorations at home; mujaawarahs depend mainly on what is available).

Mujaawarahs during the first intifada (1987-92) and beyond

Mujaawarahs were again the main factor in energizing and allowing us to do what needed to be done, during the first intifada (1987-92), when Israel closed all modern institutions (universities, schools, professional societies, social clubs…), which was a blessing in disguise, since closure of modern institutions helped revitalize rooted social structures which Israel could not close such as families, neighborhoods, and mosques which spontaneously and creatively regained their role in managing life affairs. Most significant was formation of neighborhood committees mujaawarahs especially in relation to learning and communal farming. Israel's reaction to these committees was revealing. While it did not mind international conferences in Jerusalem denouncing closure of schools, universities, etc, it issued harsh military orders against those involved in neighborhood committees! That awakened me to the difference between "**free** thinking and expression" and "**freeing** thinking and expression"; the two freedoms are worlds apart. In neighborhood committees, people did not waste time denouncing and demanding; they freed themselves from such distractions and felt free to form groups to do what needed to be done.

In 1989, I resigned from Birzeit University and started Tamer Institute for Community Education which revolved around learning (without teaching) within "learning environments" where youth formed "mujaawarahs" around "reading and expressing" within the Reading Campaign [see my article "The Reading Campaign Experience within Palestinian Society: Innovative Strategies for Learning and Building Community", *Harvard Educational Review*, Feb. 1995.] When I joined Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies in 1997 I established the Arab Education Forum, which included Qalb el-Umour that consisted of small groups (mujaawarahs) in Arab countries who met regularly in order to produce magazines or videos about aspects in their lives.

Mujaawarah in two Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank (2008-2013)

Between 2008 and 2010, I worked with teachers and mothers in Shufaat Refugee Camp, and during 2012 until June 2013, in Dheisheh Refugee Camp with 16 young men and women. In Shufaat, I was amazed at what mothers were able to do under unbelievably bad conditions. Their knowledge in dealing with life in terms of providing hope and love, and having non-stop energy in managing and doing what needs to be done, for many people in small spaces was simply a miracle. I realized how shallow, naïve, irrelevant and blind modern words such as training and empowerment are! Mothers' lives formed the main theme in my work with them. Their diverse knowledges are usually invisible to the educated, simply because we academics are unable to see what cannot be expressed in words, and measured by numbers.

In Dheisheh Camp, the project's title was Campus in Camps. It took place under the umbrella of al-Quds University. The 16 participants and I walked our common journey along a rugged wild road in learning, enjoying the beauty, aliveness, and difficulties of the wilderness. We referred to it as "House of Wisdom" (inspired by Beit al-Hikmah in Baghdad 1200 years ago). Mujaawarah was the medium we used. It included unlearning much of what participants learned in controlled environments; re-thinking academic categories and professional terms and, instead, choosing words and meanings rooted in life and culture; and unplugging selves from modern superstitions such as the belief in a single universal path for progress. A most wonderful aspect of that experience was the fact that participants often shared our discussions with people in the camps.

Two other main mujaawarahs I was involved in

The first: A mujaawarah in January 2004 where ten practicing artists from 8 Arab countries joined Mohieddin Labbad (artist and graphic designer) in Cairo for several weeks. A book was produced that reflected what happened during and after the mujaawarah. Although they all had jobs and were busy, yet all went to Cairo. By being

together, they felt they could gain a broader understanding of what they do, acquire new skills and perspectives, and learn to do better, what they were doing. The gathering was very inspiring and convinced us even more that such mediums (where the learner is driven from within and is responsible for one's learning) should again become legitimate in educational institutions.

What took place in Cairo embodied several convictions: every person is a teacher and a learner (mutual nurturing); each person is uniquely complete (no one is a copy of another); learning involves building the inner world of each person and the social-intellectual-cultural fabric among people; listening is as important as speaking; and mature experiences precede or accompany words and concepts. Participants exchanged skills, publications, books and articles. Labbad's workplace and all the people and places they visited, formed rich learning environments where friendships were developed and arrangements for future cooperation on common projects started.

The second main mujaawarah was with Sayyed Diwwi, a storyteller and last poet of the Hilali epic. Ten young people from 5 Arab countries participated in addition to storytellers from Egypt, Palestine, and Lebanon. Participants visited a group of stick dancers in Mallawi and watched a performance by the group – which embodied, very nicely, learning through mujaawarah, where children were part of the performance all the time; they learned by neighboring those who had long and rich experience in dancing with sticks. In addition, participants neighbored storytellers in the Oasis of Siwah. [That mujaawarah in all its aspects was reflected in a book and a video.]

The Hawzeh (mujaawarah) in Qum, Iran

Two aspects fascinated me in the Iranian culture: poetry and *hawzeh*. I don't know of any country in the world today where poetry is part of daily living and interactions other than Iran. What pained me most, however, was the absence of that rich culture in education. Until 6 years ago, hawzeh was still the main medium of learning in Qum. The decision to abandon hawzeh and adopt courses was strange. I was invited twice to speak at the University of Religions and Denominations

in Qom, where I tried to explain that the loss of mujaawarah is a loss not only to Iranians but to the world. I tried to explain that modern pedagogy is contrary to mujaawarah and yuhsen (both of which are contextual, relational, and form part of their culture). However, the power of academia which treats knowledge and people as commodities prevailed.

More thoughts on mujaawarahs

What was true about the mujaawarahs that I experienced was the fact that they did not need institutional terms and categories (such as evaluation, development, competition, success, failure, hierarchy, and authority). Instead, they needed reclaiming "organic" words such as *muthanna*, *bahth*, *yuhsen*, *ahaali*, *hayy*, *ijtihaad*, and *tanaaqush* (which I will elaborate on later).

There was often a need to discuss rooted useful knowledge vs. rootless verbal knowledge; knowledge that starts with life vs. fragmented knowledge that starts with academic categories; knowledge that forms a "universe" vs. one that claims to be universal; interconnectedness vs. interdisciplinary; knowledge as wisdom vs. knowledge as power; knowledge manifested in one's lifestyle vs. one manifested in exams; knowledge connected to a place vs. one in artificial space. Modern universities confuse tools with values treating e.g. excellence as a value rather than as a tool that can serve different values; they focus on texts without context; on textbooks instead of reflective books; on research more than search. Knowledge one gets in Palestinian universities qualifies her/ him to apply to any university in the world but usually useless in one's home place.

Mujaawarah can only be lived; it requires physical presence and face to face conversations. It happens at the communal level, where learning takes place in freedom, not fear. It can only happen with trust, honesty, mutual nurturance, among people who are ready to *really* listen to one another with full attentiveness. The stress is not so much on information and content as on re-thinking and unlearning much of what has been learned before entering the mujaawarah – including beliefs. Mujaawarah does not have to follow any particular format. It embodies

a simple idea in the sense that it can be done by all people using what is available. Though simple, it is usually not easy, because it is contrary to what we were taught. All what mujaawarah needs are people who decide to meet over a period of time to learn what they want to learn, or do what they feel needs to be done, in freedom with no authority they have to please; a social structure where people learn, think, act, relate, and manage their affairs outside confines of institutions. It does not require license, budget, professionals or visible outcomes. It stresses convictions ignored in modern institutions such as every person is a source of meaning and understanding and every person is unique (cannot be compared with others along a vertical line). As a medium for learning, it is radically different from institutional learning. In mujaawarah, the subject of study includes people's lives in the context where they live. Learning is not something a person gives to another (as in educational institutions) but something a person does to oneself (within a group) that involves sharpening character through actions and interactions. However, it is worth stressing that a mujaawarah is a medium not a value (a bunch of thieves can form mujaawarah); that's why wisdom needs to accompany mujaawarahs we form or talk about.

Arabic Words crucial in mujaawarahs

I mentioned that in describing mujaawarahs, we need to reclaim words rich in meaning and rooted in life, culture, and community such as bahth (search), tanaaqush (discussion), ijtihaad (independent investigation of meaning), muthanna (dual), ahaali (people-in-community), hayy (neighborhood), and yuhsen (what a person does well, beautiful, useful, giving, and respectful). These words do not have synonyms in English; words I put help as "approximations".

Bahth tells who the person is. Rumi said, "a person is what s/ he searches for". A person is not defined by the research one is involved in but what one searches for in life (suppressed in academia). In mujaawarah, everyone starts with what one searches for in life (which forms her/ his main contribution). This is crucial in knowing who we are.

Tanaaqush nicely describes the interaction within mujaawarah. Like most Arabic words ,it stems from a root (a verb). The root

naqasha refers to chiseling a stone which usually means making it more beautiful. Ancient Arabs, it seems, saw the purpose of tanaaqush (discussion) is not to win but for the different parties to come out more beautiful. Discussion in a mujaawarah is not about ideas or opinions as much as about those expressing them; about what happens to them and relations among them. The purpose is to deepen understanding of self and life, and weave fabric with whom and what is around. Mujaawarah usually has an intellectual component, but within relationships where participants are mirrors to one another. It can help each person realize and confront one's myths. Just like we need a mirror to see dirt on our face, we need human mirrors to see our myths – which all of us have, without being aware of it. In mujaawarah, one feels safe to confront one's myths; this is probably the biggest gift people in mujaawarah can give each other: humility and readiness to be "converted". The biggest conversion in my life (which was very hard for me to admit for many years) happened through mujaawarah with my illiterate mother, which was the longest I ever had in my life – when I became aware that her math was impossible for me to understand and do. It touched my deepest convictions and produced most profound conversions. The fact it started with math (which is considered universal) made the conversions more significant. Our relationship was one between two worlds that did not intersect (just like real and plastic flowers; my world being the plastic). Whereas she had understanding of why she was doing what she did, the main reason I studied and taught the math I was given is that it came from authority, whose power stemmed from symbols and perceptions.

Ijtihaad is a basic word in Arabic related to the responsibility (and ability and right) of every person to independently investigate and form meaning. Such meanings are connected to experience, reflection, freedom, dignity, and context. In mujaawarah, each person has to practice this duty; it is important in avoiding being consumer of meanings – a main engine of domination.

Muthanna embodies a relationship radically different from "one and many" or what is referred to as "the other". It is a grammatical form representing a relation between two people that does not exist in any European language (except ancient Greek). Whereas Aristotle's logic

"everything is A or not-A but not both", and Hegel's logic "A and not-A can be combined to higher synthesis", in the logic of muthanna A stays A and B stays B but the relation is important to both. It is not a legal, economic or any such bond. Whereas Descartes said, "I think therefore I am", muthanna embodies "you are, therefore I am": my existence is connected to yours, a relation between "I" and "thou".

Hayy (neighborhood) and ahaali (people-in-community) are two other words connected to mujaawarahs. Hayy literally means alive; it is aliveness that characterizes a neighborhood and not just proximity or agreed upon rules. Ahaali refers to people connected to a geographical place, a common history and collective memory, and common culture. As a result of the Oslo agreement in 1993, Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were transformed from ahaali to citizens. Whereas relationships among ahaali are basically to one another, basic relationship of citizens is with official institutions. The power of what happened during the 18 days in Cairo and during the 20 days in Istanbul (and in Tehran in 1978) reflect the fact that the spirit of ahaali is still alive in those cities; what happened form the biggest mujaawarahs in history. They were not revolutions or even evolutions, but manifestations of the deep human spirit that is fundamentally free, spontaneous, creative, incredible, and unpredictable. This rooted spirit is connected to ahaali. These aspects underlie the reason why I never felt as hopeful in my 72 years as I feel now. Young people did not get into dialectical dialogues but lived days where they shared hope, faith, and being ready to heal from modern illusions, superstitions, and categories that were dumped on them by institutions. Words such as success and failure are meaningless in describing what happened. The loss of the spirit of ahaali and the arrogance that exist in the West make it hard for people living there to see things in this light. [It is worth mentioning Newton as an example of such arrogance: he believed he discovered the laws God put in nature, which means he even limited the freedom of the Creator to be creative!]

I already spoke about yuhsen. I just want to stress it has been a most inspiring statement in my life. Since I read it in 1997, I feel it can form the vision for learning. Those who ask "how can 5 words form a whole vision?" can find the answer in what Naffari (an Arab Sufi) said

in Baghdad a thousand years ago: “the wider the vision, the less the words we need to express it”.

The roots of formal education in our countries

180 years ago, a main problem Britain faced was how to rule millions of Indians by a small number of British officers. Macaulay (who was assigned by Britain in 1835 to put a strategy for controlling India) found the answer: “We must do our best to form a class… Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect (…) we have to educate [them]”. Over the years, his words were “recycled” and today they give the aura of professionalism and appear to be knowledge-based. [The Arab Human Development Reports as well as official conferences and initiatives in the Arab world are good examples of the recycled language that carries Macaulay’s logic. The new language includes words such as development, evaluation, empowerment, rights, governance, quality, and knowledge society.] Prior to British occupation, Indians learned mainly through mujaawarahs. In an argument between Gandhi and Nehru, Nehru asked angrily: isn’t your aim to drive the British out of India? Gandhi said that his “greatest worry is for the British to leave and their institutions stay”. The nature of the “beast” is not in people but in institutions. The values that govern actions and relationships within institutions are control and winning.

Mujaawarah vs. anarchy

A word that is used to describe how to deal with control and domination is anarchy. I suggest mujaawarah instead. Even people like Chomsky could not find an English word that embodies what mujaawarah does. He uses anarchism which he describes as “a kind of tendency in human thought which shows up in different forms in different circumstances, and has some leading characteristics. Primarily it is a tendency that is suspicious and skeptical of domination, authority, and hierarchy. It assumes that the burden of proof for anyone in a position of power and authority lies on them. They have to give a reason for it. And if they

can't, which is the usual case, then the authority ought to be dismantled and replaced by something more free and just; anarchy is just that tendency, a conception of a society organized from below by direct participation with as little control as is feasible". For many, anarchy has negative connotations and stresses intellectual words such as "organized from below", "direct participation", "little control", and "dismantling authority". We should not blame Chomsky for not finding an English word rooted in people's lives, whose meaning grew out of experiences, and which can replace anarchy; the English language lacks such a living word. After all, why should the English (or Americans) invent a word for something that they don't practice in their lives? In contrast to anarchy, the tendency that Chomsky talks about is embedded in Arabic in the concept of mujaawarah and in Hindi in the concept of *swaraj* – both spring from deep cultures and rooted meanings. Mujaawarah stresses confronting cherished beliefs in oneself; and swaraj stresses the primacy of self-rule (as Gandhi translates swaraj). Both stress looking "inward", not outward, and both do not start with what they are against.

Throughout history, mujaawarahs were a main tool that people used to counter oppression; a main tool in protecting life, community, and sanity. Christianity started with a mujaawarah that consisted of Jesus and 12 disciples. For more than 300 years, Christianity flourished in the hearts, minds, and lives of people through mujaawarahs. It was not until Constantine declared his empire to be Christian that Christianity started to lose its soul. That declaration dismantled mujaawarahs and saved the empire from disintegration. However, the spirit of mujaawarah kept popping up every time oppression became intolerable. Liberation Theology in Latin America is one example. Another example is how 'Occupy Wall Street' resembles what the Palestinian Christ did 2000 years ago in Jerusalem: he carried a whip and led "occupy temple" movement, and drove moneylenders out! Similarly, Islam started with mujaawarahs, the first one consisted of Prophet Mohammad and his sahaabah (first followers). Again, that spirit kept popping up in Islamic societies every time oppression was inWtolerable. I witnessed that vividly in the first intifada when the "jaame" (one of two words used for mosque, which literally means "assembly place") flourished as a place for mujaawarahs when Israel

shut down all institutions. It became a place where people met to discuss what was happening, what they could do, and was also a place for distributing food and medicine. Every time religion became an institution, it lost that spirit. As for Blacks in the US, mujaawarahs around dancing, singing, and music were what kept them lively and alive and able to deal with unbearable oppression, for more than 200 years.

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What is interesting about organic flower plants is the fact that they have roots and they produce seeds. Those seeds are flown by winds into other places where they flourish and grow roots and produce new flowers and seeds. This is the lifecycle that embodies the spirit of regeneration. Similarly, mujaawarahs have roots and produce stories that can fly to other places, nurturing them and being nurtured by them. My dream is connected to this phenomenon: I believe the world is ready for "story-lines" where stories of mujaawarahs fly (just like airlines) in all directions – starting with those of the two big mujaawarahs: the 18 days in Cairo and the 20 days in Istanbul. The similarity in spirit between the two places is more than a coincidence; it is a "tale of two cities" of historical significance. After 100 years of tearing apart communities and peoples in the region (by Britain, France, and US), re-stitching the fabric within a civilization horizon, among peoples in the region (to include others later) is an idea whose time has come.

Ignoring the dangerous situation in the world and continuing to be hooked to institutional illusions and distractions will keep us blind to challenges we face in the real world. We have already entered a new era, which requires patience, trust, faith, and perseverance. What happened in Tahrir, Gezi and Wall Street reflect an understanding of life, which is profound, spontaneous, creative, responsible, and sacrificial, by people who had richness within, in relationships with one another, in their cultures and collective memories, communal roots, and common future. What happened was a surprise even to those who were there. It was not planned by the mind but stemmed from the heart – a manifestation of the miracle of life and rooted communal wisdoms.

Without wisdom, life on Earth is doomed. Whereas destruction is easy, protecting life requires wisdom, time, patience, and faith.

Modern progress is built mainly on invention of tools. If, for example, 100 people meet in a hall, and one person has a loudspeaker, that person will be heard more than others, not because s/he has wiser things to say but simply because s/he has a tool. Most modern tools are connected to domination and control. Mujaawarahs that are connected to liberation are our tool.

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