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After the Fact:
Potential Collectivities in Israel/Palestine

By

Shaul Setter

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

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This dissertation inquires into the question of collectivity in texts written in and about Israel/Palestine from the middle of the 20th century to the present day. In light of the current crisis in the configuration of both Israeli and Palestinian national collectivities, it explores the articulation of non-national collective formations in literary and cinematic texts. I read these texts not as sealed works that represent historically realized collectivities, but as creative projects whose very language and modalities speculatively constitute potential collectivities. Rejecting the progression of teleological history ruled by actualized facts, these projects compose a textual counter-history of Israel/Palestine. I therefore propose reading them outside of the national and state-centered paradigm that governs most political and cultural inquiries into Israel/Palestine, and suggest instead that they amount to an anti-colonial trajectory. The Hebrew and French texts discussed in the dissertation challenge their own fixed political positioning within the colonial matrix and offer a critique of European political dictates and artistic forms.

In Chapter One, I discuss S. Yizhar's constant return to the events of the 1948 war and his refusal to move beyond it and narrate post-1948 sovereign, statist time; I consider the different literary procedures he employs throughout his work to potentially (re)constitute – after the establishment of the Israeli state – a pre-1948, non-national collective formation in Israel/Palestine. I then move, in Chapter Two, to follow the revolutionary collective enunciation fashioned by Jean-Luc Godard and the Dziga-Vertov collective, a group of politically-active filmmakers formed in 1968. I investigate the collectivity they attempted to develop together with Palestinian fighters in 1969-1970, the project's collapse after what is known as Black September, and finally its reflective afterlife in the 1976 film *Ici et ailleurs.* Chapter Three delves into the texts Jean Genet dedicated to the Palestinian struggle in the 1970s and -80s. I discuss how, in addressing his writing to a non-historical Palestinian collectivity which by then had already disappeared, Genet defies the boundaries of liberal politics of representation, and calls for a different notion of a gestural, "scripted" anti-colonial struggle. In Chapter

Four I read contemporary Hebrew writer Haviva Pedaya's liturgical *piyyut* poetry, and ascertain how it may generate an oppositional history of Hebrew letters formulated from and towards Oriental collectivities, as a challenge to the modernist and secularist underpinnings of "modern Hebrew literature." Taken together, the projects I study recast Israel/Palestine as a political space in which both Palestinian and Jewish collectivities potentially emerge as anti-colonial, exilic, Eastern ones, formed in struggle and embedded in text.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction

From Imagined Communities to Potential Collectivities

Hebrew poet Sami Shalom Chetrit opens his 2003 collection of poems, *Poems in Ashdodian*, with the following lines:

אֲנִי כּוֹתֵב לָכֶם שִׁירִים
בְּלָשׁוֹן אַשׁדּוֹדִית
כּוּס אֶם אֶם אֶמְכֶם
כְלָה דַאר בּוּכֶם
שֶׁלֹא תָּבִינוּ מִלָה

I am writing to you poems
in an Ashdodian language
Kus em em emkum
Khla dar bukum
So that you won't understand a word.[1]

This poem seems to be written in Hebrew; yet its third and forth lines are curses in spoken Arabic, transliterated into the Hebrew in the original poem. Even more so, the poet declares, in this meta-poetic enunciation inaugurating the poem and the book, that he is actually writing in "an Ashdodian language." Having emigrated as a child from Morocco to Ashdod (a southern Israeli city on the Mediterranean shore near the Gaza strip) and grown up there during the 1960s, Chetrit may be signifying "Ashdodian" as a local dialect of the immigrants' city in opposition to formal, proper Hebrew. Far away from Israel's geographical-cultural center, the newly-arrived immigrants of Ashdod (most of them from Morocco), speak "Ashdodian," perhaps a sort of a Hebrew-Arabic fusion. But "Ashdodian" is also another language: in biblical Hebrew, "*Ashdodit*" signifies the language spoken by the residents of the major Philistine city of the same name.[2] Later on, from the medieval Hebrew poetry written in al-Andalus on, "Ashdodian" (together with "Ashkelonian") would come to signify more generally languages different from Hebrew, foreign tongues. So Chetrit may actually be declaring that he is writing his poem in a "foreign" language. Moreover, bearing in mind that in the Zionist discourse, the Palestinians have been often associated with the Philistines – forming a mythical genealogy of Israel's enemies – the foreign language Chetrit invokes here may indeed be the enemy's language, Arabic. Yet Chetrit does so, paradoxically, through an intertextual activation of a notion deriving from the history of Hebrew poetry itself. He furthermore asserts that he is "writing to you... so that you won't understand a word."

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[1]   Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Shirim be-ashdodit* [*Poems in Ashdodian*] (Tel Aviv: Andalus, 2003), p. 7.

[2]   See Nehemiah 13:23-24: "In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Amon, and of Moab: And their children spake half the speech of Ashdod [Ashdodian], and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people."

Addressing his poem to a "you" – a plural one in the Hebrew original [*la-khem*] – Chetrit nevertheless posits this address, from the very start, as destined to fail; instead of an act of imagined communication, where the speaker conveys his words to a future listener who could perceive and understand them, the poem assumes an incomprehensible address. He postulates a collectivity to which he addresses his words; but this is a collectivity incapable of decoding them. Indeed, the goal of this poetic enunciation seems to be the inevitable failure of address. Who is this incapable collectivity? It may be Hebrew speakers unable to understand "Ashdodian" – Arabic or Hebrew-Arabic, immigrants' dialect or a Philistine tongue; it may be the readers of Hebrew poetry who expect their poetry to be written in formal, "high", "poetic" Hebrew (with no curses, definitely not Arabic ones). The poem is addressed to that national collectivity – but only to assert its ineptitude; it uses the national Hebrew language to proclaim a different one.

Sami Shalom Chetrit is a prominent Mizrahi activist, poet and scholar.[3] As such, he knows a thing or two about the flaws of the Israeli national collectivity. His ongoing criticism of the Zionist project as an emphatically Ashkenazi, making explicit the connection between the Mizrahi and the Palestinian struggles of resistance, and his involvement with alternative grade school Kedma (which he founded) honoring the legacy of diasporic Arab Jewish communities marks a search for a different collective formation. In the last two decades, he has been living in the United States, having been kicked out of the national collectivity (at least symbolically). Writing in the United States in a Hebrew of sorts, thinking about the past Jewish communities in the Arab world and hoping for a different Jewish and Palestinian existence in the contemporary Middle East, Chetrit writes poems whose words are sometimes unintelligible. The above-quoted poem is unclear about whether a different collective formation – a different plural "you" that can understand Chetrit's Ashdodian – actually exists. Perhaps it doesn't as yet. But perhaps part of the poem's paradoxical effect, addressing the wrong "you," a "you" that cannot, and perhaps should not, understand the poem's language, is a constitution of a different collective formation, one for whom its Ashdodian words would

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Mizrahi Jews – literally, Eastern or Oriental Jews – came to signify Israeli Jews descended from the Jewish communities in the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Caucasus – including, significantly, from North African Jewish communities (such as the Jewish community in Morocco – where Chetrit himself was born), although geographically located in the Maghreb, that is the West (of the Arab world). Sometimes they are also signified as Sepharadi Jews – Jews descendants from Spain and Portugal, before the expulsion of the Jewish communities there at the end of the 15th century. There are commonly opposed to Ashkenzai Jews – descendants of the medieval Jewish communities along the Rhine, which later immigrated to Eastern and Central Europe. On the various definitions of Oriental Jews as ideologically loaded, see Ella Shohat, "Sepharadim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19/20 (Autumn 1988): 1-35; and "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29: 1 (Autumn 1999): 5-20. Lital Levy, "Reorienting Hebrew Literary History: The View from the East," *Prooftexts* 29:2 (2009): 127-72. See also Chetrit's own research in his other capacity as a scholar of political sociology, critically addressing the narrative of Mizrahi existence in Israel. Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Ha-ma'avak ha-mizrachi be-yisrael* 1948-2003 [*The Mizrahi Struggle in Israel 1948-2003*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2004).

be comprehensible. Rather than look for this alternative collectivity within political reality (after all, who *really* speaks "Ashdodian" nowadays?), we may read the poem as pointing to the potentiality of such a collectivity. While not addressing this collectivity – perhaps because there is nothing yet to address – the poem is actively engaged in negating a national collectivity and deliberately prevents this collectivity from understanding its words. Thus the poem sets the horizon of its own comprehensibility: it gestures towards an unrealized collectivity which could perhaps one day understand its words by rendering them comprehensible.

Textual Collectivities

This dissertation discusses the question of collectivity in Israel/Palestine. Collectivity has reappeared in the last decade as a prominent notion in both critical political theory and literary studies, after having been sidelined for years in critical discourse. There were many reasons for this: the bloody history of the 20th century was heavily charged with the murderous consequences of national collective formations;[4] within the context of the cold war, the notion of a collectivity was entirely aligned with one (and allegedly the wrong) side;[5] in the heyday of French theory, it was probably too *realistic*, too *humanistic*, not *discursive* enough. Many debates in political and cultural theory throughout 1980s and -90s revolved around the question of *identity* – identity politics, the constructed or hybrid natures of identity, identity critique – rather than around collectivity.[6] This tendency seems to have changed in recent years, with the notion of collectivity coming again to the fore in critical academic research. A highly influential essay posing the question of collectivity and its relations to textual practices is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 2003 *Death of a Discipline*. In this manifesto for a "New Comparative Literature," Spivak calls for a multilingual, adversarial, and engaged literary research fit for our contemporary planetary age and discusses, at length, the notion of "collectivities."[7] In contrast to the way "the question [of collectivities] is often

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[4] See, for example, Gilles Deleuze's suggestion that post-World War II cinema has ceaselessly coped with the disastrous effects of collective political action, of the masses becoming a prominent political agent; what was at the beginning of the 20th century the most radical utopia became, as the century progressed, its ultimate catastrophe. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 215-24.

[5] Jean-Luc Nancy, who places the question of community at the very core of his political theory, asserting that "'left' means, at the very least, that the political, as such, is receptive of what is at stake in community," nevertheless immediately adds that "the political is indissociable from something that the word 'communism' has expressed all too poorly." Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

[6] For a fundamental critique of identity politics, see Wendy Brown, *States of Injury* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). For a critique of this critique – all within the framework of identity politics – see Linda Alcoff's statement: "To reclaim the term 'realism,' to maintain the epistemic signification of identity, to defend any version of identity politics today is to swim upstream of strong academic currents in feminist theory, literary theory, and cultural studies." Linda Martín Alcoff, "Who's Afraid of Identity Politics?" in Paula M. L. Moya and Michael Hames-García, eds. *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[7] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), esp.

too easily answered" within contemporary political discourse, Spivak suggests that literary texts, together with literary studies, have the opportunity – if not obligation – to "stage" the question of collectivity differently.[8]

To that end, Spivak dispels two opposing notions of collectivity. The first is the one underpinning what she calls the "Old Comparative Literature": an abstract, unmarked, universalist collectivity for which (and about whom) every great literary text is presumably written. Giving form to some of the most basic and comprehensive human experiences, the literary text is, according to this view, at least potentially addressed to the most general collectivity of readers – to humanity as a whole. This universality of literature and its audience (part of the post-nationalist, humanistic credo of Comparative Literature at the moment of its founding, the middle of the 20th Century) has been thoroughly critiqued as ultimately Eurocentric, ignoring as it does linguistic and cultural differences. Indeed, it had a conservative and restrictive effect on the literary canon linked to an utterly depoliticized version of literary history as running unavoidably from Homer's Ulysses to Joyce's. It is a perception of literature and literariness as superseding national, ethnic, economic, and religious divides. The second notion of collectivity is a particularist one introduced by the once new and radical discipline of Area Studies. Informed by identity politics and minority discourse, this notion of a particularist collectivity is set around political divides, addressing from the very first the specific experiences of particular social groups. Thus, against the universalist inquiry of literary studies, it propagates politically-informed, sociological research, in which the notion of collectivity is never treated as conceptually abstract; the collectivities of Area Studies go hand in hand with the realized political collectivities "on the ground."

Spivak rejects these two opposing notions of collectivity. In their predetermined scope of the extension of the term, whether universalist or particularist, she argues, "[b]oth sides trivialize reading and writing as an allegory of knowing and doing. Both serve as powerful performative examples of an unexamined politics of collectivity."[9] Spivak's politics of collectivity, in contrast, seeks to open up a space between these two polarized yet equally rigid and preconceived notions. In such a space, collectivity is no longer assumed but rather formed and produced through the inner workings of the text itself, attending to "the question of the ceaselessly shifting collectivities in our disciplinary practice."[10] It therefore becomes for Spivak the undecidable element within the text: a text does not assume the collectivity to which it is addressed – humanity as a whole or one locatable social group – but rather engages in the "efforts to produce collectivities."[11] This undecidability, however, should not be confused with abstract universality: it is always produced vis-à-vis the social and political conditions from which the text emerges. The text does not simply adhere to a socio-historical factuality as the necessary context in which it *must* be positioned; but these conditions are

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chapter 2, "Collectivities," pp. 25-70.

[8] Ibid, p. 26.
[9] Ibid, p. 28.
[10] Ibid, p. 70.
[11] Ibid, p. 36.

simultaneously not declared as irrelevant facts that the literary text can simply transcend. Thus, the undecidable character of textual collectivity cannot be simply presupposed but needs to be formed; and it is formed through a complex negotiation with the socio-historical factuality that conditions the text. The text works, in Spivak's terms, as a singular supplementary to the factual,[12] or to use a term I will try to mobilize in this project, the text is located "after the fact": in relation to – yet never in correspondence with – sociological, historical and political factuality.

I would like to further suggest that this "double bind" of collectivity which Spivak addresses in her call for a New Comparative Literature – one in a series of double binds she confronts in her recent work[13] – has to do with two conceptions of the way collectivity functions in relation to a literary text. The first works as the text's subject matter: be it the gathering of a mob, the story of the rise and fall of a certain class, or even the synecdochic figure of a social type (the vagabond, the fallen aristocrat, the social climber), this notion of collectivity is situated within the text and is its own narrated content. The second notion consists of a collectivity positioned on the threshold of the text, the collectivity that frames and conditions the text. In this respect, the literary text is situated both by its point of origin (always more than an individual writer) and by its end point – the community of readers to which it is given. The text both emerges from and is destined to reach a certain collectivity. Literary research has oftentimes diverged according to these two versions of collectivity: scholarly work following the first literary function tends to concentrate on the constitutive character of the textual space as an imaginary realm where different collective formations can not only be narrated but indeed envisioned and reformulated; and scholarship that assumes the second function achieves a more socio-historical examination of the literary work as itself constituted by existing collective formations.[14] These two notions of collectivity, however, are far from being mutually exclusive: the collectivity narrated in the text always bears an affinity to

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[12] As a singular supplementary to the factual, Spivak writes, the text claims generalizability without being fundamentally general. As Spivak argued in her talk at the 2011 ACLA conference: "The singular is the always universalizable, never the universal." "Comparative Literature / World Literature: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and David Damrosch," *Comparative Literature* 48(4), 2001: 466.

[13] Literary studies, Spivak suggests, are the site for coping with the different "double binds" filling our contemporary late capitalist, global world. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[14] The first version of this literary research is somewhat homologous to the Old Comparative Literature with its universalist aspirations, whereas the second is homologous to particularist sociologically-bound Area Studies. One could also think here of Pierre Bourdieu's distinction between intrinsic interpretations and external explications – Russian Formalists, Anglo-American New-Criticism, French Structuralists and even Michael Foucault's "structuralist analysis of cultural works" adhering to the former, conducting as they do closed intrinsic readings with no social reference and tending to be non-historical. Investigations in the latter group – which includes, according to Bourdieu, Sartre's psychoanalytic biographism and Lukács's or Goldmann's Marxist criticism – is completely predetermined by the content of the historical and social reference. Bourdieu dismisses the two poles in a similar fashion to Spivak's, though with quite different results: he proposes the genealogical-structural research of the literary field as neither fully intrinsic nor fully external inquiry. Pierre Bourdieu, "Pour une science des oeuvres," *Raisions pratiques: Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), pp. 61-67.

the collective formations outside of it; and the collective formations conditioning the text are indexed within the text itself, thus never entirely determined in advance. Nor are the two notions neatly separated: critical work on national literature has shown how the writer of such literature, the national subject presented in it and the national public from which it arises and to which it returns are all inseparable: the collectivity conditioning the national text is both reflected in it and transmitted by it, in effect repeatedly reconstituting it.[15]

Is there, however, a way to integrate these two notions of collectivity while avoiding the circular determination that national literature – and the research thereof – presuppose? Following Spivak, I too begin this project looking for a different way of negotiating collectivity's "double bind." I search for places where the circular formation of national collectivity is fractured, and its circulation constantly problematized; where the blank open-endedness of a universalist collectivity and the preliminary determination of a particularist one are both rejected for the socially- and politically-informed undecidability of collective formation. Chetrit's poem, with its discrepancy between the Hebrew language in which it is written and the "Ashdodian" on which it declares, and between the national collectivity which necessarily conditions the poem and the different collectivity it strives to constitute, serves therefore as a salient example. It breaks the national collectivity's feedback loop to form a different, as yet to appear, collective horizon. The public that Chetrit's poem potentially addresses, precisely in asserting the impossibility of its address to the common public indicated by the plural "you," who "won't understand a word," is – following Michael Warner's notion of the public – "a space of discourse organized by discourse." Unlike a collectivity of interlocutors or an audience necessarily bound to the time and space of the act of enunciation, the public, according to Warner, is "always in excess of its known social basis."[16] Constituted by the deferral of textual address and not on the immediacy of the act of communication, the public is produced by the performative and generative qualities of the text, so that "the addressee of public discourse is always yet to be realized."[17] Moreover, part of the textual work is precisely to constitute its collective public, frequently – as in Chetrit's poem and the other texts discussed in this dissertation – in opposition to already-realized political collectivities. Thus, the inevitable virtuality of the public, its lack of any institutional conditioning and its openness to strangers – to follow Warner's qualifications of the textual public – could be understood not only within the liberal framework of free self-positioning (as in the "Old Comparative Literature" and its humanist-universalist paradigm), but rather as a direct confrontation with hegemonic political collectivities. This leads to the first definition of potential collectivities: neither an intrinsic imaginative collective formation born of the universalist approach nor an empirical-positivistic social collectivity conditioning the text from without; nor is it the national collectivity reconstituting itself in a circular process of self-progression. It is

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[15] See David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and in the Israeli context, Hannan Hever*, Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon: Nation Building and Minority Discourse* (New York: NYU Press, 2001).

[16] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), pp. 68, 74.

[17] Ibid, p. 73.

rather an oppositional realm of collectivity working from within the text outward. In this project I read various texts which explicitly and implicitly address the problematics of collectivity, and from within them try to conceptualize a textuality-collectivity dyad in order to rethink the question of Israel/Palestine.

Israel/Palestine and Europe

The political question of collectivity is of the utmost importance in contemporary Israel/Palestine. It may seem that a century-long ethnic, national, even religious conflict in the region has managed to solidify two opposing national collectivities; indeed, the logic of partition, epitomized by the building of the Separation Wall during the past decade lies at the core of the political plan taken up by the Israeli regime to set up a divide between an Israeli and a Palestinian collectivity.[18] Yet, this political plan of separation proves unattainable: the two collectivities are more than ever before entangled in each other for better or worse. And despite its separationist rhetoric, the logic of the Occupation is one of exploitation, land confiscation, unequal resource distribution – all forms of a close, albeit extremely non-egalitarian entanglement of two collectivities bound to one another.[19] Not only have the two national collectivities become geographically, economically, and politically inextricable; each has lost much of its own cohesiveness, becoming ever more amorphous.

The question regarding what constitutes Palestinian collectivity is one of the structuring questions of current Palestinian politics: after decades of struggle and with dwindling land in their possession, "the Palestinians" actually form at least five distinct communities: West Bank residents (under the partial rule of the Palestinian Authority), Gaza residents (under the rule of Hamas), citizens of the sovereign state of Israel, those living in refugee camps in the various Arab countries and those living in exile globally. Who, then, makes up "the Palestinian collectivity" – speaks in its name, represents it – if that collectivity even exists as such? The Israeli collectivity, on the other hand, is riddled with its own structural contradictions, based as it is on the continuously and deliberately unresolved (and unresolvable) gap between two analytically distinct categories, "Israeli" and "Jewish." The two are ideologically equivocated so that the Jewish-Israeli subject is

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[18] On the relationship between the idea of partition and the practices of the nation-state, see Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition, and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On the political logic of partition in Israel/Palestine and on the antidotal literary production, revealing Israeli and Palestinian or Jewish and Arab cultural interconnectedness, see Gil Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[19] Judith Butler has recently called this entanglement "the wretched forms of binationalism that already exist [in Israel/Palestine]." Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 4. More tragically, Mahmoud Drawish once remarkably captured the inseparability of Palestinians from (Jewish) Israelis: "We have the misfortune of having Israel as an enemy... And we have the good fortune of having Israel as our enemy." In Notre Musique. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 2004). 80 min., col.

still the only imaginable representative of the Israeli collectivity, although the Israeli collectivity entails, at least formally, many non-Jews (e.g. the Palestinian citizens of Israel), whereas the majority of the Jewish population in the world does not live in Israel and so does not take part in the Israeli collectivity. Thus, these two national collectivities face the challenges of scattered geographic existence and internal contradictions, undermining not only the unity of each but also the strict distinction between them as seemingly two separate collectivities facing one another according to a national key.[20] The big challenge of this project is to suggest poetic and political frameworks different than the national one, in order to discuss both the actual and the potential collective formations operating in Israel/Palestine.

This project examines the question of collectivity in texts written in and about Israel/Palestine, which I understand not only as a geographical space, limited by the boundaries of mandatory Palestine (the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea), but also as a political space – one encompassing, for example, the 1970s Palestinian militia camps in Jordan as well as the 1980s Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (both discussed in this dissertation). It is, furthermore, a politically and culturally unstable space with unsettled boundaries, a fractured political regime and, ultimately, contested representation; hence I address Israel/Palestine also as a speculative space, a site of fantasies and desires, a discursive space constantly questioned and debated. Israel/Palestine is thus not merely a space of national sovereignty or state governance and control; nor is it even only a space which both Israelis and Palestinians inhabit. It is also a symbolic place which has become the locus of different political queries that oftentimes deviate, in time and place, from the actual geography and history of Israel/Palestine as such. Thus, Israel/Palestine is the site of both "The Question of Palestine," formed vis-à-vis Zionism and Israel but not only them, and "The Jewish Question," the origin and formulation of which is actually in Europe. Israel/Palestine is then far from an autonomous space: I follow Gil Anidjar in arguing that there is no history of Jews and Arabs which is theirs alone. The point of reference of such a history is always Europe – as the place that created these categories, distinguished between them, supplied each of them with a history and separated them from one another and from Europe itself – a history which is thus, more than anything, the story of that continent and culture.[21] However, I propose to shift the focus of this conception, so that "Europe" or "the European" become themselves notions that are always located within the discursive, imaginative, and actual space of Israel/Palestine as well. A colonial and imperial power in the Middle East for decades, Europe exists as both external and internal force in Israel/Palestine. Not only did Europe define the

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[20] On the contemporary geopolitical situation in Israel/Palestine see, for example Sari Nusseibeh, *What Is a Palestinian State Worth?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[21] "What is Europe? What is Europe such that it has managed to distinguish itself from both the Jew and the Arab and to render its role in the distinction, the separation, and the enmity of Jew and Arab invisible – invisible, perhaps, most of all to itself?" Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. p. xviii.

region's geographic coordinates and political procedures from without, but it also engendered some of the basic "inner" political aspirations and cultural traits within Israel/Palestine. The desire for Europe – to be like Europe, to become a European nation, to join the course of modern European history, to write literature in European forms – was one of the main features of the Zionist project;[22] and the desire to be accepted by Europe as a recognized sovereign political entity can be said, from a certain point on, to have become central to the Palestinian struggle.[23] As a former colonial power, Europe continues to wield a crucial influence on the political and cultural constitution of Israel/Palestine.

My understanding of "Israel/Palestine" – this project's space of inquiry – is thus twofold. First, I reject the distinction between Israel and Palestine as two distinct geographical and/or political entities that can be analyzed separately; my use of the term "Israel/Palestine" demonstrates this indistinguishability. I don't mean to claim that Israel and Palestine are one and the same, or that there are no structural and historical differences between the Israeli collectivity and the Palestinian one. But I do claim that the points of distinction and lines of partition are more debatable today than they have ever been; that the possibility or impossibility of distinguishing – geographically, historically, politically, culturally – between Israel and Palestine is already part and parcel of the political debate about, and consequently the intellectual engagement with, Israel/Palestine, so that no prior analytic distinction is possible. The term "Israel/Palestine" indeed marks the undecidable differentiation at the heart of the relations between Israel and Palestine. Secondly, I argue that Israel/Palestine's entanglement with Europe requires that it be discussed in light of its complex relations to that continent. Israel/Palestine was defined by Europe, and it keeps defining itself in relation to Europe – to European power, to European politics and culture, even to a certain *idea* of Europe, however reductive or distorted.[24] On the other hand, Israel/Palestine also serves as a place for Europe to question and challenge itself – sometimes even to become, in the geographical and political space of Israel/Palestine, something *other* than itself. I therefore understand Israel/Palestine to be a place hosting not just "the Question of Palestine" and "The Jewish Question," but also "the Question of Europe," which is posed by both its inhabitants and the Europeans who visit it.

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[22] On the Zionist desire for Europe which, paradoxically, could have been fulfilled only by leaving Europe – becoming "true" Europeans only outside Europe – see Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). On Zionist historiography written in the language of pseudo-Hegelian historicism, see Gabriel Piterberg, "Domestic Orientalism: The Representation of 'Oriental' Jews in Zionist/Israeli Historiography," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (2), 1996, pp.125-38.

[23] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), pp. 153-63. And see Chapter Two, where I inquire into this historical moment.

[24] On the idea of Europe and its formative qualities, see Denis Guénoun, *Hypothèses sur l'Europe: Une essai de philosophie* (Belfort: Circé, 2000). In focusing on Israel/Palestine's entanglement with Europe, I do not mean to ignore the Middle-Eastern, Mediterranean, or local dimensions underpinning Israel/Palestine. On the contrary, I argue that it is by way of negotiating with Europe – and, ultimately, negating it as its determinate political and cultural horizon – that Israel/Palestine is potentially constituted as a space of and in the East. See also Chapter Four.

The texts I discuss in this dissertation all belong to this vast, thick, broadly construed space of Israel/Palestine:[25] they all narrate it as a political space and were all formulated, if not completely produced, within its boundaries. They are written from various positions and in different languages; however, instead of dividing them in advance into Israeli/Palestinian and European works, or "indigenous" and "colonial" texts, I seek to tease out these very categories – the Israeli and the Palestinian, the European and the non-European, together with the intricate relations between them – as a problematic that the texts themselves present. Rejecting the all-to-easy framework of contrasting a gaze from within to a gaze from without, I ask how is the space of Israel/Palestine reconstructed in these texts – constructed differently, in an oppositional way – precisely through opening up the question of collectivity.

In their engagement with undecidable, potential collectivities, the texts I discuss in this dissertation refuse the national paradigm governing contemporary political discourse regarding Israel/Palestine; they replace the national framework with a colonial/anti-colonial one.[26] Rather than a battle zone of opposing national movements, Israel/Palestine is portrayed in these texts as a space that houses colonial forces (both external and internalized) and the political, cultural, and symbolic struggles against them. The two national movements, the Jewish and the Palestinian, have indeed never been the sole political forces in the region; nor has the struggle between them been the only political conflict within it.[27] Rather than accept the national divide as the organizing principle of Israel/Palestine (and in so doing adhere to the prevalent historiographical narrative which these national movements have been disseminating), this dissertation aims to suggest an oppositional historiography. To establish it, I turn to various bodies of work, discussing them not only as literary or cinematic texts already-positioned within a certain history of Israel/Palestine but as creative projects which themselves posit a

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[25] I address films and cinematic projects as *texts* – for the sake of clarity, first of all, but also as a way of indicating that I am trying to undo the common distinctions between different media (literature and cinema, in this case) and instead focus on the different enterprises undertaken within each allegedly unified medium as carving new distinctions within it (for example, the differentiation between an audio-visual project and a film, developed in Chapter Two).

[26] In this dissertation I propose a colonial/anti-colonial framework and not a postcolonial one. As Ella Shohat has persuasively argued, the widespread postcolonial critical research in Israel/Palestine in the last decade or two has tended to substitute, too easily, the national-colonial framework with a postcolonial one, oftentimes overlooking the actual political and cultural anti-colonial struggles in the region. Ella Shohat, "The 'Postcolonial' in Translation: Reading Said in Hebrew," J*ournal of Palestine Studies* 33:3 (Spring 2004): 55-75. Instead of applying the postcolonial theories to the Israeli/Palestinian context, I therefore try to follow the anti-colonial "theory" developed in the very projects I examine in this dissertation.

[27] Adi Ophir has suggested that the "zero hour" of 1948 marks the ultimate triumph of the national paradigm, according to which the political space of Israel/Palestine was nothing but a space organized according to a national key, entailing two national movements as its fundamental political forces. Yet before 1948 there was a multitude of political forces and alliances in Israel/Palestine, and the work of critique is, according to Ophir, to disrupt the national paradigm and to follow the different political forces still operating in Israel/Palestine even after 1948. Adi Ophir, "*she'at ha-efes*" ["The Zero Hour"], in *Avodat ha-hoveh: masot al tarbut ivrit ba-et ha-zot* [*Working for the Present: Essays on Contemporary Israeli Culture*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2001).

historical and historiographic framing other than the national one. Each of them proposes an anti-colonial perspective on Israel/Palestine – whether as critique, self-critique, struggle or alternative historiography; and challenges, from different positions and in distinctly different ways, not only the national history of Israel/Palestine but indeed its concomitant historiography, a story that privileges the two national collectivities as the primary, if not the only, political agents in the region. These texts open up the political, imaginative and discursive space of Israel/Palestine to many more political forces and cultural significations, punctuated by a colonial history but also encompassing lines of anti-colonial resistance. However, this colonial/anti-colonial framework is neither pre-determined nor stable: it does not assign fixed historical roles to the different political agents in it – the Europeans and the Zionists as the colonial forces, or the Palestinians as the anti-colonial ones.[28] Rather, it brings to the fore the multifaceted negotiations between the Israeli, the Palestinian, the Jewish, and the European as sometimes opposed, at other times homologous, but never entirely fixed.

To illuminate this turn, let us turn to a passage from the end of Hebrew novelist S. Yizhar's 1949 novella "Khirbet Khizeh," which stages the interior monologue of a soldier fighting in the 1948 war as part of the Jewish national forces:[29]

> My guts cried out. Colonizers, they shouted. Lies, my guts shouted, Khirbet Khizeh is not ours. The Spandau gun never gave us any rights. Oh, my guts screamed. What hadn't they told us about refugees. Everything, everything was for the refugees, their welfare, their rescue... our refugees, naturally. Those we were driving out – that was a totally different matter. Wait. Two thousand years of exile. The whole story. Jews being killed. Europe. We are the masters now.[30]

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[28] The question of whether Zionism was (or perhaps still is) a colonial project, specifically a form of settler colonialism, is a volatile one, and lies beyond the temporal and disciplinary scope of this study. In his groundbreaking work, Gershon Shafir has claimed that early Zionism fashioned a particular version of "settler colonialism": contrary to metropole colonialism, whose primary goal has been the exploitation of the local inhabitants' labor for the metropole's economic benefit, settler colonialism aimed to create a national patrimony in the colony and so forced the local inhabitants outside the circle of labor, eventually forcing them off their lands. Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 1882-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Gabriel Piterberg follows Shafir's historical paradigm, inquiring into the ideological, political, and cultural manifestations of Zionism as a settler colonial project. Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London: Vesro, 2007). Arguably, there are differences between the American and Australian versions of settler colonialism and the Jewish one in Palestine – the latter being a colonial project of a people with no territory, perhaps bearing, instead, a historical, or mythical, affinity to the settler territory. The main question hovering above the colonial paradigm is thus to what extent should those Eastern European Jews who launched the Zionist project be considered as European colonialists.

[29] This war has different names, each carrying different ideological significations: many Israeli-Jews refer to it as "The War of Independence" or "The War of Liberation" (marking the successful struggle for the independence from the British Mandate of the Jewish community in Palestine); for many Palestinians, it is "The Nakba" (literally, the disaster; the disaster which occurred to the Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes due to the war).Throughout the dissertation, I use the less ideological – though not entirely non-ideological – term "The 1948 War."

[30] S. Yizhar, *Khirbet Khizeh*, trans. Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions,

The introduction of the colonial framework in this passage reveals the political and poetic complexity of the year 1948 in Israel/Palestine. The passage starts with the soldier realizing that he is taking part in a colonizing military force. Identifying the military force to which he belongs as "colonizers," he replaces the national paradigm – the 1948 war as a culmination of the struggle between two national forces, the Zionist/Israeli and the Palestinian – with a colonial framework: a foreign military force violently confiscating the lands of the indigenous population ("Khirbet Khizeh is not ours") and then expelling it ("Those we were driving out").[31] Whereas a national struggle framework allows only "Israelis" and "Palestinians," a colonial framework supports the appearance of many more political signifiers: "Jews" and "Europe," together with the German "Spandau gun," the refugee question and a master-slave relationship.[32] But unveiling Israel/Palestine as a colonial space reveals the extent to which the positions undertaken within it are historically unstable: Yizhar's passage shows how today's colonizing forces expelling the natives of their lands are yesterday's ultimate victims, exterminated in their own continent.[33] What is brought to the fore here is not a simple historical homology but the drama of unstable political collectivities. The narrator ridicules nationalist propaganda, and the indoctrination of the educational system, which together sort "exile" and "refugees" to one side only (i.e., the Jewish collectivity); crying out "colonizers," he points to a fundamental transformation in the Jews' political identity in 1948 Israel/Palestine, as they are now positioned differently vis-à-vis the Palestinians than they were within Europe. The colonial perspective acts to expose the changing – and therefore non-unified and self-contradictory – character of this collectivity. This passage's enunciatory mode – indeed its very use of language – reinforces the drama of unsettled political collectivity: the split between the narrator's voicing of the national discourse ("Jews as the victims of exile") and his "guts" crying out, albeit silently, its reversal ("Jews enforcing exile on another people") demonstrates the ongoing struggle regarding the political positioning of the Jewish collectivity of the time. Further illuminating is the fact that, in the original Hebrew text, when exclaiming his sudden realization that the Jewish national forces are "colonizers," the narrator uses (for lack of

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2008), p. 109; S. Yizhar, "Chirbet Chizeh," in S*ipur chirbet chizeh ve-od shlosha sipurey milchamah* [The Story of Khirbet Khizeh and Three Other War Stories] (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1989), p. 77.

[31] In his provocative book, Ilan Pappé claims that the 1948 war should be understood as nothing more than another moment, albeit a highly significant one, in a colonial enterprise to occupy the land and to expel its indigenous population. See Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

[32] The colonial political framework which Yizhar mobilizes here is therefore very different than Carl Schmitt's concept of the political: at the core of the political, according to Schmitt, lies political enmity formed through the clash between two national struggling collectivities of equal terms and definitely outside a master/slave relation. "An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity." Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 28.

[33] This is meant quite literally: many of the soldiers in the 1948 Jewish national army were Holocaust survivors, recruited to the armed forces, sometimes even killed in battle, literally a few months after emigrating from Europe's valleys of death. The question to which side of colonial or imperial power they belong remains, somewhat tragically, unanswerable. See Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: The Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

any equivalent Hebrew word) the Latin root, "*kolonizatorim*": the reality of 1948 Israel/Palestine is entangled, in its very conceptual language, with the question of European colonialism.[34]

Rather than attesting to an already-established political structure, the anti-colonial trajectory that runs though the various works discussed in this dissertation reveals possibilities of challenging the political, cultural, and linguistic collective positioning. As in Spivak's "double bind" of collectivity, the various anti-colonial positions of these works neither transcend their historico-political conditioning nor adhere to it; they are formed through a conflict, both internal and external, with colonial reality – and as a struggle to potentially transform it. This is true of Yizhar's Zionist soldier who cries out against his own colonial mission; or of Haviva Pedaya, a contemporary Jewish-Israeli writer, who calls for a counter-history of Hebrew letters, formulated from and towards the East, rejecting the European-based historiography of modern Hebrew literature. This applies equally to the European projects discussed in this dissertation, in which two of the most well-known French-language *auteurs* of the 20th Century – Jean-Luc Godard and Jean Genet – arrive to the space of Israel/Palestine (broadly construed) to join the Palestinian struggle. Narrating the Palestinian revolt as an anti-colonial revolutionary struggle rather than a national struggle to establish a sovereign state, the two find themselves implicated in it, to the extent that it challenges their own national/colonial identity. What seems at first to be an encounter between European artists and Palestinian national fighters turns into an experiment of shared political/cultural anti-colonial enterprise disrupting collective affiliations. Furthermore, all of these projects constitute an anti-colonial trajectory also in their textual workings, as they challenge European formal and generic conventions: Yizhar refuses to write a Hebrew novel based on the European novelistic form; Pedaya's a-generic texts vacillate between poetic, discursive, and theological idioms, rejecting modern generic distinctions; and Godard and Genet's works aim to go beyond the modernist European tradition, to which they allegedly belong. In this dissertation I inquire into the various ways in which how these projects' very textual procedures thematize their anti-colonial stance.

My choice of French projects to discuss the potential transformation of the European into something other than itself is hardly accidental: France has played a decisive colonial role in Israel/Palestine for decades. A powerful colonial force in the Middle East after World War II, the French government heavily supported the nascent state of Israel, providing it with large amounts of weapons and helping it build its nuclear program during the 1950s. Together with Britain, France initiated the 1956 colonial military campaign against Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal – a campaign in which Israel fought for these two colonial superpowers.[35] Besides its historic power and colonial history in the region, trying as it did to entrench its sphere of influence over

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[34] Significantly enough, there are no specific words in modern Hebrew for "the colonizer" and "the colonized"; only for "occupier" [*kovesh*], "settler" in the pre-1948 period [*mityashev*], or settler in the 1967 occupied territories [*mitnachel*].

[35] See André Beaufre, *The Suez Expedition* (London: Faber, 1969); Derek Varble, *The Suez Crisis 1956* (London: Osprey, 2003).

Israel/Palestine as it faced a bitter anti-colonial revolt in Algeria, France also constituted the prime European cultural and intellectual reference during the 1950s, -60s, and -70s in Israel/Palestine. With its humanistic heritage, republican politics, modernist inclinations and radical flare – the Parisian intellectual scene of those years had an ongoing effect on political and cultural discourse in Israel/Palestine;[36] and the questions of Israel/Palestine, in turn, sparked some of the era's most bitter debates in Paris.[37] Epitomizing European modernism and postmodernism while still sustaining the link between political colonialism and artistic Orientalism, the French cultural arena hosted many figures who tried to unbind themselves from this questionable legacy and to decolonize themselves; the geographic and political space of Israel/Palestine was one of the preferable places to do so.

Finally, in thinking about political collectivities in Israel/Palestine though their intricate relations to Europe, I am following Edward Said's reading of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*.[38] In this reading, Said inquires into the question of Judaism, the European and the non-European in the context of Israel/Palestine and maintains that these two geographically distinct spaces are actually analytically inseparable. Said suggests that for Freud there is a non-European element at the heart of Jewish identity: the founder of Judaism, according to Freud, was an *Egyptian* – not a Jewish – Moses. The roots of Jewish identity, Said suggests in explicating Freud, are in something quite foreign to it; in an alterity which, however excluded and negated (Freud goes on to claim that the Israelites in fact killed the Egyptian Moses), cannot be completely eliminated and is always active within Judaism.[39] The non-European (specifically the Egyptian, and

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[36] For an account of the major role France played in the development of 20th century World Republic of Letters, see Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[37] For example, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de-Beauvoir visited the Middle East only a few months before the 1967 war, and during their most politically radical period decided to endorse Israel and its pseudo-socialist regime. They were especially enthusiastic about the kibbutzim, most of which were built on Palestinian lands confiscated from their native inhabitants during the 1948 war. See Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre 1905-1980* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), pp. 527-33. On the other hand, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that the 1970s rift between Foucault and Gilles Deleuze evolved, at least in part, as a result of Deleuze's pro-Palestinian partisanship. See Edward Said, "Diary," *London Review of Books* 22:11 (June 2000): 42-43. More generally, Yair Oron has looked into the important role both "The Jewish Question" and "The Question of Palestine" played in 1968 France. See Yair Oron, *Kulanu yehudim germanim* [*We Are all German Jews*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1999). Finally, and returning to my project, during of the 2000s Eric Marty published two long essays on Jean Genet's writing about the Palestinians in which he attacked Genet's Manichean political worldview, his investment in the morality of the Bad ("*le Mal*") and, ultimately, his alleged antisemitism. Eric Marty, *Bref séjour à Jérusalem* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003) and J*ean Genet, post-scriptum* (Paris, Verdier, 2006). Alongside other scholarly works on Genet – some critical, like Ivan Jablonka, *Les vérités inavouables de Jean Genet (*Paris: Seuil, 2004), others endorsing Genet's politics, like Jérôme Neutres, *Genet sur les routes du Sud* (Paris: Fayard, 2002) – it was during the heyday of the Second Palestinian Intifada that Genet scholarship seemed to have become a privileged locus for French intellectuals for examination of their political attitudes toward Israel/Palestine.

[38] Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (London: Verso, 2004).

[39] In her recently published book, Judith Butler tries to ratify a Jewish critique of Zionism based on a heterogenous concept of Jewishness constituted, from its very inception, on the relation to the non-

perhaps even the Arab in general)[40] is Europe's internal outsider, or at least so it is in Freud, who Said opposes in his reading to Zionist ideology, in which the non-European (specifically, the Palestinian) is ruled out entirely. Yet Said's text reveals another drama, that of the (im)possible interchangeability of the Jew and the European; after asserting that for Freud, at the heart of Jewish identity lies a non-European element, Said implicitly asks whether Jewish identity is, in itself, European; and indeed this was a highly volatile question in 1938, the year *Moses and Monotheism* was published.[41] In other words, does Judaism, with its original alterity, act – for Freud as well as for Said – as an allegory for Europe in general? Especially since non-Jewish and non-European Moses is seen as the founder not only of Judaism but of European culture at large? Said indeed maintains that this is the case for Freud, for whom Judaism is inevitably part of the European story – not so much as the true bearer of European humanistic universal values (as George Steiner, for example, would later have it)[42] but rather as the most rigid and cohesive collectivity in Europe, formed against the wound of its alterity. Said himself is abundantly aware of the interpretations that see the 20th Century Jewish national enterprise as a belated, outsourced version of European colonialism.[43] But I believe that Said's reading of Freud gestures toward something beyond these alternatives. A collectivity based on alterity – couldn't that also be said to be the story of Europe vis-à-vis European Jewry? Weren't the Jews the foreign element within Europe – the internal alterity, eternally reconstituted only to be negated in order to form Christian-European identity? Aren't Freud and Said actually showing how the story of an Egyptian Moses "giving birth" to Monotheism, first told as Judaism's formative narrative, becomes then negated – somewhat like the Egyptian Moses himself – in order to become the mythical story of Judeo-Christian monotheism, i.e. the very story of Europe itself? Indeed, as Jacqueline Rose has suggested, Said's reading is not merely about Freud and the non-European but also about the Jewish Freud as the non-European.[44] Said's writing may suggest thinking Jewish identity as an alterity to Europe – first within

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Jew – to the extent that it destabilizes the very category of "Jewish" itself: "If, however, the question of the ethical relation to the non-Jew has become definitive to what is Jewish, then we cannot capture or consolidate what is Jewish in this relation. Relationality displaces ontology." Judith Butler, *Parting Ways*, p. 5. Said's reading of Freud has a prominent place in Butler's points of reference. Ibid, pp. 28-31.

[40] It should be noted, however, that any relationship between ancient Egyptians and modern Arab ones – not to mention Palestinians – is historically questionable.

[41] Many readings of Freud's text, attuned to the historical moment in which it was written, emphasize how Freud dismantles the cohesiveness of Jewish identity, claiming that its origins are to be found in a foreign element – precisely at a time when the whole of European Jewry was under unprecedented political attack. Yet I suggest here, following Said, that Freud's text raises a no less substantial question as to the relationship between Jewish and European identity – precisely when the Nazi regime tried to eradicate this relationship.

[42] George Steiner, "Our Homeland, the Text," *Salmagundi* 66 (Winter/Spring 1985).

[43] Said made this point clear in his early, groundbreaking essay, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims": "The fact also that no Palestinian, regardless of his political stripe, has been able to reconcile himself to Zionism suggests the extent to which, for the Palestinian, Zionism has appeared to be an uncompromisingly exclusionary, discriminatory, colonial power." Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, [1979] 1992), p. 69.

[44] Jacqueline Rose, "Response to Edward Said," in *Freud and the Non-European,* pp. 67-8.

Europe, but then maybe also in Israel/Palestine. I would go on to suggest that a reading of Said's text reveals both the Jews and the Palestinians not only as confronting each other, but indeed as two alterities of Europe. The Egyptian Moses can therefore stand for both the Palestinians and the Jews (let's remember that Said's self-description as the last Jewish intellectual),[45] as the potentially non-European elements populating the space of Israel/Palestine.

After the Fact, the Potential

To elaborate this new framework for collectivity, I try in this dissertation to turn away from the historical-factual approach that governs most political inquiries into Israel/Palestine, delving instead, with the help of literary and cinematic works, into a speculative, potential realm. This is, after all, what Freud did when he suggested his pseudo-historical tale about the origins of monotheism; and it is what Said stressed in Freud's "mobiliz[ing] the non-European past in order to undermine any doctrinal attempt that might be made to put Jewish identity on a sound foundational basis, whether religious or secular."[46] Indeed, it was Said himself who launched an attack on scientific positivism as fetishizing both natural and historical facts, and revealed them as taking part in a network of a colonial power/knowledge dyad – factual knowledge which is made available through colonial occupations and remains highly dependent on their systems of control and inquiry, thus also ideologically supporting them.[47] In this respect, an attempt to unshackle the determinate and determinative aspects of "the fact" structures this dissertation; rather than being invested in fact, this project aims at unpacking places positioned "after the fact." I consider being "after the fact" in its double meaning: first, that which is in search of the (historical) fact – an asymptotic search itself staging the fact as a yet unattained object of inquiry; and second, that which temporally comes after the fact, perhaps as its result – but also missing or skipping the fact or even covering it up, negating it. In both senses, we fall short of the fact: it is either not yet seized or already lost; but this absence opens up a realm radically different from that of the factual, within which discrete, closed, already-grasped historical facts are replaced with a textual constitution of a non-factual potentiality. The term "after the fact" arrives in

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[45]   Gil Hochberg, "Edward Said: The Last Jewish Intellectual: On Identity, Alterity, and the Politics of Memory," *Social Text* 24:2 (Summer 2006): 47-65.

[46]   Said, *Freud and the Non-European,* p. 45. In his book on Freud, Yosef Hayim Yerhusalmi stages a speculative dialogue with Freud in which he asks him whether psychoanalysis can be regarded as a Jewish science. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Derrida takes on this issue, pondering how this Jewish-science-to-come alters our very notion of science: rather than factual, positivistic, general and objective, Derrida suggests – with Freud – a new image of a science arising from within a specific archive, from the signature of the proper name and a certain tradition and aimed at the transmission of a secret (such as the murder of the Egyptian Moses – a narrative which Freudian psychoanalysis helps transmit onwards). Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998).

[47]   Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1979).

this dissertation after a long detour of translation in the fields of psychoanalysis and deconstruction: it is Spivak's translation of Derrida's *après-coup*, itself Lacan's translation of Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*.[48] Freud, we shall recall, posited *Nachträglichkeit* – rendered in standard translations as "deferred action" – as the re-arrangements and re-transcription of past events in new circumstances. There are some external stimuli, Freud has argued, that are not perceived by human consciousness in their moment of occurrence but are instead archived in the Unconscious until a new set of events brings them into the Conscious in a deferred way, long after they were first received. What was impossible to experience at first is belatedly raised into awareness through the different context it has now acquired.[49] Derrida has suggested that this inscribing of unexperienced events in the Unconscious in the form of a trace is both primal and ever inextinguishable; it can never be rendered in its entirety into the Conscious and become a decipherable sign. For Derrida, this becomes one of the models for writing as a primal practice eternally bound to deferral.[50] Spivak's postcolonial language unveils the political significance of this critique of metaphysical origin and linear temporality: "After the fact" defies historical progression and the primacy of original actions, inaugurating an alternative textual realm which refuses the rule of the factual. In this way, the texts discussed in this dissertation do not only inhabit the after-the-fact realm commonly reserved for representational practices (which supposedly sanction the original "factiveness" of reality); they rather show how parts of reality itself – events, occurrences, actions – are textualized to the extent that they become part of the very realm of the after-the-fact. In his writing on the Palestinian struggle, for example, Genet depicts the revolutionary actions of the Palestinian fighters as themselves part of this after-the-fact modality – gestural, theatrical, scripted actions which write the revolt while enacting it. He understands this after-the-fact as the new mode of action developed by anti-colonial collectivities of struggle. S. Yizhar, on the other hand, follows in his 1948 writing the outcry against the expulsion of the Palestinians as it is disseminated throughout the space of Israel/Palestine. He shows how the outcry's very path of circulation refuses national partition and rejects the collective formations that became facts on the ground in post-1948 Israel/Palestine. In these works, then, "after-the-fact" does not only serve as the quality of belatedly-written texts but as a textually-oppositional potentiality already-inscribed within the political space of Israel/Palestine.

Refusing to adhere to the rule of fact – and to history as the sum of actualized facts in

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[48] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. lxxxi-lxxxii. Lacan introduces *après-coup* as a translation of Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* in his 1953 "Rome Discourse"; Jacque Lacan, "The Function of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," *Ecrits: A Selection* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 34-7.

[49] Laplanche and Pontalis trace the genealogy of this concept in Freud's writings: It first appeared in his 1986 letters to Fliess and was further developed in the 1914 study of the Wolf Man case. See Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Deferred Action," in *The Language of Psycho-analysis* (London: Hodarth, 2006), pp. 111-14. *Nachträglichkeit* later became one of the cornerstones of trauma theory, with its emphasis on the time lapse between the traumatic event and its perceptual reoccurrence, always already as a trace. See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[50] Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* pp. 9-10.

political reality – I use this modality of the "after-the-fact" to call for a potential counter-history of Israel/Palestine. "To read what was never written," Walter Benjamin quotes Hugo von Hofmannstahl in his notes for "Theses on History," and immediately adds: "The reader one should think of here is the true historian."[51] This dissertation is indeed a Benjaminian project in which I read in its textual corpus what was not written in the factual history of Israel/Palestine. From this textual after-the-fact I try to carve out a non-factual trajectory within Israeli-Palestinian history itself. As against notions of "additive" historiography made up of "a mass of facts" [*die Masse der Fakten*], that constitute progressive movement and create "an eternal picture of the past," Benjamin famously suggested a constructive history made apparent at once and for the first time as it flashes at a moment of danger in the *Jetztzeit*.[52] Benjamin formulated this call for a counter-history at the very moment when the rise of fascism out of the crisis of liberal parliamentary democracies was about to culminate in a catastrophic, abrupt end to European modernity and to Jewish physical and cultural existence within it.[53] I suggest that there is a line connecting this moment of collapse in European modernity – alongside the vast critique of factual historicism it has engendered[54] – and the contemporary moment in Israel/Palestine. Almost a century later, and in a different geopolitical space underpinned by a belated national and colonial history, the modern promise that has generated the progressive, developmental modality of factual history is in a state of collapse. Liberal-democratic principles have proved irreconcilable with forms of governance based on ethnic nationalism; the internal contradictions of liberal Zionism have become ever more apparent as control of the Palestinian population by the Israeli state keeps growing firmer. The humanist-universalist horizon is revealed as itself an ideological formation inadequate to resolving the crisis in Israel/Palestine, the very demarcation lines of which are the results of its own colonial history. A secular agenda remains unattainable in a region where the majority of the inhabitants has been formed by different religious traditions, never quite fitting the European genealogy of secularity. These modern discourses have reached an impasse which itself creates a rupture in their concomitant linear-teleological historical narrative.[55]

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[51] Walter Benjamin, "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History," *Selected Writings IV*, p. 405.

[52] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," pp. 395-96.

[53] A catastrophe which Giorgio Agamben has suggested should be considered as the exceptional, and therefore also paradigmatic, state of modernity. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), esp. p. 4.

[54] David Myers has shown the extent to which the critique of historicism was one of the defining features of an important trajectory within German-Jewish thought during the first half of the 20th century. See David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[55] I am indebted here to Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin's critique of these liberal, secularist, and allegedly universalist discourses, and his call for a Benjaminian historiography of Israel/Palestine. Raz-Krakotzkin has suggested that the strong claim in favor of "history" in modern Jewish, often Zionist, historiography – the need to return to history, to write the history of Jews, even to historicize Jewish experience – is "a manifestation of the core idea of assimilation," applying a notion of history which is emphatically Christian, even in its modern, secularized, national rendering. This "history" – progressive, totalizing, moving toward salvation or a rational end – had originally forsaken the Jews and left them outside its course as the people who refused the progress of history by rejecting Christian grace; and Jewish theology, in turn, rejected this understanding of teleological history,

The various works discussed in this dissertation all address this rupture: Yizhar refuses to adhere to the naturalization of the Israeli national collectivity accompanied by its seemingly liberal principles; Godard shows the break in the progressive linearity of the Palestinian struggle; Genet insists on the non-liberal and anti-humanistic aspects of Palestinian resistance politics; and Pedaya's creative and political intervention in Israel/Palestine posits a non-secular vantage point. In very different ways, all of them attest to the rift in the course of modern historical thinking by challenging many of its most basic presuppositions. In doing so, they form a textual counter-history for Israel/Palestine, moving away from the realm of factual realization – infused with these aporias of teleological modernity – into that of non-factual potentiality.

In developing this idea, I follow Giorgio Agamben's reformulation of the notion of potentiality in his various works over the past two decades.[56] Agamben rejects thinking of potentiality as a state of privation, the starting point in a process of realization through which what was at first only a potential passes into actuality – a transient stage ready to be negated as it is realized. This is precisely the course of a Hegelian linear-teleological historical development, in which the potential exists only in order to be externalized and extricated, until becomes entirely realized and fulfilled. Agamben develops a different notion of potentiality as experience, a faculty which entails the very existence of potentiality. Far from being subsumed under the realm of actuality (i.e., potential as the not-yet-actualized), this kind of potentiality constitutes a different realm for which actualization is not the horizon. On the contrary, this realm of potentiality, Agamben asserts, is marked by the potential *not to* be realized, the potential *not to be* and *not to do*, the potential not to pass into actuality. Indeed, in the realm of potentiality, actualization manifests itself in impotentiality, i.e. in the rejection of the very processes of becoming and realization.[57] I read the various works discussed in this dissertation through this notion of potentiality: rather than waiting to be actualized in the political reality of Israel/Palestine (and eventually joining the course of factual history), they constitute a different realm of potentiality which stands in opposition to realized politics. Furthermore, if politics is structured on the passage from constituting power (potentiality) to constituted power (actuality) – from the potential power to declare

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fashioning an alternative conception of history based on the state of the world as imperfect, lacking, irredeemable. Raz-Krakotzkin's work asks us to ponder what it would mean to try to resist the Christian/national conception of history today and to think of history as an ethical category, writing it, following Benjamin, from "a moment of danger" as "the history of the oppressed." Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Jewish Memory between Exile and History," T*he Jewish Quarterly Review* 97(4) (Fall 2007): 530-43; "*Galut be-tokh ribonut: le-vikoret 'shlilat ha-galut' ba-tarbut ha-yisre'elit*" ["Exile within Sovereignty: Toward a Critique of 'The Negation of Exile' in Israeli Culture"], *Te'oriah u-vikoret* 4 (Fall 1993) and 5 (Fall 1994).

[56] Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," in *Potentialities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). pp. 177-184; "Potentiality and the Law," in *Homo Sacer*, pp. 39-48; "Notes on Politics," in *Means Without End* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 109-118; *The Coming Community* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[57] "The potentiality that exists is precisely the potentiality that can not pass over into actuality... This potentiality maintains itself in relation to actuality in the form of its suspension; it is *capable* of the act in not realizing it, it is sovereignly capable of its own im-potentiality." Agamben, *Homo sacer,* p. 45.

oneself as a sovereign to the implementation of that power in sovereignty[58] – then potential collectivities stage a constituting power never transformed into a constituted one, an ever declarative textual potentiality unrealized as an implemented political power of governance and control.[59] Unlike the Jewish national collectivity, which began as a written potentiality in Zionist writings of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries (most prototypically, Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*),[60] and later became a realized collectivity that eventually formed a constituted state power, the textual potential collectivities discussed in this project do not address a future in which they would be implemented but rather a past that made their actualization impossible (and thus granted them impotentiality). For instance, the revolutionary moment in the Palestinian struggle during the late 1960s and early -70s, which I discuss in Chapters Two and Three – and the collective formations it engendered – were to be interrupted by a bid for a sovereign Palestinian state as viable, realizable political plan, turning this revolutionary modality impotential; rather than directed towards future realization, it forms, from its state of un-realization, a counter-factual history. Both Godard and Genet invoke this revolutionary moment in their works *after the fact*, precisely as an unrealizable (im)potentiality turned towards the past, as they locate the rupture from which a textual counter-history would be made possible. Like true Benjaminian historians, they both read within the Palestinian revolt exactly that which was never properly written.

Potential Collectivities

In this respect, the potential collectivities described in this project stand in utter opposition to Benedict Anderson's "imaginary communities." Anderson famously defined the modern nation as "an imagined political community," and asserted the role of the imagination in the creation of these collective entities: since the members of the national communities are not personally familiar with one another, they imagine them and their relation to a general whole so that

> in the mind of each lives the image of their communion.... In fact, all
> communities larger than primordial villages (and perhaps even these) are

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[58] Agamben's discussion of these two distinct forms of power is based on Benjamin's distinction between the violence that posits the law (constituting power) and the violence that preserves it (constituted power), in "Critique of Violence," *Selected Writings I*, pp. 236-52.

[59] Significantly, power and potentiality (ability, capability) have the same etymology – *potere* in Latin, *pouvoir* in French – and also (in a different linguistic tradition), *koa'ch* in Hebrew. See also Chapter Four.

[60] This 1902 utopian novel, portraying a vision of a Jewish state in Palestine, marked a formative moment in the Zionist movement, when its political plan was put into fictional form by the writer and national forefather Theodor Herzl. Yet even from the 1880s on, many modern Hebrew literary texts allegedly planted the seeds for national revival before it actually existed as an historical movement. This is commonly referred to as the textual foundation of Zionism. See, for example, Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

imagined. Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[61]

Anderson emphasizes here that "imagined" does not mean false, mistaken, unproven, or unreal; on the contrary, the force of the imagination enables the national community's existence. There is nothing more real than national communities and the constant process of their imagination. The imagination is construed not as the antithesis of political reality but, on the contrary, as its very core. It does not consist only of a volitional act, performed by the individual subject (imagining the other members of the national community not as strangers, but as allies of sorts); rather, it is construed as a structural act that precedes the individual acts of imagination and sanctions them. Anderson's "imagination" is therefore quite close to Lacan's "imaginary" – the register in which the subjective ego is primordially constituted as a distinct unit through its relation to an other. One could then say that the national community is the collective ego formed by the act of the imagination, stabilizing the image of the national self, always vis-à-vis a national "other" and portraying political reality as populated by these national egos and the relations between them. The imaginary, as both Anderson and Lacan suggest, is the very reality in which we all live – or rather as Althusser would have it, the perceived, ideological reality which we believe we live in.[62]

In this project I posit "potential collectivities" as a counterpoint to these "imagined communities": in contradistinction to national communities, established in political reality through the action of social imagination, potential collectivities are textually constituted as that which problematizes, escapes or rejects the processes of national realization. If community is made in the form of a national communion based on an imagined common, collectivity would be an unexpected, non-derivative coming together; and if the imaginary is the mode in which the national ego is actualized in reality, the potential is the non-realized and unrealizable working of textuality as a non-phenomenological and un-imaginable realm. In Chapters Two and Three I show how it is not the image of the revolutionary Palestinian fighter but rather its disappearance – even absence – from political intelligibility that forms a certain collectivity-in-struggle that both Godard and Genet cling to. This collectivity constitutes an oppositional pole to the one formed by the national imagination: interrupted by the struggle for national independence, unrealized in political actuality, sometimes even erased from the national historical narrative, this collectivity persists only in and through writing – Godard's and Genet's projects of writing the revolutionary Palestinian collectivity, but also, following Genet, the modes in which this collectivity forms itself through writing.

In *The Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that there is no being-in-common of a community without the inscription of the communitarian exposure, without

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[61] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, [1983] 2006), p. 6.

[62] "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individual to their real conditions of existence." Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (Monthly Review Press. 1971).

its sharing in writing – in literature, not as an institution, but rather as *écriture*.[63] Against the aspirations of "first philosophy" founded on the singular being – whether the individual subject or the unified absolute – Nancy seeks to develop a relational political ontology whose point of departure would already be a singular-plural in-between-ness, a state of communality always mediated through language. Nancy argues against the view of community as a gathering of individuals aligning according to an already-shared empirical identity, a social structure with presupposed conditions of participation, a fusion or absorption of various discrete egos into one common Ego – defining community instead as a primary space of "*partage*" ("taking part," both sharing and dividing), in which "substantial identities" are constantly negated.[64] Subverting the common progressive narrative of modernity – the move from archaic community to modern society, from clan communities to the national imagined community – Nancy proposes this linguistic "being-in common" as a contemporary force standing against the common being of national communion. Agamben, surely in dialogue with Nancy, insists on the potential character of what he calls "the coming community": echoing Spivak's "double bind" of collectivity, he rejects predicated identity as well as universal one as the foundations of belonging to a community; both give form to a sovereign politics of actuality determined to realize political power. Agamben appeals instead to the (im)potentiality of human language precisely as it disconnects from reality to constitute an oppositional realm that resists the very actualizing power of national and Statist politics: "The novelty of coming politics is that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but the struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity), the insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization."[65] This struggle with the predicated collectivity of the state, as well as with the historical-factual realm to which it confines politics, is invoked by different projects discussed in this dissertation.

In **Chapter One** I discuss the 1948 works of the Hebrew writer S. Yizhar (1916-2006). Although commonly regarded as a prominent Israeli author, Yizhar dedicated much of his work to the 1948 war and the time preceding it, in effect rejecting post-1948 sovereign Israeli time. In this chapter I therefore examine what I consider to be Yizhar's non-Israeli writing. I suggest reading his texts outside the boundaries of the modern,

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[63] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, esp. pp. 25-6.

[64] "We do not have to identify ourselves as 'we,' as a 'we.' Rather. We have to disidentify ourselves *from* every sort of 'we' that would be the subject of its own representation, and we have to do this so far as 'we' co-appear." Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Bryne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 71.

[65] Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p. 85. Agamben uses, as his model for the split between humanity's linguistic existence and reality, the Talmudic *aggadah* – an exegetical parabolic tale, or *midrash* – about Acher's cutting off the twigs while entering the realm of knowledge, the *pardes*. Isolating the Shekhinah from all the other Sefirot, Acher signifies, according to Agamben, language's alienation from the real world that conditions our modern existence. He goes on to suggest, contrary to the common interpretations of this *midrash*, however, that it is only through this split – a mode he identifies with the state of exile – that the world may finally be seized within a messianic moment of slight change in things; in that moment, Acher would become Rabbi Akiba who left the *pardes* unharmed.

European, and national novelistic form which propagates progressive, open-ended present time. Instead, I follow how these texts inaugurate a potential temporality returning to a time which is historically lost. Reading "Khirbet Khizeh" – Yizhar's 1948 masterpiece – against the grain, I claim that rather than narrating the fictionally focalized story of an Israeli soldier, this text follows the circulation of an un-individuated experience, disseminating an ethical outcry throughout the space of Israel/Palestine; this outcry potentially undoes the divide, sealed in the 1948 war, between the two national collectivities. Through its attention to the exilic (not national) experience shared by Jews and Palestinians, I suggest that Yizhar's work does not adhere to post-1948 history – to the Israeli national subject, Israeli collectivity and ultimately the very category of Israeli literature.

Chapter Two explores the cinematic project undertaken by Jean-Luc Godard (b. 1930) in the late 1960s and early -70s vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle. Analyzing its various permutations, I try to extricate the lost history of the revolutionary moment in the Palestinian struggle, to which it attests. Together with the Dziga-Vertov collective, a group of politically active filmmakers formed after May 1968, Godard joined some Palestinian fighting groups in Jordan and Lebanon aspiring to form together with them a creative-political project of what I theorize as a revolutionary collective enunciation: to breach the divide between political action and artistic creation, defy the boundaries of the cinematic object, and rethink European and Middle-Eastern identities and identifications. This project disintegrated in the early 1970s, I suggest, due to a decisive change in the course of the Palestinian struggle itself, moving from a Third World revolutionary liberation struggle to a national struggle for the establishment of a sovereign state. It was resumed only in the mid-1970s, resulting in Godard's film (this time in collaboration with Anne-Marie Miéville), *Ici et ailleurs,* which I understand as the afterlife of the revolutionary political-artistic moment, exposing its (im)potentiality. I discuss how the interruption in the revolutionary struggle structures this belated film, in which the flow of images – ideological, oftentimes televised images shaping the progressive course of history – is interfered with the recurring un-imaginable image of death – the dead Palestinian revolutionaries, and the death of the revolutionary moment in the Palestinian struggle tout court. From this repetitive interruption, *Ici et ailleurs* mobilizes a counter-history of the Palestinian struggle in which the revolutionary moment, however historically collapsed, potentially never disappears.

In **Chapter Three**, I turn to Jean Genet's (1910-1986) texts on the Palestinian struggle, which – although superficially resembling Godard's project – harbor a very different understanding both of the struggle itself and of the place of writing within it. I propose that Genet's long engagement, throughout the 1970s and -80s, with various revolutionary struggles – most prominently, the American Black Panthers and the Palestinians – was accompanied by an experimentation in different textual forms, rethinking the relationship between revolutionary action and its writing. Arriving on the scene of the Palestinian struggle after the significant moment of interruption to its revolutionary modality, Genet reveals the "after-the-fact" as inscribed in the Palestinian

revolt itself. Reading his posthumous magnum opus *Un captif amoureux*, I follow Genet's conceptualization of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle as a formalized revolt rife with deferred or unrealized action, a revolt of specters, gestures, and rituals, a poetic or theatrical struggle – indeed a scripted revolutionary modality. I discuss the important attention Genet pays to transformative actions in the face of death and beyond it – linking the Palestinian fighters and French transsexuals as two modes of a non-identitarian struggle. Finally, from his own recognition of the book's lack of any real historical readership, and simultaneously from the punctuation of his French text with both Hebrew undercurrents and an Arabic horizon, I suggest that Genet positions himself as bearing witness to an unrealizable potential collectivity of struggle, a position which is itself informed by the role of the *shahid* within Islamic tradition, echoing the very act of bearing witness exercised by the Palestinian revolutionaries themselves.

Chapter Four, the final chapter of the dissertation, is engaged with the contemporary moment in Israel/Palestine through the Hebrew works of Haviva Pedaya (b. 1965). A Jewish-Israeli writer descendant from a renowned family of Baghdadi Kabbalists, Pedaya challenges in her work the modern/modernist, secular, Europe-oriented, national history of Hebrew literature and its assumed collective formation. In her poetry, Pedaya questions the monolingual dictum of the modern Hebrew language, fashioning instead a Hebrew informed by its non-modern pre-secular Jewish modalities and its close links to the Arabic. Emphasizing the delivery of the living voice, Pedaya "returns" in her poetry to *piyyut*, a continuous tradition of oral liturgical poem, as an alternative to the modern Western lyric poetic formation. In ecstatic mystical Hebrew, she addresses the divine, mobilizing a devotional, mesmerizing language of messianic potentiality. Reading Pedaya's *piyyut* poetry, I suggest that it challenges the view of modernity as a rupture (first secular and later national) underpinning the Eurocentric historiography of Hebrew literature. Instead of it, Pedaya conceptualizes the processes of transmission, in which (Jewish, or Arab-Jewish) tradition is disseminated and transformed across pre-modern and modern times, thus calling for an alternative history of Hebrew textuality, arising from and addressed to the collectivities of the Orient. She invokes pre-modern Arab-Jewish collective formations in order to undo the secular, national, Europe-oriented horizon of the Jewish existence in Israel/Palestine, always set in confrontation with the Palestinian collectivity. Her poetry and scholarly work reconstitute instead an exilic, post-secular and emphatically Oriental Jewish, Arab-Jewish and even Jewish-Palestinian collectivity in Israel/Palestine.

Taken together, the four chapters amount to a political and textual counter-history of Israel/Palestine. Although advancing chronologically – from 1948 (Chapter One), through the 1960s, -70s and -80s (Chapter Two and Three) to the contemporary moment (Chapter Four) – they do not abide by the movement of historical progression and realization; instead, each of the projects discussed in these chapters disrupts its own historical moment as it textually explores a political trajectory which was shattered or lost. Together, these projects form a genealogy of potential moments in which various modalities of non-national collectivities were and are constituted in Israel/Palestine.

Ever in negotiation with the political and cultural image of Europe, these projects nevertheless attest to collective formations of and for the Orient. As in Chetrit's poem, they put forth an "Ashdodian" – an anti-national Hebrew-Arabic oppositional language historically un-actualized yet potentially invoked – calling for a collectivity that would be able to read that which is yet to be written.

Chapter One

    The Outcry of Collectivity:

    S. Yizhar's Non-Israeli Writing

This chapter engages with the work of S. Yizhar, "the most important novelist in Israeli literature" in Amos Oz's words, a writer "uncompromising[ly] delving into the infrastructure of 'Israeliness,'" according to Dan Miron.[66] My exploration of Yizhar's texts will take, however, a very different, if not altogether oppositional, vein. Yizhar's work, I argue, defies the very notions these celebratory assertions put forth: It refuses to adhere to the novelistic, as a modern, secular European form, and rejects the Israeliness which allegedly qualifies and ratifies Hebrew texts written in Israel/Palestine. Reading this renowned, canonical writer who has "reformulated the linkage between author and authority"[67] against the grain means here considering the generic status, textual arrangements, political motivations, and ethical horizons of an oeuvre that oftentimes seems at once too familiar and too far removed.[68]

I'll start with questioning the position conventionally assigned to Yizhar's work in the literary historiography of modern Hebrew literature: a modernist corpus, emphatically literary and overly aestheticized, epitomizing the normalized, successful, national stage in the history of Hebrew prose fiction. By contrast, I'll read in Yizhar's texts a constant refusal to the progressive, open-ended, persistently present-tense, heteroglot, and social novelistic form. Instead, I argue that these works fashion a different mode of temporality – preliminary yet from the point of the aftermath – they destabilize the fundamental separation between different narrative positions, and appeal instead to an ontological rhetoric and exterior instantiations, very much at odds with the immanent and humane idiom of the novel. This section will try to shed some light on the non-novelistic tendency of this corpus, moving between passages from various texts in Yizhar's work. The second section, however, will concentrate on one single text, the famous 1948 war short-story "Khirbet Khizeh." This story was widely read, commented upon, and discussed in scholarly contexts, mostly as the narrative of a young Israeli soldier who confronts the expulsion of the Palestinians during the war, who is both sensitive enough to realize the ethical calamity and too passive to act upon it. I propose,

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[66] Dan Miron, "Introduction" to S. Yizhar, *Midnight Convoy and Other Stories* (London: The Toby Press, 2007), pp. ix, xviii.

[67] Eleonora Lev, "Li-vsorato tzarikh le-ha'amin yoter" ["One Should Believe His Message More"], *Ha'aretz* June 9, 1999 (a review of Yizhar's last book, *Giluy eliyahu* [*The Revelation of Elijah*])

[68] Of all the major, highly regarded, canonical 20th century Hebrew writers, Yizhar is nowadays probably the least read (with the exception of his two 1948 texts: "Khirbet Khizeh" and "The Prisoner"). Yet the literary criticism of his work has tended over the span of more than 50 years, to repeat some unexamined truisms. It is as if "we" – whoever "we" are – have always known what these texts entail, and therefore, as the Berkeley joke goes, do not read them, only teach them.

however, to read this text not as a fictional focalized narrative of an individual facing a punctual historical event, but as the circulation of un-individuated experience, disseminating an ethical outcry, and potentially forming a different collective formation. In the third section I will follow the return of this de-focalized outcry in a later work by Yizhar, and see how it portrays Israel/Palestine as a space of both Jewish and Palestinian exilic out-of-placeness.

Yizhar's work has repeatedly been subject to political readings; nowadays, when contemporary political discourse in Israel/Palestine revolves again around the year 1948, Yizhar's corpus, of which a significant part is dedicated to that decisive moment, is asked from time to time to take a stand, take an oath and testify.[69] My writing on Yizhar is, needless to say, much influenced by this return of and to 1948 in contemporary political discourse in Israel/Palestine; but as much as it is greatly indebted to recent postcolonial literary criticism of Hebrew literature – led by a genuine critical, radical, and dissident political stance – it also distances itself from that critical trajectory.[70] In trying to situate Yizhar's writing vis-à-vis the dominant Zionist national discourse, this criticism tends to conflate the biographical Yizhar Smilansky, his social positioning, and his declared political stance with the politics embedded in his textual practice, producing a single corpus that then becomes the unified object for a critique of ideology. In the case of S. Yizhar, who was a member of the Israeli parliament for many years, representing the governing centrist labor party, and has always been, despite everything, a full-fledged Zionist, this can only result in an instant verdict, collapsing Yizhar's literary persona with that of Smilansky, the public figure.[71] This tantalizing construct of a complete and singular discursive Yizhar now completely resides within a national political discourse.[72] I would suggest, however, that Yizhar's work operates against the positioning of its textuality within, or even in relation to, a preconceived and already naturalized national framework. It is crucial, I argue, to attend to these texts'

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[69] See, for example, Chapter 6 in Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London: Verso, 2007), and Zeev Sternhell's review of the book, commenting specifically on Piterberg's discussion of Yizhar (Zeev Sternhell, "In Defence of Liberal Zionism," *New Left Review* 62 [March/April 2010], esp. p. 113).

[70] For representative examples of postcolonial criticism of Israeli literature, see Yitzhak Laor, *Anu kotvim otakh moledet* [*Narratives with no Natives*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 1995), and Hannan Hever's extensive work on Israeli literature, available in English in his *Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon: Nation Building and Minority Discourse* (New York: NYU Press, 2001).

[71] The very fact that the writer is always known by his pen-name S. Yizhar, while the public figure is always Yizhar Smilansky, can also testify against the conflation of the two into one.

[72] In his essay on Yizhar's *Days of Ziklag*, Yitzhak Laor moves freely between the literary text, Yizhar's address to the society of Hebrew writers, and Smilansky's political role in the Israeli parliament; all inform one another, with no distinction, or, for that matter, even tension. "One has to read Yizhar's great talent and his limitation within the confines of the dominant ideology, Zionism if you will. His limitations are related to his obedient relationship with this ideology. Maybe there are big chunks in this ideology that he doesn't like, to say the least, but in all of this beautiful story [*Days of Ziklag*] there is not one attempt to rebel against the [Zionist] project." And later on: "Yizhar Smilansky was a member of the Knesset representing the ruling party in the years during which what had been destroyed was being buried... Yizhar does not permit himself real heresy. He remains within the confines of the dominant ideology." *Anu kotvim,* pp. 52, 62. An see also *The Returns of Zionism*, pp. 13-218.

utter rejection of the national novel as their ultimate genre, to their constant return to 1948, refusing the post-1948 Israeli time, to their speculative formation of a collectivity resisting the decisive divide between two histories of two divergent collectives, in order to give an account of their "politics." This chapter – moving between formal but not aestheticizing considerations, historiographic but not historicist thinking, and an affective but not sentimentalized understanding of texts – aims to bring out precisely this politics, located in the workings of textuality itself.[73]

1. "A Story That Has Not Begun": On Not Writing a Hebrew Novel

Is the history of Hebrew literature the history of the modern Hebrew novel? Does it revolve around the genre of the novel, and even, more generally, around fictional narrative writing? This seems to be the prevailing historiographic narrative. Gershon Shaked's five-volume *Hebrew Fiction 1880-1980* [*Ha-siporet ha-ivrit 1880-1980*] is dedicated to "one literary mode with its multiple variations [*sug sifruti echad li-gvanav ha-shonim*]: the short story, the novella, the novel."[74] Robert Alter also explores, albeit more concisely, modern Hebrew literature through the stylistic development of a Hebrew novelistic language, in his *The Invention of Hebrew Prose*.[75] Taking novelistic writing as the focal point for the discussion of modern Hebrew literature and its history is hardly surprising: a modern invention, the quintessential modern genre, the novel, which started as a lower, inferior, popular art, had by mid-19th century, the time when the Hebrew novel was launched, already completed its ascent and taken its place at the apex of European written culture. It is therefore in reference to the novel that the anomaly structuring modern Hebrew literature in its formative moments is portrayed: Modern Hebrew literature is seen, in these accounts, as a literary endeavor created prior to the national project, consolidated in conditions of de-territorialization, written in a non-vernacular language, not yet a language of lived experience, whose raw materials are holy idiom and emphatically pre-modern textual formations, from which it nonetheless strives to stylize the modern, secular, European genre of the novel.

Granted, some of these dominant historical narratives – Robert Alter's, for example – very much focus on the many difficulties in fashioning a novelistic form in the modern

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[73] And the fact that Smilansky was also, among other things, a legendary teacher of literature, later a professor of education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who fiercely resisted and even despised theoretically-informed interpretative works of literary criticism is but another aspect of Smilansky the public figure that this present inquiry into his textuality is happily willing to forget. For his position on how one should read, and teach, literature, see S. Yizhar, *Likro sipur* [*To Read A Story*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1982).

[74] Gershon Shaked, *Ha-siporet ha-ivrit 1880-1980 vol. I* [*Hebrew Fiction 1880-1980 vol. I*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 1977), p. 13. My discussion in this section vacillates quite freely between the novel and the fictional narrative in general (be it in the form of the short story, the novella or the novel). For although there are major differences between them, the novelistic tendencies I shall later try to tackle lie at the heart of fictional narrative writing at large.

[75] Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

Hebrew language, and suggest that the short story or the novella were actually the prominent genres of modern Hebrew prose for quite a while. Other narratives, such as Dov Sadan's, even propose non-Western and pre-novelistic genres as the alternative genealogy of the development of modern Hebrew prose: the Jewish/Arabic Maqamah, the Middle-Eastern episodic literature, or the Hasidic tale, to name a few.[76] But even in these cases – and definitely in the more simplistic novel-oriented accounts – the historical narrative of modern Hebrew literature is framed as a normative correction to the historical anomaly structuring both modern Hebrew language and the modern prose written in that language: It goes all the way from Abraham Mapu's prose as a tissue of biblical citations [*shibutzim*], which fails in formulating a valid novelistic language; to Abramowitz, Brenner, and Gnessin's language of "as-if reality" – language that somewhat succeeds, even in the absence of a vernacular Hebrew, to fashion a social world, intersubjective dialogues, and even internal experiences *as if* they all originally existed in Hebrew;[77] ending up to Israeli literature written in Hebrew, a literature which now successfully mediates a comprehensive Hebrew reality. Within this narrative, S. Yizhar (1916-2006) is positioned at the exact historical moment when this anomaly was allegedly corrected, and thus supposedly appears as the ultimate representative of normalcy. He is considered one of the first native modern Hebrew writers, a member of a generation born both in Palestine itself and into the Hebrew language as a mother-tongue and a vernacular language of experience. The son of the Hebrew educator Zeev Smilansky, and the nephew of the orientalist writer of the early Jewish settlement in Palestine Moshe Smilansky, Yizhar Smilansky was raised in the Hebrew colony of Rechovot, whose soil – as a Jewish territory wherein Hebrew is mundanely thought and spoken – he has repeatedly described throughout his oeuvre. Furthermore, Yizhar started his literary career at the end of the 1930s, when the status of the Jewish national project, of the modern Hebrew language, and of the Hebrew language as a national language was finally consolidated. From then on, Yizhar was supposed to carve out the path for a national literature – a literature written in a national language, the nation's language, and from within the national territory; a literature dealing with the already-formed national collective and offered to this collective for reading; a literature written in the modern, national genre of the novel. In other words, Yizhar was considered the first to be able to write an actual Hebrew novel, a novel not marked by the anomaly of Jewish nationalism and the exceptionality of the Hebrew language – the pervasive condition until his own historical moment. Yosef Haim Brenner (1881-1921), for example, could have never written such a novel: His "novels" – if one might even classify these broken, fragmentary textual objects as novels – are written through the foreignness of Hebrew, which was neither the author's mother tongue, nor his fictional characters' and contemporary readers' language of experience. Brenner's texts are not based on a national project whose existence is granted and whose success is likely, and they do not take part in a tradition of Hebrew writing which would surely prevail. On

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[76] Dov Sadan, *Avney Bedek: Al sifrutenu, masa ve-agapeha* [*An Essay on Our Literature*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 1962).

[77] Although what their prose actually managed to do was quite the opposite: Both *nusach* and *anti-nusach* texts simulate, in Hebrew, dialogues pronounced, within the fictional world, in Yiddish or Russian.

the contrary, Brenner forms his writing project as an ongoing, ever intensifying crisis, always in the shadow of the possibility of complete failure. His texts express the writing of a last generation, not of a first one; they are all concerned with the impossibility of writing a Hebrew novel. Only two decades later, so the story goes, Yizhar writes – in a native, natural, abundant, and solid language – the valid, unquestionable, however embattled, existence of a people in its own land, and he can do so in the great, continuous, hopeful genre of the novel.[78] It is thus not surprising that Yizhar was considered, most famously by Amos Oz and A.B Yehoshua, as the greatest Hebrew novelist in Israeli literature.[79]

My reading of Yizhar is set precisely against this historiographic account, which I propose to understand as the historicist fiction of modern Hebrew literature: an immanent historical narrative based on modern, progressive, teleological temporality, as well as a narrative whose undebatable center of textual creativity is prose-fiction and the novel as its pivotal telos. In what follows I engage Yizhar's texts not from within the novelistic tradition, but precisely as texts that constantly reject some of the most basic novelistic conventions and tendencies. This claim – that Yizhar's texts are not quite written within the novelistic form – was not as far-fetched for contemporary readers as it might seem today. In fact, the statements celebrating Yizhar as the greatest Hebrew novelist and *Days of Ziklag* as the greatest novel of the post-1948 era are a result of a later process of normalization, a correction to Yizhar's anomaly which was noted to some extent in the early reception of Yizhar's work. Thus, in two harsh reviews written right after the publication in 1958 of *Days of Ziklag*, prominent critic Baruch Kurzweil argued against the alleged novelistic status of the work: "[with this book] Yizhar entered a daring, hasty adventure with the 20th century great story or the novel, when at his disposal are only the literary tools and the experiential-cultural premises of the *Palmach* [the 1948 generation] short story. But even multiplying ten times over the *Palmach* short story, whose main subject-matter is the emotional 'now' alongside the confessional-lyrical monologues will not result in conquering the space of the great story or the novel."[80] One might indeed tie Kurzweil's refusal to acknowledge Yizhar's novelistic achievement to his overall rejection of contemporary Hebrew literature, dismissing it wholesale due to what he saw as its catastrophic break with its Jewish cultural sources and heritage. However, even a younger generation of critics doubted the novelistic status of Yizhar's oeuvre. Dan Miron opens his long essay "*Al sipurey S. Yizhar*" ["On S.

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[78] This is, for example, Todd Hasak-Lowy's overall historical narrative in his book: from Abramowitz's inaugural moment of modern, secular Hebrew literature, to Brener's precarious, fragmentary, almost collapsing writing, on to Agnon's non-secular antithesis, and finally to Yizhar, who succeeds to write the ultimate "Modernist Encounters with the National Narrative" (as the title of the last chapter of his book, discussing Yizhar's works, goes). See Todd Hasak-Lowy, *Here and There: History, Nationalism, and Realism in Modern Hebrew Literature* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

[79] Amos Oz states: "S. Yizhar is the most important Israeli novelist in Israeli literature"; and A.B. Yehushua says of *Days of Ziklag:* "It is the most important novel in the post-Independence literature." Both quotations are from the blurb to the 1989 re-issue of S. Yizhar's 1958 massive tome *Yemey Tziklag* [*Days of Ziklag]* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1989).

[80] Baruch Kurzweil, *Ben chazon le-ven ha-absurdi* [*Between Vision and the Absurd*] (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1973) , pp. 378-89.

Yizhar's Stories"], from his 1962 book, with a chapter titled "On the Limits of Yizhar's work," where he enumerates the components of "the endless unity, resulting also in monotony" of Yizhar's writing, thus exploring the many ways in which Yizhar's texts deviate from the standards of novelistic writing, as Miron envisions them. "Yizhar oeuvre is the most certain and interesting achievement in the literature written in Israel [*al yedey bney ha-aretz*, literally, literature written by sons of the land, or those who were born on its soil]," writes Miron, "not despite its limitedness, but thanks to it." Miron goes on to make it clear what the right generic classification of this corpus is, asserting that "Yizhar's limited *piyyut* [literally, liturgical poem; but here also ode, or even poesy, and actually *Dichtung*] is the truest, most impressive *piyyut*."[81] Much later, in 1993, Gershon Shaked signals the change in genre assigned by stating "*Days of Ziklag* is the first and last novel [by Yizhar], and in a way most of [Yizhar's earlier] stories seem like 'etudes' preparing the path for it"; he thus activates the conventional teleological narrative according to which the novel is the unquestionable peak and the ultimate goal of prose writing, possibly of literature in its entirety.[82] However, in a footnote to this declaration itself – pushed, maybe not accidentally, to the end of the book – Shaked goes back to Kurzweil who, in his uncompromising critique of Yizhar's work, "didn't believe that the author's technique could produce a well-formed novel. This warning," Shaked concludes, "is very much justified, since this work [*Days of Ziklag*] is not a novel, neither according to the accepted rules [*ha-klalim ha-mekubalim*] of the traditional novel, nor according to those of the modern one."[83]

I am not sure that either the traditional or the modern novel do indeed have such clearcut "accepted rules," nor do I believe that what Dan Miron explores in great detail as "the limits [and actually the limitations] of Yizhar's work" could only be seen as the shortcomings of this corpus in relation to some ideal type of a novel, a "real novel" that would eventually be crafted in the Hebrew language only with Oz's *My Michael* [*Michael sheli*] or Yehoshua's *The Lover* [*Ha-me'ahev*] – and whose authors in their attempt to recruit Yizhar's work into this genre, would seek to be anointed as his legal successors. The novel, according to both Mikhail Bakhtin and Georg Lukács, is an always developing, self-transforming, ever-becoming genre, which succeeds in mediating modern reality precisely since it remains, just like the reality it aims to explore, undetermined, open, multivalent, changing, elastic and flexible, endless and contemporary.[84] The novel, then, is precisely the genre that does not have a stable

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[81] Dan Miron, *Arba panim ba-sifrut ha-ivrit bat yamenu* [*Four Modes in Contemporary Hebrew Literature*] (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1962), pp.190, 191-92 respectively.

[82] Gershon Shaked, *Ha-siporet ha-ivrit 1880-1980 vo. IV* [*Hebrew Fiction 1880-1980 vo. IV*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 1993), p. 222.

[83] Ibid, fn. 34, p. 391.

[84] "The novel is the only developing genre," writes Bakhtin, "and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding." M. M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," in *The Dialogical Imagination,* trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Texas: Texas University Press, 1981), p. 7. Lukács states similarly that "the novel, in contrast to other genres whose existence resides within the finished form, appears as something in the process of becoming." Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel,* trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge,MA.: MIT Press, [1920] 1971), pp. 72-73. I chose to address Bakhtin and Lukács's theories of the novel throughout this section

image, or a set of preconceived rules; instead, both Bakhtin and Lukács discuss in their critical writings certain tendencies, sensitivities, and challenges which together form the novel as an emphatically modern literary project: a project formed in modernity very much in antithesis to the non-modern genres and the pre-modern world and worldviews from which they developed.[85] Thus, Yizhar's textual corpus significantly deviates from these conceptualizations of the novelistic project. But instead of understanding it as a shortcoming of sorts, the mark of a certain lack in creative power for which other novelistic qualities of his writing manage to compensate, the refusal to the novelistic form might in fact be the crucial operation of Yizhar's texts which informs both their motivation and significance.

As a project anchored in modernity, the novel revolves around the present time. Unlike the eternal past of the epic, or the circular, mythic time of tragedy, "the new zone opened by the novel... [is], namely, the zone of maximal contact with the present (the contemporary reality) in all its open-endedness."[86] The time of the present structures the novel as an open form: it allows the ongoing, evolving action of the protagonist which in turn allows the development of a spontaneous narrative, never determined in advance. The novelistic time is transitory and cumulative, always inclusive and potentially all-encompassing: it recruits all the events to one long continuum, which however unexpected, changing, and transformative, remains also stable in its progression as it steadily advances towards an unknown, open future. The novelistic flow of time, in other words, is the unifying platform for the multiplicity of events populating the novelistic narrative.

The temporality of Yizhar's texts is very much at odds with this conventional novelistic present time.[87] Even the titles for some of his major works tell a very different story: from the 1948 "Before Going Out" ["*Be-terem yetzi'ah"*], to the 1963 "A Story That Has Not

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not only because they are "classics" – there are, of course, other classical theories of the novel – but mainly since the two express very different stylistic and ideological approaches towards the novel: In *The Theory of the Novel* written a moment before his ideological conversion to Marxism, and the start of his long apologia for the realist, and sometimes also the epic-like, novel, Lukács understands the novel as a secondary form, following the fall of the great inherent totality of the epic. Bakhtin, on the other hand, celebrates the novel as an open, dialogic, heteroglot form, always in comparison to the monolithic epic; he thus unsurprisingly bases his theory – in complete contradistinction to Lukács – on early-modern pre-novelistic works, such as Rabelais's, as well as on proto-modernist novels, such as Dostoevsky's. Reading these two opposing theories in tandem allows us to see where – despite their different motivations – the two agree on some of the basic characterizations of the novel. On Bakhtin, Lukács, and the question of the novel see also Massimo Fusillo, "Epic, Novel," in *The Novel, Volume 2: Forms and Themes,* ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 32-63.

85   For Bakhtin, this is mainly the epic; for Lukács, who sometimes opposes the novel to the epic while at other times sees the novel as the last development of the "great epic," it is also tragedy and even the ode and lyric poetry.

86   Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," p. 11.

87   It must be noted, however, that many critics of Yizhar's work did read it according to these novelistic lines, not least of whom was Baruch Kurzweil himself who, although harshly critiquing Yizhar as a novelist, did discuss "the emotional 'now'" of the heros as the main insistence in *Days of Ziklag* (in his review mentioned above, see fn. 16). My reading of Yizhar will aim to oppose this position.

Begun" ["*Sipur shelo hitchil"*], up to the late 1992 *Preliminaries* [*Mikdamot*], these texts are concerned not with the inclusive, rich, actualized time of the present, but rather with the empty, frustrating time of expectation which precedes a realization that never quite arrives. "Before Going Out," the first in his four 1948 war stories, narrates the story of a group of soldiers who are about to go out for a military operation. Already the first paragraph assures us that, "[t]his time we'll go out, no doubt, without any regret." By the end of the story, however, some 30 pages later – and despite a series of declarations, significantly formed in the future tense ("Together we all, all of us together, together we'll go out. Hallelujah") – the military operation is yet to begin, the soldiers not even having started their long, dreaded voyage into the night.[88] The story ends with the soldiers seemingly "going out to the field" finally, albeit "without clearly knowing if this is something that has ended, or on the contrary something that, lo and behold, is beginning and opening up [*mashehu she-hineh hu matchil ve-niftach*]."[89] This last phrase is highly ambiguous: it dramatically vacillates between the present and the future tenses, between what is already happening and that which is yet to occur. The present-tense verbs in this sentence, together with the word "*hineh*" – literally "here it is" (which also functions, in biblical Hebrew, as the imperative "look!" and is used as a marker of a focalized point of view in biblical narrative) – could indicate that the action is already taking place within the space of the story. But "*matchil ve-niftach*," the last words of the story, might also signify one verbal expression referring to a continuous action which is only about to start, forming, in the tense-deprived Hebrew language, a structure somewhat similar to the French *futur proche*. According to this parsing, rather than "beginning and opening up," the military operation is only "about to open up." This grammatical formulation – whose great master in early modern Hebrew literature was Uri Nissan Gnessin (1897-1913), to whose writing the story repeatedly refers, indeed even in its very title[90] – together with the sense of abrupt break entangled in this moment ("something that has ended"), suggest that the novelistic present time of action, the Bakhtinian "zone of maximal contact with the present […] in all its open-endedness,"[91] is actually not woven into the story. The moment that opens the present time is also the one that seals Yizhar's text.

This mode of temporality runs throughout Yizhar's oeuvre. Even in works primarily concerned with decisive action – the convoy breaking through into the besieged Negev in "Midnight Convoy" ["*Shayarah shel chatzot*"] or the gigantic *Days of Ziklag*, filled with military battle scenes – the textual investment almost always turns to the side of never-ending deferral: "Is it really beginning? Oh, may it not begin. And then some empty,

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[88] S. Yizhar, "*Be-terem yetzi'ah*," in *Sipur chirbet chizeh ve-od shloshah sipurey milchamah* [*The Story of Khirbet Khizeh and Three Other War Stories*] (Tel Aviv, [1948] 1989), 9, 23. Translation mine.
[89] Ibid, 30.
[90] "*Be-terem yetziah*" ["Before Going Out"] echoes Gnessin's 1909 story "*Be-terem*" ["Before"]. At the same time, the title also gestures towards Brenner's 1921 story "*Ha-motza*" ["The Way Out"], from which it might have also taken its thematic-political rigor.
[91] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," in *The Dialogical Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Texas, 1981), 11.

quiet moments and nothing has been made clear. Nor has [anything] begun."[92] The heroic war story "Midnight Convoy," supposedly a counterpoint to the antebellum "Before Going Out," actually follows the latter in its detailed, continuous desire for things to start – "The sound of a plot-line-in-the-making [*alilah mithavet*]. Now things will start"[93] – a desire, if at all fulfilled then only partially, ambiguously: "at this place they had finally arrived, not knowing whether it was the end of the journey, or only the beginning."[94] This temporality of expectation is also conveyed in the first pages of *Khirbet Khizeh*:

> No one knows how to wait like soldiers. You don't have a time or a place in which soldiers are not waiting and waiting. Waiting in dug-in positions on the high ground, waiting for the attack, waiting to go out, waiting in a cease-fire; there is the ruthlessly long waiting, the nervous anxious waiting, and there is also the tedious waiting, that consumes and burns everything, without fire or smoke or purpose or anything. Finding a place, lying down in it, and waiting. Where have we not lain down?[95]

Waiting becomes, in this passage, the antithesis of fictional narrative. It fills the text with repetitive punctuation blocking the possibility of any plot line to develop. The soldiers' constant, empty waiting is echoed in a text that keeps naming it – eleven times – without quite realizing it: instead of a narrative of waiting, this passage stages "waiting" as an axis around which the text circles, an anaphoric verbal element in a work that seems to have already left novelistic discourse. Indeed, what might have been a novelistic catalogue, conventionally reinforcing the referential rhetoric of a text by naming the components of the narrated world, turns out here to be a completely textual operation: in blocking any waiting narrative from developing, the recurring "waitings" manage to invoke – instead of "reality" – some biblical and post-biblical figures of apocalyptic speech and to name Yizhar's own previous war-story – "waiting before going out [*hamtanah be-terem yetzi'ah*]." Here, the time of narrative hiatus – "a dry place to sit or stretch out and wait quietly for things to begin"[96] – becomes the proper temporality of Yizhar's text. Furthermore, while "waiting" – indeed, waiting for the waiting narrative – this passage nevertheless manages to do much textual "work," albeit not precisely referential:[97] it moves quite quickly from a general, impersonal statement ("No

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[92] S. Yizhar, *Yemey Tziklag* [*Days of Ziklag*] (Tel Aviv, [1958] 1989), 62. Translation mine.

[93] S. Yizhar, "Midnight Convoy" trans. Reuven Ben-Yosef, in *Midnight Convoy and Other Stories* (London: The Toby Press, 2007),129; translation has been modified. S. Yihzar, "*Shayarah shel chatzot*," in *Sipur chirbet chizeh,* 126.

[94] "Midnight Convoy," 180; "*Shayarah shel chatzot*," 162.

[95] S. Yizhar, *Khirbet Khizeh,* trans. Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2008), p. 12; S. Yizhar, "*Chirbet Chize*," in *Sipur chirbet chizeh ve-od shlosha sipurey milchamah* [T*he Story of Khirbet Khizeh and Three Other War Stories*] (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1989), p. 35. Translation modified.

[96] Ibid.

[97] In the preface to her book, Anne-Lise François discusses Roland Barthes's entry "waiting" in *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, which ends with the story of a mandarin in love with a courtesan who promises him to be his if he waits for her for 100 nights; the mandarin sits in her garden, under her window, for 98 nights, only to walk away on the ninety-ninth. François provides some of the

one knows how to wait like soldiers [*Mi od ka-chayalim yode'a hamten?*]") to a seemingly second-person singular address ("You don't have a time or a place [*Eyn lekha sha'ah ve-eyn lekha makom*]," then back to some general assertions ("Waiting... Finding... lying... [*Mamtinim... notlim ve-osim... rov'tzim...*]"), and finally to the first-person plural enunciation ("Where have we not lain down? [*Ve-heykhan lo ravatznu?*]". This vacillation between various narrative positions is one of Yizhar's most recognizable textual mechanisms, and it is here operated precisely while the narrative is "on hold." Gabriel Piterberg has argued that progressive critical historiographic accounts of Yizhar's corpus – which follow an alleged development in his aesthetic and political engagements from the 1948 war stories to the 1958 *Days of Ziklag*, for example – are not attuned to Yizhar's special temporality, in which "there is no clear and irrevocable temporal development […] but rather an unending vacillation."[98] Yizhar's literary corpus, in other words, is also stuck in waiting. The story that fails to begin is simultaneously the story of the soldiers, the story of the various texts writing them, and the story of Yizhar's entire oeuvre.

"A Story That Has Not Begun," Yizhar's last story prior to almost 30 years of abstention from fiction writing – a story finally set to tell the events leading to the death of his beloved older brother, who was run over by a train while riding his motorcycle with his Palestinian business partner in 1942 – seems to return once more to this preliminary temporality. Yizhar often described the accident as one of the formative events of his life, and yet this lengthy text – more than a hundred pages long – hardly manages to narrate it.[99] Fifteen years after the 1948 war stories, but still in a similar vein – and sometimes using the selfsame verbal expressions – this text engages in a discursive detour that fails to lead to the time of the present: "And the story? What happens to our story? For we were supposed to tell a story, apparently, weren't we? Yes, and we won't be able to begin until we go out and get further away."[100] The story, however, does not begin, and its many pleadings – "Do not first ask whether and then go out. First go out and do not ask"; "Do so that you'll be able to go out"[101] – are in vain. After all, "going out" here indicates a cyclical motion that couples the act of narration with the narrated action – not only the end of the story, but the end of a life. The sentence of action is also a

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possible psychological plots for this story – the mandarin is afraid of realization, he had fallen in love with waiting, he is only an athlete testing his endurance, or he realizes his love precisely by walking away – only to tease out "the nonpsychological satisfaction afforded by the anecdote itself [as Barthes tells it], by its koan-like self-containment (refusal to narrative complexity, detail, or development), and its briefly, unhesitatingly assertive *passé simple*." Thus, in a somewhat similar manner to Barthes's mandarin, François waits for the structure of the narrative of waiting– anticipation, frustration, realization – to show up, but then, just before it is realized as a narrative, lets it go; she underscores "waiting," somewhat like Yizhar in the passage quoted above, as a realization in and of the non-narrative form. See Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. xxi-xxii.

[98] Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism,* 219.

[99] See, for example, "*Lir'ot et ha-sofi ba-en sofi*" ["To See the Finite in the Infinite"], Helit Yeshurun's interview with S. Yizhar, *Hadarim* 11 (Summer 1994), p. 218.

[100] S. Yizhar, "*Sipur she-lo hit'chil*" ["A Story that Has Not Begun"], in *Sipurey mishor* [*The Stories of the Plain*] (Tel Aviv, 1963), 110. Translation mine.

[101] Ibid, 118, 122.

death sentence – for the Jewish and the Palestinian protagonists alike. Through the non-novelistic preliminary temporality, the time of a constant "before," the story attempts to defer – perhaps endlessly – a decisive, transformative, and ultimately fatal present. Throughout the story, the narrator – younger brother Yizhar reenacting the scene of the accident – calls on its different components to cease from action:

> To Hasan: Why are you silent, detached in your 'but.' Can't you see? This is the end. Stop him. Yell at him. Plead with him. Hit him on his back! And to the train: Stop, you beast! And to the motorcycle: Take a moment, be silent, shut up, you too![102]

The operative mode of this text – expressed in the voice of the writer/narrator/storyteller that experiences the scene not only as retrospective commentator but also as inserted participant and anachronistic witness – is that of blockage rather than realization, of prevention rather than facilitation.

In postponing the time of the present, however, this temporality never returns to the absolute past of the epic, to the already far removed, sealed course of events, following the distinction between novelistic and epic time. Rather, precisely since the present (marked as a time of horrific, deadly actions) is already known, the text – always anticipating it – tries to prevent its coming into being. If "there are roads [*drakhim*; also paths, ways, modes] it is better not to take,"[103] it is only because they were already taken; since the present had been experienced in reality, it should be ever postponed in – but also through – the realm of the text. In other words, the temporality of Yizhar's writing is set against the consecutive, positivist and eventually historical trajectory leading from past to present, as the movement structuring narrative itself:

> I don't find in me any passion [*ta'avah* – desire, interest, lust] for any beautiful yesterday. I am all attuned toward what has never been. Although it is not very modest to give such a declaration. Towards what has never been yet, towards something which maybe can never be... Not to any 'once upon a time' [*hayo hayah*; what actually was, what happened]. It was? No good and no wisdom in what was. Just that which has not been, which is perhaps as yet to come.[104]

The rejection of the present moment, the continuous deferral of transformative action, is thus formulated in Yizhar's texts as a negation of empirical past – of what happened, what actually was [*hayo hayah*]. These texts are not formed within the narrative structure of "once upon a time," of punctual events that happened and ended, and therefore can now be told from afar; these texts do not, to use Walter Benjamin's memorable phrase in his "Theses on History," "give themselves to the whore called

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[102] Ibid, 175.
[103] S. Yizhar, "*Sipur she-lo hit'chil*," 193
[104] Ibid, pp. 124-125.

'Once upon a time' in the bordello of historicism."[105] The negation of both the closed, linear past and the spontaneous open present – the two sides of the same coin – is a rejection of the narrative mode of "once upon a time" in favor of a potential temporality. Indeed, in lieu of a story – a story that seems not to take place, "a story that has not begun" – this text is compiled out of a set of *drahsot* – sermons, but also, more generally, exegetical interventions ("Is all of this a story? It is once again only a *drasha*"[106]). The text thus aims not so much to make a story out of the past, but to stage an experience with it; and precisely because this experience is not empirical – the young Yizhar was not part of the historical scene of accident in 1942 – it might indeed, to keep following Benjamin, "explode the continuum of history": from the textual labor of forming such an experience, a different temporality, and now also a different historical movement, unfolds. Yizhar's linguistic insistence on conjugating what, in Semitic languages, is the not-quite-verb "to be" – *haya*, *yakhol li-hiyot* (was, could be) – wanders around in order to find a way towards a Hebrew pseudo-subjunctive speculative modality of "that which has not been, which is perhaps as yet to come [*rak ba-lo haya, ba-ulay od yavo*]."

Yizhar's speculative mode – speculative but not theoretical, since it is inscribed into the diegesis itself as a circulated experience – departs from the narrative mode in many important ways: Not adhering to the work of separation and distinction at the core of narrative formations, it blurs, duplicates, and cuts across different narrative positions. The basic distinction between different narrative positions – between writer, narrator, character, and reader – does not hold in Yizhar's texts.[107] On the contrary, they constantly frustrate the articulation of these very discrete novelistic instantiations. Many of Yizhar's texts are written through the voice of a narrator who is shaped in the image of the writer himself, while also acting as the not very active and yet focalizing protagonist of the narrated story; this voice thus exists at the level of the artistic crafting, the intertextual orchestration, and the imaginary action all at once. It also moves, frequently and freely, from the collective first-person plural, to the individual, mostly antagonistic, first-person singular, and then also to impersonal, non-focalized, abstract assertions. But most importantly, these texts constantly address a certain second-

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[105] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on History," in *Selected Writing IV*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 396 (Thesis XVI). This "once upon a time" might also be the time of the fairy-tale, which is, pace Benjamin, the ultimate derivation of the historicist myth.

[106] S. Yizhar, "*Sipur she-lo hitchil*," p. 130. Christ's Sermon on the Mount [*ha-drashah al ha-har*] – which obviously has its roots in the Jewish exegetical genre of the *drasha* – is undoubtedly a major point of reference for this text, which substitutes the novelistic dialogue with exegetical prophecy. ("Prophecy is characteristic of the epic," claims Bakhtin in his "Epic and Novel," p. 31.)

[107] That is not to say that all narratives keep these positions strictly distinct from one another; many narratives, of course, do blur these positions. But the modernist or proto-modernist blurring, unlike Yizhar's preliminary refusal to adhere to the principle of separation between narrative positions, is nevertheless based on a novelistic convention of separation, and appears precisely as a challenge for or a negation of this convention. See, for example, how even "modernist" Bakhtin distinguishes between the various novelistic positions through the cumulative disjunction "or": "[the heteroglot sense of the world and of society orchestrating a novelistic theme] enters [also] as the fully embodied image of a posited author, of narrators or, finally, as characters." "Discourse in the Novel," pp. 331-32.

person singular "you," in what has become one of the trade-marks of Yizhar's style. Many critics have read it as the interior dialogue of the narrator/protagonist, staging his internal moral struggle.[108] But this "you" is actually much more undecidable than the one easily ascribed interiorly: The Hebrew second person singular might equally indicate a general assertion (as in the English "one"), or an act of communication between two imagined individuals in what is usually a scene of collective gathering, but also an address to the unmarked reader, or even the summoning of some radical otherness to the humane discursive mode itself (namely, God). This frequent singular "you" thus continuously problematizes what is traditionally seen as the narrative framing of Yizhar's textuality, since it keeps undermining both the inter-diegetic (the narrator, the character) and the extra-diegetic (the writer, the reader): The "you" can refer, in principle, to each of these positions, and can, and perhaps should, be read as ever referring to more than one position at a time. Instead of differentiating between narrative positions, this textual mode looks for ways to conflate them. It does not ascribe different experiences to different positions – imaginary artistic creation to the writer, narrated action and bearing witness to the first-person narrator/protagonist, reception through identification to the reader – but rather aims at circulation and dissemination of experience (in the sense of *Erfahrung*), necessarily folding over, and ultimately undoing, the categories of the historical and the fictional.

This circulation of experience – the quick passages from one pronoun to another, in the shadow of the always ambiguous singular "you" – signifies that such experience, conveyed in the textual form of speech or discourse, never quite belongs to one specific subject position. The language of experience circulates and fails to differentiate between the various positions of utterance. Compare this to the Bakhtinian novel which "can be defined," in one of the rare moments when Bakhtin does supply a definition, "as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized."[109] The novel, in this view, is made up of the multiplicity of distinctive social languages, available through the speech of the numerous individuals populating it, whose interrelations create the always heteroglot and dialogic discourse of the novel itself. This "internal stratification" of the novelistic discourse is almost completely absent in Yizhar's writing, which is famous precisely for its overall monotony: The similar scenery, revisited again and again, restricted in narrow geographical and topographical delimitations (almost only the plains of South and Central Israel/Palestine), the single type of characters put at its center (young Israeli men, mostly soldiers, who were either born in Palestine of European descent or are new immigrants from Europe), and the monophonic and homogenous linguistic register of

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[108] Gidi Nevo, for example, dedicates a section of his book on *Days of Ziklag* to "The Second-Person Stream of Consciousness," thus solving the riddle before even posing it: for him, the address in the second person is unquestionably an integral part of the interiorized literary technique known as "stream of consciousness." Gidi Nevo, *Shiv'ah yamim ba-negev: al 'Yemey Tziklag" le-S. Yizhar [Seven Days in the Negev: On S. Yizhar's Days of Ziklag]* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2005), pp. 75-91.

[109] "Discourse in the Novel," p. 262.

narration.[110] Even in a text of more than 1000 pages long such as *Days of Ziklag*, and despite the novelistic promise of its first chapter which does present a panorama of different characters, it is hard to clearly distinguish between all of the young soldiers populating it since their actions, their personal and social languages, as well as the language narrating their actions all remain, throughout the text, quite similar.[111] How different it is, for instance, from Yehshua Kenaz's 1986 *Infiltration* [*Hitganvut yechidim*], the other significant military epic in modern Hebrew literature, written as a direct response to *Days of Ziklag*, though almost 30 years later, a text invested in the social differentiation of its many characters – in their individual social trajectories, their unique character traits, their different interior worlds, in their opposing languages.[112] *Infiltration*, inspired by the late 19th century European novel which Kenaz had immersed himself in, read, admired, translated, and finally also mastered, is indeed structured around the novelistic "diversity of social speech types."[113]

Yizhar's texts do not share the same novelistic motivations: they are not invested in writing human multitude and the plethora of human relations, where the numerous linguistic formations are owned by different individuals as they mediate the rivaling social positions from which the course of contingent actions can take place, leading to a developing, consecutive narrative. In the absence of differentiation – between narratological functions, between fictional characters, between social languages – this textuality frustrates the oedipal drama of separation, so formative to the novel: The drama of the hero as a seeker, antagonistic to the conditions of living, trying to form the totality of life not given in advance, but achieved through individual acts. "The novel," to quote Lukács's classical analysis, "raises an individual to the infinite heights of one who must create an entire world through his experience and who must maintain that world in equilibrium."[114] The novelistic "experience" is therefore that of a distinctive individual,

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[110] Shaked discusses "the principal limitations of the typology, the narrative, and the formal materials [*ha-chomarim ha-me'utzavim*, that is the *fabula* and *sujet*]" of Yizhar's work. (*Ha-siporet ha-ivrit 1880-1980 vol. IV*, p. 195); Miron claims that "Yizhar situates almost all of his protagonists in one single phase of undeveloped emotional experience" (*Arba panim ba-sifrut ha-ivrit bat yamenu*, p. 176).

[111] Commenting on the seeming multiplicity of tastes, interests, and political positions among the numerous characters of soldiers in *Days of Ziklag*, Laor claims that Yizhar nonetheless prefers to follow only one type of soldiers ("those who resemble 'us'"), and that "since there are really no differences among the characters in relation to the one action in which they all partake, the narrator is forced to load upon them the difference in 'ideational' debates... Each is characterized through something that is utterly unrelated to the action itself: Barzilay quotes from the Bible, and Beni is a Marxist, and so forth. It would be superfluous to say that these differences have no significance whatsoever other than [within] the acts of discussion [themselves]." *Anu kotvim*, pp. 53-54; quoted and translated in *The Returns of Zionism*, p. 218.

[112] Yehushua Kenaz, *Hitganvut yechidim* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986); Yehoshua Kenaz, *Infiltration,* trans. Dalya Bilu (South Royalton, VT: Zoland Books, 2003).

[113] Furthermore, Kenaz's novel might be seen as the symbolic turning-point from the 1960s and 1970s national literature of the Statehood Generation to the writing of the 1980s and 1990s identity-politics and multicultural literature. See Dror Mishani, *Be-khol ha-inyan ha-mizrachi yesh eyzeh absurd* [*In All of This Mizrahi Thing There Is Some Absurd*] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006). Yizhar's writing, I claim, is neither here nor there, since those two allegedly opposed poles (the unmarked, allegedly unified national vs. the multiply ethnic) actually create one progressive historiographic narrative.

[114] Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 83. This is mainly true of the realist novel, and would later serve

whose focalizing experience, in the course of separation from both the immediate inanimate surroundings and fellow peers, regenerates the totality – whether realistic-comprehensive or modernist-fragmentary – of the novelistic world.[115] I argue that Yizhar's textuality withdraws from the novelistic focalization of experience: Instead of a protagonist initiated into virile maturity, we find fungible characters populating a continuous play, always only on the threshold of maturity;[116] instead of an inward experience exteriorized, cumulatively validating a "hero [that] does not have to be passive,"[117] we find in Yizhar's work characters constantly failing to implement their stormy discourse;[118] and instead of a narrative based on the immanence of human life, Yizhar's textuality bears on various forms of exteriority.

Focalized experience, rooted in the drama of separation, sets the novel as an epistemological form:[119] a genre that merges action, speech, and knowledge together as the components of what is always a human practice and experience. And here is, at the other pole, the beginning of the long first sentence with which "Before Going Out" opens:

> When the sun would go down, and the being of twilight [*havayat ben arbayim*] would go out to the fields, and their time would come to say their piece [*lomar et dvaram*], and there would arise in the world an excitement that has no basis, that would become so much of a wonder which does not have a name...[120]

These lines express a forceful event which is not human but cosmic: an ontological occurrence that immediately becomes a linguistic happening and causes emotive bustle. All of these – event, language, sensation – are not attached to any active individual or even to any perceptual subjective consciousness; they rather open a non-human space constituted against the human action (going out to battle) which fails to appear. Novelistic epistemology – the focalized experience of an active-speaking-

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Lukács in his apologia for the realist against the modernist novel, which has forsaken this equilibrium for some subjective internal reality (Ibid, p. 70). However, individual focalization remains an integral part of the modernist novel.

[115] Bakhtin also stresses the individualized nature of the novelistic hero, whose "action has no shared meaning for the community, is not uncontested and takes place not in an uncontested epic world where all meanings are shared." "Discourse in the Novel," p. 334; and see also "Epic and Novel," pp. 34-35.

[116] "'This here, this isn't a war, it's a child's play.'" *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 22; "Chirbet chizeh," p. 39.

[117] Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, 89.

[118] "The war is the war, and the talk is just talk [*ha-milchamah hi milchamah, ve-ha-diburim hem diburi*m]." *Anu kotvim*, p. 54.

[119] Bakhtin: "When the novel becomes the dominant genre, epistemology becomes the dominant discipline ("Epic and Novel," p. 15). Brian McHale discusses the change between modernist and postmodernist literature as a transition from the epistemological crisis to an ontological one; see his *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987), esp. pp. 3-12. Bakhtin's historical reasoning – the inauguration of the novel in the modern, epistemological era – reveals his inherent, and not only historical, valorization of the epistemological-qua-novelistic.

[120] S. Yizhar, "*Be-terem yetziah*," p. 9. My translation.

knowledgeable human subjectivity – is replaced here with an almost epic ontology, comprised of speech but deprived of naming.[121] Yizhar's ontological language takes various forms: In many of his texts it appears as the archaic, ahistorical land or landscape which constantly reject, in metaphysical terms, the Jewish settlement in Palestine ("That maybe the land doesn't want us at all, really. Because we came here to make changes and it doesn't want.... the insolence of strangers, coming here to pull down what has been completely fixed for a thousand, two thousand or three thousand years, a single, vast, whole, empty land, so beautiful in her even, perfect, total emptiness"[122]); in other cases, it shows up as the sound of music that traverses all worldly speech ("But I remember one young man stopping at the slope of the road, caught by sounds he hasn't known before... and realizing that in this world there is a greater world than the limits known to him, and he was almost tempted to think that here it's everything, until he almost surrendered."[123]); or, finally, the ontological language is transmitted through the image of the Divine, as in the final moment of "Khirbet Khizeh," where God "would come forth and descend to roam the valley..."[124] But in whatever form it takes, Yizhar's ontological language circulates not as a diverse, stratified, heteroglot novelistic social language, but precisely as a monolithic quality with a strong crystallizing tendency; rather than the multiplicity of human speech it posits itself as, but also disseminates, a unifying discourse. In that sense, it touches upon the prophetic, and not only the vernacular speech – as a recurrent point of intertextual reference, but moreover, as an authorial form it strives to evoke: The longing for Jeremiah and Isaiah – not as biblical figures but as metonymies for modes of speech – is a crucial structuring element Yizhar's texts.[125] These texts, therefore, join a non-modern textual lineage – prophetic or epic, ethical or ontological – in what is only properly an anachronistic way.[126] But this anachronism is neither nostalgic nor affirmative; it is critical of modernity, of modern temporality and modern literary historiography, and of the modernized, secular language of literature. Written vis-à-vis a textual tradition which holds a very conflictual relation toward modern historiography and progressive temporality, and "[i]n a language where He is invoked back a thousandfold into our life, God" – as a cypher of exteriority of and within the narrative of modernity – indeed "will not stay silent."[127]

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[121] And naming, as Benjamin claims, is what defines human language: "[T]he language of man speaks in words. Man therefore communicates his own mental being (insofar as it is communicable) by *naming* all other things... *It is therefore the linguistic being of man to name thing*s." Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," *Selected Writings I,* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 64.

[122] S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries,* trans. Nicholas de Lange (London: The Toby Press, 2007), pp. 86-7; *Mikdamot* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1992), pp. 48-9. On the political significance of this passage, where the "emptiness of the land," one of the primal Zionist dictums, is resignified here, see section 3 of this chapter.

[123] "*Psanter boded ba-laylah*" ["A Lonely Piano at Night"], in *Tzdadiyim* [*Asides*] (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1996). Translation mine.

[124] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 113; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 78.

[125] For Bakhtin, on should recall, the novel is Socratic while the epic is prophetic ("Epic and Novel," pp. 24-25, 31)

[126] Since anachronism is one of the main characteristics of these non-modern textualities: see "Epic and Novel," p. 3.

[127] The quote is from the now famous letter of Scholem to Rosenzweig, "Confession on the Subject of Our

I would like to conclude this discussion with the last paragraph of "The Prisoner" ["*Ha-shavuy*"], one of Yizhar's 1948 war stories.[128] "The Prisoner" tells the story of the arbitrary capture, looting, and violent interrogation of a Palestinian shepherd by a group of Jewish soldiers in an occupied Arabic village during the war. The story ends, as its summaries usually go, after the decision to send the captive on to another camp, when the first-person narrator debates within himself whether to defy the orders given to him and release the prisoner or not. Like "Khirbet Khizeh," this text was subject to much public and critical attention throughout the years including, most recently, a harsh ideology critique waged by the prominent non-Zionist, post-colonial literary Israeli scholar Hannan Hever.[129] In what follows, I will try to show how the formalistically disguised discussion of Yizhar's non-novelistic language, replacing the present human focalized activity and experience with speculative ontological language of already lost time, could produce a very different political reading of the last paragraph of "The Prisoner," a reading which will serve here also as a prelude to my reading of Yizhar's textual politics in the next section of this chapter:

> The fields were one vast shallow gold expanse, all the tens of thousands of dunams made up one single enchanted plain with no valleys, no hills, no uphills or downhills, no villages or trees. Everything has been hammered out to one single gold foil, one leveled expanse above which were scattered quivering restless golden dust-blobs around a vast land of gold that stretched on to infinity; and even if it were possible that on the other side (where nobody watches) amid the evening mists making their way down from the hills, even if there is some other sadness over there maybe, some gnawing sadness, some sadness of who knows what, some sadness of shameful helplessness, some waiting woman, some who-can-know-what decree of life, a who-knows-what that's very very private, and another who-knows-what, a general one, that the sun will set and it will stay here, among us, never brought to an end.[130]

"The Prisoner" ends with one long, complex, tortured sentence written in a metaphysical idiom: It unifies the space by rejecting the multitude of the different instantiations of human reality, through constant, repetitive, poeticized negations – "one vast shallow expanse, with no … no... no." Everything is gathered, "beaten down," into a sublime

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Language," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion,* ed. Gil Anidjar [New York: Routledge, 2002], p. 227. On the conflictual relationship between traditional Jewish temporality and modern historiography, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982)

[128] A better translation of this story's title would be "The Captive," and it stands in a long tradition of captive stories in modern Hebrew literature. See Nurit Govrin, "*Alilat ha-shavuy*" ["The Captive Narrative"], in *Am va-sefer* 10 (1998), pp. 82-98; see also Uri Sh. Cohen's research on the question of captivity in modern Hebrew literature and culture in *Refiguring the Israeli Soldier* (forthcoming).

[129] Hannan Hever, "*Achrayut u-merchav be-ha-shavuy me'et S. Yizhar*" ["Responsibility and Space in S. Yizhar's 'The Prisoner'"], in *Mechkarey Yerushalayim* 23 (2009), pp. 273-78.

[130] S. Yizhar, "The Prisoner," trans. I.M. Lask, in *Midnight Convoy and Other Stories,* pp. 87-8. Translation modified.

vision of an endless plain, full of gold, formed as an uncompromising wholeness. In this way, argues Hever, "the Israeli gaze, organizing the landscape" is adopted at the end of the story, through "the aesthetic closure of the story's structure," by the supposedly rebellious narrator himself, whose "new gaze negates the presence of the Palestinians in the space – 'without villages, without trees' – and actualizes the [Jewish/israeli] appropriation of the space."[131] Despite the practical difficulties and the moral dilemmas, by the end of the story, Hever argues, "the narrator takes a decision to conquer the space through the gaze," in a narrative strategy that ultimately follows the strategy of the occupying forces.[132] Naturalizing the space means here naturalizing the historical violence that has just created this space through the expulsion of its native inhabitants, as an already calm, beautiful, celebrated, and yet mono-ethnic, occupied place.

This is a strong reading, but also a circular one: It presupposes the novelistic language on whose basis it critiques the text. The unifying space, thus, necessarily testifies to the ideological failure in fashioning a diverse, heteroglot social discourse that would also give voice to Palestinian speech;[133] the vision of the space is taken as a focalized experience of a first-person narrator, a Jewish soldier who eliminates any traces of Palestinian existence from his apprehension of the landscape; and the end of the text is inevitably the closure of a well-written short story, the culmination of its progression in the novelistic time of the present, always addressed to an open-ended future, that of the nation state of Israel. However, Yizhar's texts, and this paragraph in particular, might be read very differently. The paragraph, to begin with, is not subjectively focalized: The language of its first half is emphatically ontological and not phenomenological: "The field was" [*ha-shadeh haya*], "all the tens of thousands of dunams turned into one single enchanted plain" [*melo kol asrot alfey ha-dunam hafkhu az kikar pil'it*],[134] "everything has been hammered out" [*ha-kol nitraka*]. Moreover, the second half of the paragraph is written in the potential language of an anti-phenomenological experience: What might possibly be happening "where nobody watches" [*ve-shamah lo mistaklim*, expressed in the Hebrew in the impersonal, even collective, grammatical construction, like the French "*on*" or the German "*man*").[135] What occurs in this paragraph does not belong to the novelistic domain of a perceptive consciousness – a focalizing individual subjectivity mediating localizable social speech (a Jewish soldier) – but tends towards the arena of an anonymous ontological intervention. Furthermore, rather than an aestheticized closure of a short story – as a well-defined, closed object ready for aesthetic consumption[136] – "The Prisoner" ends with a long, tormented, not quite grammatical

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[131] *"Achrayut u-merchav be-ha-shavuy me'et S. Yizhar,"* pp. 274, 273, and 277, respectively.

[132] Ibid, p. 277.

[133] See also Laor's critique of Yizhar: "This might be the time to turn to 'The Prisoner.' Here Yizhar also does not represent any Arabs. This is true. But in his war stories he represents Israelis-expelling-Arabs." *Anu kotvim,* p. 60.

[134] The original version of the text, from 1949, reads *hayu* (were) instead of *hafkhu* (turned into). See S. Yizhar. *Sipur chirbet chizeh, ha-shavuy* [*The Story of Khirbet Khizeh and The Prisone*r] (Merchavyah: Sifriyat ha-po'alim, 1949).

[135] However, in its idiomatically plural-impersonal version, this form is typical of hebrew from the rabbinic period on.

[136] For a discussion and a critique of the aesthetic domain, see Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without*

sentence, crafting a conditional clause without a definite end (an "if" with no "then"), moving intensively towards the last two words which leave both the sentence and the text unbound: "*lo gamur*," literally "unfinished" or "incomplete," but also, as the translation goes, "not brought to an end." This is not an aesthetic closure of a story written in a progressive present time, pointing to the results of its transformative action on some future reality; it is rather an unfulfilled statement, folding over itself in its potential, unrealizable, yet endless attachment to the past.

Instead of validating the historical time of the present – the already absent Arab village, the persecuted Palestinians expelled from their land, the law of the now Jewish state – the endless end of "The Prisoner" remains in the past, as an unconsoled aftermath of a calamity. And through the speculative, non-phenomenological turn to "the other side" [*me-achor*, from the back], "an other sadness" [*etzev acher*] can come to the fore: An abstract emotive state, first devoid of subjective articulation, coming from and as an exteriority. But it is precisely as a non-focalized exteriority that this *etzev* (sadness, sorrow, misery, grief) can circulate in the ontological space of Yizhar's text – "some other sadness, some gnawing sadness, some sadness of who knows what, some sadness of shameful hopelessness" – in the form of a political, emotive, and also ethical experience. This *etzev*, a de-subjectivized, non-localizable, yet recurring and disseminating experience, is not ascribed to the Jewish soldier – regretting what he could not do or lamenting the conditions that have led him finally do it (release the prisoner); it is not focalized as an interiorized individual experience within the psycho-drama of "the beautiful Israeli soul." Through its ontological language this *etzev* rather manages to move from one punctuation to another – from an exteriority penetrating the space, to an urgency filling it, through to a situation whose focalization is indeterminate, to an ethical outcry, and then, finally, to its subjective manifestations which are here not necessarily Jewish but probably Palestinian ("some waiting woman, some who-can-know-what decree of life"[137]). The circulation of this political/ethical affective mood is therefore not addressed to an open-ended future but to the already damaged past – a lament over what has happened but is also still happening, as long as the *etzev* keeps disseminating, as long as the text is incomplete and never brought to an end: "*lo gamur*."

Yizhar's politics, not Smilansky's – the politics of Yizhar's texts, not of Smilansky's parliamentary or academic activity – cannot be separated from the politics of his textuality, anchored in its non-novelistic tendencies. In the next section of this chapter I read anew Yizhar's most prominent short text from and about 1948 war – "Khirbet Khizeh" – in light of this non-novelistic textuality. If something still "stay[s] here, among us," more than sixty years after 1948, it might reside exactly in the question about this "us" – between a "who-knows-what that's very very private, and another who-knows-

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Content, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[137] The waiting woman is either the wife of the prisoner, mentioned in the text a few paragraphs earlier, or his mother, through an allusion to the biblical figure of Sisera's mother who was weeping while waiting for her son's return from battle (Judges 5: 28-30). *Ozlat yad* – helplessness to act – can apply to either the Jewish soldier or the Palestinian inhabitants.

what, a general one" – now being posed again, decades later, and through these texts "never brought to an end."

2. Collectivity in Ruins, Collectivity in the Making: Writing 1948

S. Yizhar dedicated most of his work to the 1948 war. Not only his 1200-page 1958 magnum opus *Days of Ziklag*, "a monument to the 1948 war,"[138] but also his four "war stories" written in 1948-49 during wartime ("Before Going Out," "The Prisoner," Khirbet Khizeh," and "Midnight Convoy"), and many short memoirs written over the years. When he did not write about that war, he dealt with the time that preceded it: In his 1963 *The Plain Stories* [*Sipurey Mishor*], as well as in his later books from the 1990s, he returns to Palestine of the first decades of the 20th century. This is a surprising corpus for a writer who spent almost his entire mature life in the post-1948 sovereign state of Israel. Yizhar, who is commonly considered as the major, albeit dissident, figure in the 1948 generation of prose writers ("The *Palmach* Generation")[139] is indeed someone for whom 1948 kept being a major point of reference, but at the same time also a limit, a barrier, a block he couldn't quite cross. "Yizhar, like Bialik," writes Gershon Shaked, "saw the [promised] land from the other end [*mi-neged*] but into it he did not enter: Just as Bialik didn't write any work which directly engages the land of Israel, so Yizhar wrote no work that deals with the fulfillment of the dream of 'The Silver Tray' [Alterman's metaphor for the state of Israel]."[140] Yet unlike Bialik, who wrote almost all of his poetry in Eastern Europe, prior to his emigration to Palestine in 1924, Yizhar was born in Palestine and wrote most of his works within the confines of the state of Israel, a state which was established after, and as a result of, the 1948 war. Yizhar's consistent withdrawal from the post-1948 era is therefore as telling as it is enigmatic.

If Yizhar's textuality, as I have already argued, rejects the novelistic present time in favor of some speculative preliminary time – the time before the fictional action begins and the novelistic language takes shape – this temporality can now be understood also as the time before the consolidation of the national community and the formation of an independent Israeli state. And yet, Yizhar does not simply ignore 1948 and its decisive results, writing as if 1948 is yet to occur. Writing after 1948, always in its shadow, Yizhar goes against historical time, deferring the present which has already taken place, invested, as in "A Story That Has Not Begun, in "that which has not been, which is perhaps as yet to come." Thus, there is almost no "Israel," as the already naturalized national Jewish space, in Yizhra's oeuvre;[141] only Israel/Palestine, a yet-to-be

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[138] *Anu kotvim,* p. 50.

[139] Dan Miron has recently argued against the positioning Yizhar in "The *Palmach* Generation." See his "Introduction" to S. Yizhar's *Midnight Convoy and Other Stories,* pp. x-xvi.

[140] *Ha-siporet ha-ivrit 1880-1980, vol. IV*, p. 189.

[141] With the sole exception of his last book which deals with the 1973 war, in a somewhat similar manner to the 1948 war, as a state of emergency where no national sovereignty remains intact. See S. Yizhar, *Giluy eliyahu* [*The Revelation of Elijah*] (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1999).

determined place of habitation and struggle, an area divided in many possible ways and not only according to national coordinates, and, by the end, approaching 1948, a battlefield of a "civil war," as Rashid Khalidi puts it.[142] At the same time, this yet-to-be-determined has already been determined historically, and it is always from that point of determination that Yizhar's texts make a continuous effort to potentially find or create an opening of a different path. This is why this textual corpus cannot be easily recruited to the developmental trajectory of "Israeli literature." What Dan Miron celebrates – somewhat unavoidably, being the leading national historian of Israeli literature – as "[Yizhar's] uncompromising delving into the infrastructure of 'Israeliness,'"[143] I propose to understand as a persistent rejection of "Israeliness" in Yizhar's writing, and eventually a negation of "Israeli" literature as the ultimate frame from which this textuality was formed and through which it should be read.[144]

The year 1948 was a remarkable time even prior to the decisive moments of the foundation of Israel and the Nakba: It was "the zero hour" [*she'at ha-efes*], in Adi Ophir's words, when "an empty space was created, allowing to raise the question of political authority and its sources in the most acute and radical way."[145] In the twilight zone between British mandatory rule that ended in late 1947, and the Israeli law formed only at the beginning of 1949, a state of anomaly, of *a-nomos*, was created in Israel/Palestine, inaugurating the time of constitutive, law-making violence – violence forming the law as well as its own (past and future) legal legitimacy.[146] Adi Ophir

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[142] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon, 2006), p. 126.

[143] Miron, "Introduction to S. Yizhar, *Midnight Convoy and Other Stories,*" p. xviii.

[144] The historical explanation for Yizhar's discomfort with post-1948 sovereign Israel, and his continuous lament over pre-1948 mandatory Palestine (or Palestine-Eretz Israel) – as Gabriel Piterberg has recently elaborated – is based on Yizhar Smilansky's biography, growing up in Rechovot. Rehovot was a *moshava*, an "ethnic plantation colony" in Gershon Shafir's terms, founded in 1890 during the first phase of massive Jewish immigration to Palestine ("*Aliya rishona*"), when colonization was focused on land, and not yet on labor. Thus, in places like Rechovot at the beginning of the 20th century, Palestinians and Jews worked together and lived in great proximity. By contrast, the second and third waves of immigration founded the "pure settlement colonies" of the *moshav* and the *kibbutz*, already based on "Jewish labor," thus separating the Palestinian and Jewish communities from one another; this second mode of settlement became the pervasive one, setting the terms to the post-1948 "Jewish State" of Israel. In lamenting pre-1948 Jewish/Palestinian mandatory Palestine, Yizhar, according to this explanation, laments the first, more inclusive, stage of Zionism, which was still somewhat invested in a certain mode, however limited, of cohabitation. See *The Returns of Zionism*, pp. 64-65, 205, and *Anu Kotvim*, p. 62. As much as this historical reasoning is crucial – even if it does not give an account of the important class difference between the petit-bourgeois settlement of the "*Aliya rishona*" and the socialist settlement of "*Alyia shniya*" – it cannot fully explain Yizhar's approach to Israel and to Zionism, many years after the original clash between the two ideological forms of settlements, when "*Aliya rishona*" and its settlements has been integrated into mainstream Zionist ideology and the Israeli state. More importantly, it cannot account for the operation of Yizhar's texts as they keep returning to the 1948 and pre-1948 moments.

[145] Adi Ophir, "*she'at ha-efes*" ["The Zero Hour"], in *Avodat ha-hoveh: masot al tarbut ivrit ba-et ha-zot* [*Working for the Present: Essays on Contemporary Israeli Culture*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2001), p. 227.

[146] Ophir applies here Benjamin's distinction between law-making and law-preserving violence in his "Critique of Violence," in *Selected Writings I*, pp. 236-52, as well as Derrida's discussion of Benjamin's

proposes that the work of critique is to revisit this volatile political time – entailing both the anomalous moments prior to the violent formation of the law and the still shaky moments immediately following this formation – as a time when the law of the state, allowing political governance, is not yet reified, naturalized, and normalized. These moments of transformation, he argues, should be closely and critically examined: From the multitude of political forces and alliances in Israel/Palestine, to the binary conflict between two national movements, and finally to the violent, differential resolution of this conflict. I suggest that Yizhar's work, repeatedly revisiting this time of 1948, might be seen as one prominent locus of such work of critique. Yet instead of understanding the undecidable yet decisive moment of 1948 in terms of political regime and juridical law, always still within the confines of a state-bound analysis,[147] Yizhar's work engages with the time of 1948 through the question of collectivity, as a moment of movement and displacement, but also of formation and consolidation, of collectivities. The resolution of the year 1948 is, after all, not only the constitution of state law and the one-national regime of the new state called Israel; it is also the making of a sovereign national collectivity, the Israeli collectivity, formed as an ethnocentric one based on the exclusion, both interior and exterior, of the Palestinian, and on the other hand, the dismantling of the Palestinian collectivity, now fragmented and scattered, which 1948 paradoxically managed to solidify, only as a collectivity of loss.[148] Lena Jayyusi thus stresses that for the Palestinian collectivity, the Nakba was not only the end of a historical process, but that it came to be seen, throughout the following decades, as "the foundational station in an unfolding and continuing saga of dispossession, negation, and erasures."[149]

Positioned on the verge of this 1948 divide between the two collectivities, and two different forms of collectivity – both during the last moments before the final divide and on the first moments after it – Yizhar's textuality tackles the problematics of collectivity. But this problematics is also deeply rooted in the conditions of this textuality itself: Not an Israeli literature in any simple way – a national literature emerging from the national collectivity and addressed to it, literature representing this collectivity through the representative figure of the national subject[150] – Yizhar's textuality opens up the

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text, deconstructing this distinction at "Force of Law," in *Acts of Religion,* ed. Gil Anidjar [New York: Routledge, 2002], pp. 230-98).

[147] Thus, writing in a Foucauldian dialect, Ophir nevertheless seems to ignore Foucault's pointed critique of modern political thought: "Dans la pensée et l'analyse politique, on n'a toujours pas coupé la tête du roi." Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p 117.

[148] In the introduction to the volume of essays they edited on the Palestinian memory of the 1948 Nakba, Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad H. Sa'di write that [t]he Nakba has... become, both in Palestinian memory and history, the demarcation line between two opposite periods," so that after the Nakba "the most distinctive feature of Palestinian social memory is its production under constant threat of erasure." Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Introduction: The Claims of Memory," *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 3, 13.

[149] Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figures of Palestinian Memory," *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Limits if Memory*, pp. 109-10.

[150] Hamutal Tsamir theorizes and critiques this figure of the non-nationalist, apolitical, already naturalized national subject in post-Independence Israeli poetry in her book *Be-shem ha-nof: le'umiyut, migdar ve-subyektiviyut ba-shirah ha-yisre'elit bi-shnot ha-chamishim ve-ha-shishim [In the Name of the Landscape: Nationalism, Gender, and Subjectivity in 1950s and 1960s Israeli Poetry]* (Tel Aviv: Keter,

question of collectivity precisely from the political moment of 1948 in which the collective formation in Israel/Palestine is not yet, or are already not, intact. The textual procedures of these works and their subject-matter are then bound together. Yizhar's texts continuously dramatize the precarious state of collectivity conditioning these texts themselves: From which collectivity do they arise and to which are they offered in return? What collective formations do they narrate, and how are various subjective instantiations positioned vis-à-vis such collectivities? His works pose these questions as they narrate the interrelated processes of coming into being and dismantling of different collectivities. In this sense, these texts echo Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's leading question regarding collectivity, located at the core of her suggested New Comparative Literature, "Who are we?" – the "we" of writing and of reading, as well as the "we" writing about reading – a question raised precisely because this "we" is the crucial but as yet undetermined component in the operation of texts which cannot be simply deduced from the their political or social affiliations, as Spivak suggests.[151] But doesn't the question "Who are we?" send us back quite dramatically to the question with which Yizhar's "The Prisoner" ended: the "who-knows-what that is very very private, and another who-knows-what, a general one, which the sun will set and it will stay here, among us, never brought to an end"? Doesn't it echo the endless task of forming an "us" within the crack which Spivak discusses between the universalist and particularist poles of collectivity?[152]

This crack could be formed, Spivak argues, through "claim[ing] *poiesis* over *istoria.*"[153] But this does not necessarily mean privileging once again eternal art thanks to its capacity to overcome contingent history. Instead, Spivak understands the poetic – and not just the literary – through Derrida's definition of the "teleopoietic" as "both that which renders absolute, completed, perfect, finished, which brings to an end *and* the one that speaks to distance and the far-removed."[154] Commenting on Nietzsche's famous aphorism on the philosophers of the future, Derrida develops the structure of the teleopoietic in which the end (*telos*) comes in an untimely fashion, too early, right from the start, as the text envisions, from afar (*tele-*) what will potentially be constituted only in its end. The philosophers of the future are precisely those who are not yet here, and yet as the philosophers of the future, capable of thinking the future, set in a text that envisions the future, they have already arrived. They arrived not as part of the present moment, but as its negation: an existing speculative potentiality, at odds with historical reality.[155] This teleopoietic – as a way to pose the question of "who we are?" – is thus a mode of channeling across time potential forms of collectivities which the text envisions

2006).

[151] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, p. 25. I have discussed Spivak's book in the Introduction.

[152] "The Prisoner," p. 88; "*Ha-shavuy,*" p. 96.

[153] *Death of a Discipline*, fn. 1, p. 114.

[154] Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, (London: Verso, 1997), p. 32.

[155] Derrida is indebted here to a certain Messianic notion in Jewish theology, most famously articulated in the traditional tale about the Messiah sitting at the gates of Rome as a beggar wearing rags, who is asked, at some moment, when the Messiah will come. Ibid, p. 37.

although, or precisely because, they were not historically realized; they do not quite condition the text – they are not part of its "context" – nor are they only freely narrated in it, without any socio-historical conditioning. Rather, they appear speculatively, as the potentiality to recast the positions from, about, and toward which the text evolves, thus also as the possibility to change the apparatus through which the text operates.

I would like to understand S. Yizhar's constant return to the time of 1948 as a teleopoietic practice. Yizhar's texts channel, across time and as always untimely, the limit moment of 1948 with all the possibilities it shattered, into the present or even future time of Israel/Palestine. In other words, they ask us to return to 1948 in a non-historical fashion, to understand it not only as a punctual historical event, but also as a moment creating a fracture in historical time.[156] This return to 1948 has become over the past decade part of the political reality in the Middle East, as well as the focal point for major currents in contemporary political discourse in the region. Even when this is done in the name of linear historical reasoning – narrating as comprehensively as possible what happened at that historical moment, and then, based on these findings and their injection into geopolitical reality, fighting for historical justice and a better future for the next generations – this complicated temporality is inescapable.[157] If the signifier "1948" indeed marks the time of return – the time when one people's enterprise of return was consolidated, the time in which another people's claim for return is anchored, and the time which keeps returning in different moments of the political discourse – Yizhar's work is both one important instantiation of such a return (these texts return again and again to, indeed never leave the year 1948) and a place to which the 1948-informed current political debate tends to return.[158] Yizhar's work writes that moment of 1948 – as it is envisioned from the present which nevertheless has never quite passed the time of 1948 – as a moment in which the final divide between collectivities happened, thus a moment in which two national histories were finally separated. But to remain bound to this moment, not to be able to leave it, also means not to adhere to it as a finite one; and to speculate on the inaugural moment of history is also to speculate differently on it, from a place not yet inscribed in its history.

"Khirbet Khizeh," probably the most famous text in the Hebrew language dealing with

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[156] Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad H. Sa'di stress several times throughout their Introduction the sense of a break with history that the Nakba created: "The Palestinians were excluded from the unfolding of [national, progressive] history";"[The Nakba] deflects Palestinians from the flow of social time into their own specific history and often into a melancholic existence." "Introduction," pp. 4-5.

[157] Note, for example, how even when Yehuda Shenhav opposes the "time of the green line" (the time of 1967) which "moves towards the past" with the time of 1948 moving "towards a mutual future in the region," the language of "return" he keeps using – "the return to the moment of 1948," "the return to the time of 1948," "the return to the rights of Jews" – tells a completely different story, in which the temporality of 1948 can never be a linear-teleological one. Yehuda Shenhav, *Be-malkodet ha-kav ha-yarok: masah politit yehudit* [*The Time of the Green Line: A Jewish Political Essay*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2010), esp. pp. 149-50, 152.

[158] See, for example, the recent debate between Zeev Sternhell and Gabriel Piterberg in *New Left Review*. Cf. fn. 4.

the expulsion of the Palestinians in the 1948 war,[159] begins at the end: its point of departure is the war which has already ended – "'This here, this isn't a war anymore [*ze kvar lo milchamah*], it's a child's play,'" says one of the soldiers right at the start;[160] not the time of fighting but its aftermath, in the barren land of what was not long a long time before a battlefield comprised entirely of the sound and fury of war. What could have happened – within a war narrative, coupling ongoing fighting with their ultimate consequences – has already occurred: the exchange in possession of land ("'The devil take them,' said Gaby, 'what beautiful places they have.' 'Had,' answered the operator. 'It's already ours'"[161]) as well as the emptying of the land from its Palestinian inhabitants ("Once villages were something you attacked and took by storm. Today they were nothing but gaping emptiness screaming out with a silence that was at once evil and sad").[162] As much as "Khirbet Khizeh" writes the expulsion of the Palestinians, it is also a text structured, from the beginning, on that expulsion, which already happened in the past; in this respect, it is not very different from *Days of Ziklag*, whose "beginning is in [the Palestinians'] banishment."[163] The temporality of waiting in "Khirbet Khizeh," already discussed above – "No one knows how to wait like soldiers"[164] – is actually the time of

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[159] The reception history of this text is long and complicated: It was written right after the end of the war, dated May 1949, and published – alongside "The Prisoner" – in *Sifryiat ha-po'alim-Mishlat* publication, owned by the left-wing Labor party; it later became part of high school curriculum in 1960s Israel. In 1978, the drama department of the state-run Israeli Television made a film based on Yizhar's text (dir. Ram Levy), which was initially banned by the government (which had recently before that been taken over by Begin's right wing party) and was then shown on the single-channel Israeli television a week later. In 1989 Yizhar edited a new, slightly modified, version of the text and republished it (together with the three other war stories). This publication of "Khirbet Khizeh" coincided with the publication of another influential text on the expulsion of the Palestinians in the 1948 war – Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), published in 1988 in English and in 1991 in Hebrew. For a detailed discussion of the reception history of "Khirbet Khizeh" see Anita Sahpira, "'*Chirbet chizeh: zikaron ve-shikhechah*" ["'Khirbet Khizeh:' Memory and Forgetting], *Alpayim* 21 (2000), pp. 9-53.

[160] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 22, *"Chirbet chizeh,"* 39. Translation slightly modified. The English translation – published only in 2008, more than 50 years after the text's original publication – follows Yizhar's 1989 version of the text. I'll follow this version too, but will indicate the differences between that and the original 1949 one, whenever they appear.

[161] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 25; "Chirbet chizeh," pp. 40-41. The original version reads a bit differently: "'What beautiful places they chose.' 'Forget it! [*shkhach!*] Answered the operator. 'It's already ours.'" *Sipur chirbet chizeh*, p. 23. Notably, the necessity to forget became in 1989 a mere change in grammatical tenses.

[162] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 26; *"Chirbet chizeh,"* p. 41

[163] Laor, *Anu kotvim*, p. 50. It is thus not necessarily the case that Yizhar's war stories – especially "Khirbet Khize" and "The Prisoner" – form a very different literary and ethical modality of writing than *Days of Ziklag*, as the historiographic narrative usually goes (most recently in Zeev Sternhell's review of Gabriel Piterberg's book). True, the expulsion of the Palestinians does not quite appear in *Days of Ziklag* (although it is mentioned at certain strategic points, not least of which is the very beginning: "'Shoot them quick!' Shaul got excited, put a bullet in and shot his rifle one, two, three. And others followed him. - 'Look there!' … But there is no one, they all escaped." *Yemey Tziklag*, pp. 25-26). But I believe Yizhar struggles here, and throughout his oeuvre, with a more fundamental question: How to write, and to experience, the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948 precisely as the event of absenting, as a fracture in history and in the phenomenological accounts thereof?

[164] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 12; "Chirbet chizeh," p. 35.

foreclosure and lament, after things (narrative progression included) have already been broken, destroyed, and lost.

The Palestinian collectivity is then already absent; the war is very much over, the land has changed hands, the villages are now empty. But this is only the platform for a text which delves into the sound of this ending – "a gaping emptiness screaming out with a silence" – a sound both affective and ethical, "evil and sad at once [*ra'ah va-aluvah ke-achat*]":

> These bare villages, the day was coming when they would begin to cry out. As you went through them, all of the sudden, without knowing where from, you found yourself silently followed by invisible walls, courtyards, and alleyways. Desolate abandoned silence. Your guts clenched. And suddenly, in the middle of the afternoon or at dusk, the village that a moment ago was nothing more than a heap of wretched hovels, harsh orphaned silence, and heart-wrenching threnody, this large, sullen village, burst into a song of things whose soul had left them; a song of human deeds that had returned to their raw state and gone wild; a song that brought tidings of a sudden crushing calamity that had frozen and remained like a kind of curse that would not pass the lips, and fear, God-in-Heaven, terrifying fear screamed from there, and flashed, here and there, like a flash of revenge, a summons to fight, the God-of-Vengeance has shown himself![165]

What the English translation manages to do only with great stylistic effort, Yizhar's Hebrew elegantly writes, throughout this passage, with apparently simple incohative verbs and a second-person present narrative – *matchilim litz'ok*, *ata over*, *eynayim melavot otkha*, *pote'ach ha-kfar ve-shar* – which nevertheless do not signify a current event in the process of its realization. Rather than a punctual occurrence, well situated in historical time, this outcry of silence, both instantaneous and habitual ("suddenly, in the middle of the afternoon or at dusk"), takes place potentially, always in the conditional, as something that might happen when the "day comes" (*yom magi'a;* but has it already come, does it come, is it about to come?)[166] This passage points to the moment of potentiality when the closed, sealed-off past – the silence of the already bare villages, evacuated from their inhabitants – opens up and starts "singing." However, this moment – significantly, a moment of singing and not of narrating – is not that of present action finally penetrating into the chronological time of narrative; it is rather a threnody of lost moments, of the collapse of progressive evolution, of a past that returns precisely as what has already passed away. The novelistic language of the present tense is replaced here with the biblical genre of Lamentations, or the pre-secular, non-narrative, Jewish/Arab genre of the threnody (*kinah* in Hebrew, *ritha* in Arabic). What appears in

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[165] *Khirbet Khizeh*, pp. 26-27; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 41

[166] The Messianic undertones here, conflating the unspecific "day" with a certain "coming," are not coincidental, "for the teleopoiesis we are speaking here," writes Derrida, "is a messianic structure." *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 37.

the text, in the form of a non-phenomenological, a-historical interruption, is thus the non-event of silence, the reemergence of the absence of the Palestinians as the place of a sudden totality of void, where "[e]verything was empty. The emptiness of sudden catastrophe [*reykanut sho'at pit'om*]."[167] This totality is then written in the language of inanimate things, the ontological language of the place: Like Benjamin's account of the Surrealists's fascination with "the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded'... [in the] objects that have begun to be extinct," the language of this passage is that of what has already left the world, the grammar of lost history.[168] Reversing the classic panopticon-like policing novelistic narration, the inanimate objects in Yizhar's passage – the village's empty "walls, courtyards, alleyways" – are the ones who turn their "invisible eyes" towards the narrator; the lamenting inanimate objects and not any narrating subject position hold the gaze, carry a voice and cry out.[169] But this ontological speech only presents the village as a void entity, evacuated from human discourse and action. The outcry of silence utters "the song of things whose soul has left them"; not a return of the repressed in the form of the saturated, meaningful past reanimated as it comes to the fore, but the return of the past as the already forsaken and absent. This elegy does not revisit any lost paradise that predates the catastrophe, but rather "the sudden crushing of calamity," the destructive violence of "human deeds... gone wild." This dramatic occurrence – annihilating, preventive, inexpressive ("the kind of curse that would not pass the lips") – circulates fear throughout the empty villages ("fear screamed from there... and flashed, here and there"), not so much someone's fear but the mere mode of paradoxical catastrophic happening as a non-happening, in which, finally, "the God-of-Vengeance has shown himself [*hofi'a* – appeared, became apparent, was made manifest]."[170]

This thick textual moment – taken from the first pages of "Khirbet Khizeh" – engages with the Palestinian disaster or catastrophe, the Nakba, not as a present-tense narrative in the process of its unfolding, but rather as an already distant, unapproachable past: Although experienced and written in 1948, "The huts appeared to have been uninhabited for a very long time."[171] As an event of loss, the Nakba cannot be easily rediscovered; through the failure in its narration, it is further lost again and again. What "Khirbet Khizeh" manages to convey – during the entry of the soldiers to the evacuated land of Palestine – is "a way of life whose meaning was lost, diligence that had reached its negation."[172] But this unintelligibility of the Palestinian life does not just reveal here the naturalization of the national space, based on the process of de-historicization, the

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[167] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 56; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 54. "*Sho'at pit'om*" – a sudden catastrophe, but also a sudden Shoah, Holocaust. The diction is, of course, extremely volatile here.

[168] Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in S*elected Writings II*, p. 210.

[169] On the policing character of the 19th century novel see D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[170] Divine appearance here is, needless to say, an extremely charged moment. I believe it should be read as the epitome of the non-phenomenological idiom of this entire passage: Not a revelation, but a call or an outcry. And see below for the discussion of the last paragraph of the text.

[171] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 40; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 47. "Appeared" ("*nir'eh she..*") is, of course, significant here.

[172] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 41, "*Chirbet chize*h," p. 47.

famous Renanian forgetfulness that is necessary for the creation of a nation. Precisely as an event of loss and a lost event, the expulsion of the Palestinians keeps haunting both the geographic and the textual space of "Khirbet Khizeh," and cannot be completely, or merely, historicized as contingent, intelligible, and punctual narrated event. Structuring the space from the beginning while appearing within it only in the form of absence, the collapse of Palestinian life in Israel/Palestine maintains its non-historicist mark in the form of "so many unburied corpses; [*pgarim kulam she-lo yavo'u li-kvurah;* literally, all carcasses that won't be brought to (proper, legal) burial"]. Indeed, Palestinian collectivity in "Khirbet Khizeh" does not only vanish, but also appears; through its very state of loss, this collectivity is also gathered and formed, just as the elegy formed a silence that nevertheless cries out. And configured in the text, these fragments of collectivity rearticulate – à la Spivak – the very textuality of "Khirbet Khizeh."

"Khirbet Khizeh" names various fractures of Palestinian collectivity in different ways. The first appears in Arabic, when the soldiers open fire, from a distance, on the bottom of the village: "That's good,' said Moishe. 'We really startled them. Push it a bit to the right. At those houses. Good morning, *ya jama'a*. *Yahud* have come for a visit in the village!' said Moishe with relish."[173] The Palestinian collectivity – *jama'a* – serves here as a group target for a murderous gaze whose language it mockingly mimics: The firing soldiers name the Palestinians – young Palestinians, significantly, and not the women and old-men we'll later encounter – as they, in reverse, would supposedly name the soldiers ("*Yahud*"). The two collectivities already appear here in tandem, in the voice of the soldiers, one opposing the other as one is mirroring the other, when it is precisely the conflation of the two collective languages which brings them together – at least, at this stage, from the focalized, violent, colonial phantasmatic viewpoint. Yet whereas the image of the Jewish collectivity, metonymized here through the group of soldiers, is further elaborated, the Palestinian collectivity is, from the start, on the verge of having been already disappeared. "Can't see a thing there' [one of the soldiers] said. 'It'll turn out in the end we're attacking an empty village.'" Palestinians immediately do appear – but only under the colonial gaze, and precisely as vanishing images. "'*Ahalan*'... 'look over there, they're running away'... With difficulty… we made out [*gilinu*, we discovered], continuing the line of his outstretched finger, a few frantic figures disappearing into the bushes."[174] Dissolving figures – fleeing from the fire and the narrative alike – turning into an ephemeral group ("Another group of figures appeared. Shadowy figures [*dmuyot-tzlalim*, shadow figures, but also shadow-like, in the image of shadows] that moved in the open"), yet nevertheless keep rising, "group after group, and maybe family after family."[175] The soldiers' gaze, entailing at this stage also the narrator's gaze, follows the Palestinians and tries to control, target, and expel, if not altogether annihilate them. But in so doing, it keeps figuring them, first as individuals and then as small groups, while it

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[173] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 30; "Chirbet chizeh," p. 42. The hebrew just incorporates the Arabic here (in italics here), whereas the English version further translates: "'The Jews are here.'"

[174] *Khirbet Khizeh*, pp. 32, 33; "*Chirbet chizeh*," pp. 43, 44. "*Ahalan*" – "hello" in Arabic which has been in use also in Hebrew.

[175] *Khirbet Khizeh*, pp. 34; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 44

also keeps figuring the space as ultimately a Palestinian one, a place determined by the presence – precarious, chased away, about to vanish, yet haunting the entire space – of a Palestinian collectivity. Thus, in following the disappearance of the Palestinians, "Khirbet Khizeh" conveys how the Palestinians have never left, or rather return to and reappear within what is otherwise seen as the geographic, historical, and textual Jewish-Israeli space.

As the soldiers enter the bare village where "everything was empty" and wander around, more and more Palestinians appear and populate the space: A Palestinian man, his camel and his donkey, two old Palestinian women, another man, then "already seven or eight people from the village walking ahead of us," finally a "little crowd [*kahal katan*; also: the traditional Jewish term for community and congregation]."[176] They are all captives now, waiting to be expelled – not soldiers but unarmed civilians – and yet the text that is conditioned on the already-empty village from the start and which refuses to narrate the expulsion as a historical event is actually highly invested, through this always interim temporality, in the paradoxical – but also potential – gathering of a Palestinian collectivity:

> Because who were we dealing with after all, apart from some women with their babies in their arms... and a few more women...? There were also a few old men … There were some middle-aged men there, too.... There was a blind man led by a child.... And with all these blind, lame, old, and stumbling people, and the women and children all together like some place in the Bible that describes something like that, I don't remember where – in addition to this bit of the Bible, which was already weighing on our hearts, we now reached an open place in which there stood a wide-spreading sycamore tree under which we saw sitting in a huddle the entire population of the village, gathered in silence, a great dappled mass, all collected together, a single silent assembly following what was happening with their eyes, one of them occasionally sighing, "O, dear God."[177]

This lengthy passage, listing the numerous Palestinians gathered in one place, assembles them not only as figures of Palestinian captivity but also as a Palestinian collectivity in Palestine; the way they stand for the soldiers is not necessarily the way – historically as well as speculatively – they might stand in the text. The pathos with which the text describes the different groups, the detailed attention it gives to their various forms of disenfranchisement, the self-conscious, obscure biblical reference, all end up quite dramatically – textually, not narratively – in a dense vacillation between different ways of naming the collectivity just gathered here: "the entire population of the village [*kol kehal ha-kafriyim kulo*], gathered [*mekubatz*], a great dappled mass [*gush gadol menumar*], all collected together [*kol ha-melukatim*] in silence, a single silent assembly [*tzibur echad shotek;* one silent collectivity]." The signifier of totality *kol*, which appears

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[176] *Khirbet Khizeh*, pp. 63-64; "*Chirbet chizeh,*" p. 57
[177] *Khirbet Khize*h, pp. 72-73; "*Chirbet chizeh,*" 61.

five times in the last three lines of the paragraph, convenes the different singularities into a figure of one collectivity ("a single silent assembly," *tizbur echad shotek*) out of which, reversibly, a single figure ("one of them," one of the totality, *echad mi-kulam*) arises. The recurring alliteration of the "k" and "l" sounds focuses the attention on the interrelations between "*kol*" [all], "*kol*" [voice], and "*kahal*" (population, collectivity, congregation). From the silence of captivity, through the formation of the collectivity, a speech is finally born. And this speech – a sigh, a plaint, a rant[178] – addresses the divine: "'O, dear God,'" written in the original Hebrew in transliteration from the Arabic, "*ach-ya-rab*."

But at this moment, as the Palestinian collectivity is gathered and then declares itself, it anticipates and actually foreshadows, in a bold textual move, the famous, much quoted ending of "Khirbet Khizeh," where "God himself would come forth and descend to roam the valley, and see whether all was according to the cry that had reached him [*ha-ke-tza'akatah*]."[179] It is therefore this Palestinian plaint – "*ach-ya-rab*," and later, "*la illa ila allah*" [there is no god but God][180] – and not merely the morally interior indecision of the soldier/narrator, which calls for and evokes the descent of God into the geographic and textual space of "Khirbet Khizeh." This plaint forms the relationship between one man's speech and the collectivity – the collectivity from which it arises, but also the collectivity which it might constitute. Thus, when the narrator wonders later "if among all these people there was a single Jeremiah mourning and burning, forging a mouth of fury in his heart, crying out in stifled tones [*va-yikra chanukot*] to the old God in Heaven, atop the trucks of exile...,"[181] he may be referring to the Palestinian man evoking God when he confronts the danger of expulsion, as well as to the narrator's own discourse as prophetic speech, uttered in the form of a lament,[182] and most importantly to the potential movement from one to the other as the circulation of an outcry [*tze'akah*] throughout "Khirbet Khizeh," all over this space of expulsion and exile.

In Yizhar criticism, this outcry is usually ascribed to the self-tormented narrator/soldier who opposes the moral wrongdoings of the group to which he belongs without decisively departing from it. His outcry is thus a twofold cipher of rebellion and

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[178] Against the sovereign speech of an already constituted subject, Dina Al-Kassim proposes the "rant" as "complex of address, entreaty, and attack that characterizes the haphazard and murky speech that only sometimes gathers itself into a counter-discourse and which has become a symptom of modernist writing, avowed to truth telling but unable to secure its own speech from the clutter of its own undoing." Dina Al-Kassim, *On Pain of Speech: Fantasies of the First Order and the Literary Rant* (Berkeley: University of California, 2010), p. 3. Whether the rant is necessarily a certain mode of speech of the modernist "literary" work itself, or can be a mode of speech within it, disseminating through it so that it contaminates the authorial speech as well, remains, I believe, an open question.

[179] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 110; "Chirbet chizeh," p. 78.

[180] "*Ach ya rab*" appears twice in "Khirbet Khizeh" (*Khirbet Khizeh*, pp. 73, 74; "*Chirbet chizeh*," 61. 62) and once in "The Prisoner" ("The Prisoner," 80; "*Ha-shavuy*," 91). "*La illah illa allah*" appears in *Khirbet Khizeh*, 77; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 63, and refers – through its alliteration – to the traditional Islamic prayer.

[181] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 105; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 75.

[182] Jeremiah, after all, inaugurated the national lament over the exiled people, and was also the one, according to the tradition, who wrote the book of Lamentations [*Eikhah*].

obedience, of an active questioning and a similarly passive withdrawal from action; what later came to be known as the pseudo-progressive, hypocritical ideology of *yorim u-vokhim* [we shoot and we weep].[183] Indeed, it is the narrator who, while pointing at the fleeing Palestinian villagers and helping to target them better, "felt somebody was shouting differently inside me [*mishehu tza'ak acheret bi*]," an outcry that inaugurates an interior moral debate – "I was still feeling startled by these two voices" – which would nevertheless end up, by the last pages of the text, in almost nothing: "I wanted to do something. I knew I wouldn't cry out [*yadati she-lo etz'ak*]... Who could I speak to? Who would listen?"[184] But the outcry in and of "Khirbet Khizeh" neither starts nor ends with the moral indecision of the Jewish soldier. It first appears, as we have seen, in he threnody of the silent Palestinian villages, devoid of any human presence: "These bare villages, the day was coming when they would begin to cry out [*li-tz'ok*]."[185] It then circulates not only in the form of an interiorized moral voice of a soldier, but also – and more forcefully – through the very much external, captivating Palestinian voice dispersed in the entire village: "the howling, a shrill, high-pitched, rebellious, spine-chilling scream of refusal, went on still, and there was no escape from the sound of it, you couldn't free yourself for anything else... a roar of I-will-not-move, I-will-not-give, I'd rather-die-than-let-you-touch, until even the stones began to roar."[186] The entire semantic field of excessive rant speech – *yelalah, tze'akah, ze'akah, tzrichah* (howl, cry, shout, scream, screech) – is employed here to convey an outcry whose origin is not known and whose words remain incomprehensible, but which nevertheless fills the space as a call for help transformed into an ethical claim; the outcry's incommunicability – its operation outside the axes of signification – is precisely what allows its circulation. From the cry of the walls in the empty houses of the village to the cry of the stones, it surely echoes the biblical outcry right after the first murder – "Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil [*kol dmey achikha tzo'akin elay min ha-adamah*]" (Genesis 4: 10) – also as an ontological-ethical outcry located in the already-dead and absent.[187] The circulation of this outcry throughout "Khirbet Khizeh," its ongoing transmission from one instantiation to another, disrupts its subjective focalization; it also frustrates any attempt to locate it in one singular discourse – be it Jewish textual "ethics" or Palestinian *tzumud* [persistence] "culture." Thus, even when it is finally voiced by the narrator/soldier, the outcry can no longer be only the confessional enunciation of a confused, well-meant, but ultimately impotent Jewish soul. As another, though highly volatile punctuation within the circulation of an ethical outcry in the geographical-textual space of "Khirbet Khizeh," it becomes a mixture of juxtaposing yet competing discourses:

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[183] See Hannan Hever, "*Mapah shel chol: mi-sifrut ivrit le-sifrut yisre'elit*" ["A Map of Sand: From Hebrew Literature to Israeli Literature"], *Teoriya u-vikoret* 20 (2002): 165-190, esp. p. 172; Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 114.

[184] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 110; "*Chirbet chizeh*." p. 77.

[185] Ibid.

[186] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 55; "*Chirbet chizeh*," 53. Translation slightly modified.

[187] The translations from Genesis in this chapter are Robert Alter's, from his *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton, 1996).

My guts cried out [*kol kravay tza'aku*]. Colonizers, they shouted [*tza'aku*]. Lies, my guts shouted, Khirbet Khizeh is not ours. The Spandau gun never gave us any rights. Oh, my guts screamed [*tza'aku*]. What hadn't they told us about refugees. Everything, everything was for the refugees, their welfare, their rescue... our refugees, naturally. Those we were driving out – that was a totally different matter. Wait. Two thousand years of exile. The whole story. Jews being killed. Europe. We are the masters now.[188]

The narrator's inward cry – the cry of his *kravayim* (guts, innards, viscera, but also what is within oneself, closest to one's self) – is crafted out of all the exterior path נַו has travelled: The soldier evokes, in no particular order, Jewish exceptionalism (Jewish history of refuge and exile) and Zionist historiography ("two thousand years of exile"), the moral narrative of liberal-humanist Zionism (the land is not occupied by the right of force but by the force of right [*lo bi-zkhut ha-koach ela be-khoach ha-zkhut*]), but also (as already discussed in the Introduction) Zionism as taking part in the history of colonization ("colonizers," written in the original as the latinized *kolonizatorim;* and "masters"), and the Palestinians as the ultimate victim. The narrator's outcry, but one not only his, appears now, even in their failure to realize ("I knew I couldn't cry out"), as a tissue of all the previous ethical utterances: "This time I'd become entangled. There was something in me that wanted to rebel, something destructive, heretical, something that felt like cursing everything." This outcry, way beyond the nets of human communication – "Who could I speak to? Who would listen?" – remains irresolvable and thus keeps haunting ("I could never be reconciled to anything"), as it carries upon itself, circulates, transmits onward "the tears of a weeping child still glistened as he walked along with his mother, who furiously fought back her soundless tears"; but the mother's soundless cry itself carries the silent cry of the empty villages, and the child "on his way into exile, [is] bearing with him the roar of injustice [*she'agat avel*] and such a scream [*tzvachah*] that – it was impossible that no one in the world would gather this scream in." It *is* impossible, or this text seeks to make it impossible, for all these cries not to be gathered, as they accumulate, change voices, vacillate between different positions, and yet are uttered and heard, indeed collectively gathered – if not historically then potentially– in "Khirbet Khizeh."

The text thus ends exactly at the possible point of this outcry's gathering:

All around silence was falling, and very soon it would close upon the last circle. And when silence had closed in on everything and no man disturbed the stillness, which yearned noiselessly for what was beyond silence – then God would come forth and descend to roam the valley, and see whether all was according to the cry that had reached him [*ha-ke-tza'akatah*].[189]

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[188] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 109; "*Chirbet chizeh*," 77.
[189] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 110; "Chirbet chizeh," p. 78.

The end of Yizhar's text is written in the ontological and ethical language of the divine, as it appears in the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah: "And the Lord said, 'The outcry [*ze'akat*] of Sodom and Gomorrah, how great! Their offense is very grave. Let Me down and see whether as the outcry that has come to me [*ha-ke-tza'akatah*] they have dealt destruction, and if not, I shall know'" (Genesis 18: 20-21). This seemingly focalized biblical passage – representing God's thoughts in a first person direct speech and from a particular point of view ("Let Me down and see") and evoking an epistemological discourse ("I shall know") – becomes, when ascribed in this biblical text to God, an entirely de-focalized enunciation: Within a text of revelation, God's point of view is not partial but absolute, His knowledge has no limits, and the status of His words, uttered in direct speech, is equal to the status of the words of which the text itself is comprised.[190] Thus, when "Khirbet Khizeh" ends with the biblical hapax legomenon *ha-ke-tza'akatah,* it does not just use an intertextual marker to mobilize a biblical text into a modern, secularized, humanist context; the complex Word at the end of "Khirbet Khizeh" points to the ontological status of an ethical outcry that has reached God, and so it is a mark of wrongdoing now heard throughout the geographic and textual space. God here is not a figure in a narrated world, but the matrix in which the cry takes place; his descent does not occur as an event, located in human, historical time. Moreover, writing God's descent onto earth, Yizhar significantly rejects the tense-system of modern Hebrew that distinguishes between past, present, and future actions in favor of the *irrealis* of biblical imperfect aspect: *yetze az elohim ve-yered el ha-bik'ah*, rendered in English into the hypothetical conditional mode: "God would come forth and descend." Through this aspectual *irrealis*, conveying incomplete actions marked by their potentiality and their tendency to return, God's appearance cuts across the chronological, factual, punctual temporality of events, as it gestures towards to the speculative mode of Yizhar's entire text.[191]

God is therefore the final instantiation of the outcry in "Khirbet Khizeh": What started with the walls of the empty villages, then penetrated the soldier's soul, reverberated in the villages through the voices of the persecuted Palestinians, pronounced by the Palestinian Jeremiah, failed to be pronounced by the Jewish one, finally reaches God. Any such instantiation is one of witnessing, occurrence, and circulation altogether: Like God in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, they are at once the ears to which the outcry reaches, the locus where this outcry occurs, and the platform through which it is disseminated. Never signified as content nor communicated by the individuated agents who owned it, "Khirbet Khizeh" actively stages the outcry as an experience whose pervasive circulation is its own operative mode: As the outcry is uttered it is also heard;

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[190] On God-qua-character as a problem for God's fundamental omniscience, see Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987). For a critique of the modern exegetical horizon and liberal historicizing reading of the sacred text, see Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and the Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18:2: 323-347, esp. pp. 335-341.

[191] On the complex use of the biblical aspectual *irrealis* in modern Hebrew literature, see Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 96-98.

as it circulates it is textually gathered. The single word *ha-ke-tza'akatah*, with which the text ends, conflates the outcry and its gathering. This last word, however, together with the entire scene of God's descent, do not appear in the form of a closure, but rather, as in the ending of "The Prisoner," a different kind of opening. "Everything was suddenly so open. So big, so very big. And we had all become so small and insignificant." Human activity is pushed to the background, and "[a]ll around silence was falling, and very soon it would close upon a last circle [*tisgor al chug acharon*]."[192] The totality of closure does appear here, but it is only after such closure, "when silence had closed in on everything [*u-kh-she-tisgor ha-shtikah al ha-kol*], in "what was beyond silence," at this aftermath of closure, only "then God would come forth and descend."

"Khirbet Khizeh," very much like "The Prisoner," is a text "never brought to an end," unfinished or incomplete, "*lo gamur*."[193] Definitely not a cohesive short story, but also not quite within the tradition of the modernist open-ended one, it circulates an outcry that is potentially not closed within the boundaries of the text, a speculative experience that seeks to be transmitted onward. But to whom? "Who are we," to return to Spivak's question, the "we" to whom this experience can be reached, the "we" who can, collectively, gather it?

In his brief discussion of "The Prisoner," Gil Anidjar suggests that Yizhar's text "constitutes the Jew and the Arab, the Muslim and the Jew, as the haunting figure(s) of an encounter where nothing comes together but what I will call the 'partaking' of roads taken and not taken, a *partage des voies*."[194] Insisting on the double signification of Jean-Luc Nancy's term "*partage*" as both sharing and dividing, Anidjar reads Yizhar's stagings of the 1948 war as the point of divide between the figures of two collectivities: However mutually constituted, mapped on one another, each haunted by the other, the roads/voices (*voies/voix*) they take are, from then onward, emphatically opposed.[195] Historically, this is undoubtedly true: Since 1948, Palestinians and Israelis have not inhabited the same history; or more accurately, post-1948 history has broken these two collectives apart. But in writing this moment of *partage* again and again, without ever going beyond it, doesn't Yizhar seek to prevent this divide from taking place and be uninterruptedly realized? In circulating the ethical outcry against 1948, its catastrophe, the Nakba, don't these texts potentially constitute a collectivity that could perhaps carry this voice not according to its division into opposing voices, but beyond it? Perhaps the collectivity that the text of "Khirbet Khizeh" envisions is the collectivity to which this outcry would reach, the collectivity which would gather this outcry?

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[192] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 112; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 96.
[193] It is indeed quite striking how similar the endings of these two texts are, in their ontological visions, in their unifying rhetoric, and in their insistence on these not as modes of closure, but on the contrary, as potential ways of opening.
[194] *The Jew, The Arab*, p. 115.
[195] It must be noted, however, that while Anidjar addresses "the figure(s)" of the Jew and the Arab, the Muslim and the Jew in their singular-typical formations, I discuss them as collectivities.

3. The Place of Exile

Theorizing this collectivity of outcry means, therefore, theorizing the text as the locus of potential textuality that constitutes and formulates such a collectivity, since the latter is not just "there," ready to be grasped in a positivistic, phenomenological, historicist sense. It also means thinking about what a historiography of such textuality would look like, a literary historiography – or better, a potential one – that would start with this circulated and experienced outcry, forming the collectivity which could gather and bear it. It is by now clear that this could not be a national historiography, or a historiography of a national literature – Israeli literature, in this case – since it is precisely the national collectivity presupposed by such historiographies that Yizhar's texts, indeed Yizhar's textuality, constantly reject. If the already reified Israeli collectivity in the post-1948 sovereign temporality and within the national-aesthetic realm and the naturalized European novelistic form is precisely that against which Yizhar's texts arise, then from where, in the name of what, or under which term, are these texts written? Put differently, what was the place which stood back then, in 1948, in opposition to the national place, and which might return in the contemporary moment, alongside the return of 1948, as the critical place, or the place of critique?

In the final moments of "Khirbet Khizeh," upon witnessing the peak of the Palestinians' expulsion from their village at its climactic moment, the narrator suddenly arrives at a stunning realization:

> Something struck me like lightning. All at once everything seemed to mean something different, more precise: exile [*galut*]. This was exile. This was what exile was like. This was what exile looked like. We brought exile upon them [*anachnu asinu la-hem galut*].[196] I couldn't stay where I was. My place itself couldn't bear me [*mekomi lo nesa'ani*]. I went round to the other side. There the blind people were sitting. I hastily skirted around them. I went through the gap into the field that was bounded by the cactus hedge. Things were piling up inside me.[197]

This indexical moment, when the event is finally pointed out, recognized, and given a name ("exile. This was exile") takes over the text, so that from its conception the notion of exile appears again and again, as if the notion itself haunts the text and can only be repeated over and over: "We Jews sent to exile" [*heglenu galut*; with a double use of the root g.l.h], cries the narrator, then wonders "if among all these people there was a single Jeremiah... atop the trucks of exile," and right before the silence that invites the descent of God upon the earth, he contemplates on this "us" for whom it was "as if we had never been anything but peddlers of exile [*magley galuyot*]."[198] Exile – the Palestinians being exiled from their land by the Jewish soldiers – is a form of signification so strong, so

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[196] This last sentence does not appear in the 1949 version of the story, only in the 1989 revised version. Significantly enough, it does not appear in the English translation, published in 2008.
[197] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 104; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 75.
[198] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 112; "*Chirbet chizeh*," p. 78.

shocking, perhaps so revealing, that it also restructures the entire spatial scene: The narrator cannot stay in his position, he has to move away, change his place, exceed, transgress, or transform his own place which "couldn't bear" him anymore. Indeed, he feels compelled to change his place : He leaves the group of soldiers, moves "to the other side" [*la-ever ha-sheni*], joins the group of Palestinians for a moment, then goes on, onward, to the field and through the breach or the opening [*ha-pirtzah*], entirely preoccupied with his destabilizing conceptual epiphany.

Recognizing what takes place in front of his eyes as the ethical calamity of exile, the narrator does not miss the irony of history according to which he, who "had never been in Diaspora [*golah*]," but was taught in school about "[t]wo thousand years of exile. The whole story. Jews being killed," suddenly experiences it now, from the other side: "We came, we shot, we burned; we blew up, expelled, drove out, and sent into exile."[199] But in this exact moment of realization, the narrator himself "went round to the other side," then looked for some other opening; in registering what he is witnessing as the exile of the Palestinians by the Jews, their being doomed "out of place," in Edward Said's unforgettable phrasing, the narrator loses his own place, the place that can no longer bear him.[200] This is not to say that the narrator, who is part of a Jewish national military force whose mission is the expulsion of the Palestinians, turns out to be, in this mere moment, part of the exiled Palestinians, but rather that "exile" – the volatile, complex Jewish notion of *galut*, and the no less significant, signifying Arabic notion of *manfah* – with all its dyadic logic, differential structure, and horrifically contrasting consequences, is nevertheless, as Said himself kept stressing, a formative experience in both Jewish and Palestinian histories.[201] Exile, in other words, is what binds these histories together precisely as divergent, separate ones; it is their point of *paratge*. The ethical outcry of and in the text is therefore written through the Jewish notion of *galut*, which has very much structured Jewish history,[202] as it now turned against itself and being addressed at the Palestinians. This is precisely what the double evocation of *galut* in Yizhar's "*higlenu galut*" or "*magley galuyot*" signifies: the full extent of the political and ethical catastrophe can be grasped only from within the framework of the paradoxical calamity of a Palestinian exile. The last moments of "Khirbet Khizeh" establish the notion of "exile" as what takes place, a textual place, precisely in the uprooting from the spatial space.

Yizhar's texts' refusal of the national framework is thus formed through the working of

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[199] This set of short sharp assertions is, together with the descent of God in the last sentence of the text, the most famous, and often quoted moments in *Khirbet Khizeh*. See, for example, Gabriel Piterberg's response to Zeev Sterhell's critique of his book, *New Left Review* 62 (March/April 2010) and Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Afterword" to *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, p. 302.

[200] The expression "*mekomi lo nesa'eni*" was translated as "the place itself could not bear me," and not the more literal "*my* place could not bear me." "Mekomi" could also mean here my "Place" [*makom*] which is also "God."

[201] Edward Said, " Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile* (New York: Granta books, 2001), pp. 177-186.

[202] Reading Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's Zakhor, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin suggests to replace Yerushalmi's notion of memory and providence, informing Jewish history as a non-historiographical one, with that of exile. See Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Jewish Memory between Exile and History."

the notion of "exile."[203] In 1948, exile indeed served as the opposing pole to the national – either in the divide between the Jews in Palestine who won their national sovereignty and the Palestinians who were, on the other side and quite as a result of that, sent into exile with no national state of their own in sight; or in the dialectical relations within nationalist accounts of Jewish history (from exile to nationhood) as well as of Palestinian history (the nation formed upon exile).[204] Could "exile" then become – potentially, through texts which do not leave the year of 1948, on to our contemporary political reality again saturated with the time of 1948 – an alternative textual framework to the national Israeli one? To begin answering these questions, I suggest that "Khirbet Khizeh" is not the only place where Yizhar introduces exile as his political-textual framework. In the early 1990s, after almost 30 years of "literary" silence, S. Yizhar returned to writing, publishing six books in the span of seven years, most of which were semi-autobiographical memoirs from pre-1948 Palestine.[205] Through a reading of the first chapter of the first book he published over the 1990s – *Mikdamot* [*Preliminaries*][206]– not as a nativist text, but precisely as a text of and about exilic Jewish existence in Palestine, about exile-in-the-land, I will try to think what an exilic textuality of Israel/Palestine might entail.

If the Zionist endeavor was set up as an enterprise of reterritorialization, of finding a place for the Jewish people, even of bringing the Jews back to their own place, *Preliminaries* – narrating the first years of the young Yizhar Smilansky in late 1910s and 1920s Palestine – is a long reflection on a state of out-of-placeness. The book's title, *Mikdamot*, does not only indicate the musical anacrusis, those unaccented notes which precede the accented ones in a musical bar, as a preliminary preface (*hakdamah*), but it also resonates with that which comes from the ancient, from antiquity (*mi-kadmut*), and also from the geographical space of *kedem*, the east, the Orient.[207] Yizhar goes here even further back in time, not to 1948 but to the beginning of his own biographical time, or even before time, a preliminary temporality "announcing something which is about to come or take place."[208] The very beginning of the book, its own "Liminary" [*mikdam*], is titled "Staring at a place"; rather than positioned in a place, the text gazes at one:

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[203] For an opposite reading of "Khirbet Khizeh" as a text that constitutes the Israeli national subject and invokes Jewish exile only to eventually eliminate the Palestinian one and justify the violence which led to it, see Hanan Hever, "*Mapah shel chol*," pp. 173-174.

[204] See Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "*Galut be-tokh ribonut: le-vikoret 'shlilat ha-galut' ba-tarbut ha-yisre'elit*" ["Exile within Sovereignty: Toward a Critique of 'The Negation of Exile' in Israeli Culture"]. *Te'oria u-vikoret* 4 (Fall 1993) and 5 (Fall 1994); and Said, "Reflections on Exile," p. 183.

[205] This is, of course, hardly coincidental: The early 1990s was the time when such radical thought came to the fore. I hope to address the historical (and non-historical) reasons informing this moment in future studies.

[206] S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries,* trans. Nicholas de Lange (London: The Toby Press, 2007); *Mikdamot* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1992).

[207] The orient was considered the ancient, and also the primary, place in antiquity. The root *k.d.m* is thus a semantically rich and ideologically complicated one and appears in many junctions in Jewish and Israeli culture, not least of which is Naftali Herz Imber's "*Ha-tikvah*" ["The Hope"], Israel's national anthem.

[208] Dan Miron, "Introduction: A Late New Beginning," in S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 1.

> And where was the first place? The very very first? Because the first place, although there is no supporting evidence, was orange, all orange, wholly orange, very orange. Totally.[209]

The first place – Zionism's object of longing, the land of Israel finally reclaimed by Jewish settlers (like Yizhar's own father) – is being displaced here and becomes a color, perhaps a sensation of a color, and later a tactile feeling ("Smooth like the smoothness of silk"), then some contours ("a sort of lining of a tent").[210] The very first place which the glorious, circular, one-sentence first paragraph of *Preliminaries* aims to decipher and write, is nothing like the archaic land being conquered, worked, and settled. It is the inauguration of a baby's consciousness – the writer's – as self-consciousness, created through its encounter with the world and acknowledges itself in its first moments of sensation and perception: "a very smooth silky orange, luminescent, poured inward into the consciousness of that observer, who had just seen and known for the first time, that he really did know, and to his innermost being that he really had just been open to the knowledge and existence of all this orange."[211] The first place becomes, then, the taking place of a self-consciousness that experiences the world through its writing; a paradoxical place, since it aims to write the exact moment of its coming into being, its taking place, moments still without consciousness, an *in-fant* with no speech. But like the Benjaminian materialist historian who, from the present moment writes his unique experience with the past,[212] the place here is anchored in the movement backwards to the preliminary place which is a non-place. If the first place is not the grounds on which everything will occur, the land upon which the people will arise, but indeed an object of desire, always yet to be fully attained, then the place will not take place, will always remain out-of-place.

The infant Yizhar does not have a place: "He is so tiny in the cosmos, that without paying particular attention you might overlook his tiny being, his lack of space in the world"; throughout the book he will not find his proper place. "[W]ithout occupying any space and without weighing down on any place" he is put in "a patch of land" which in itself has not yet taken place, "in this place that is coming into being."[213] Palestine goes through major changes at the time, its growing Jewish population tries to work, amend, transform it, make it its own place. Within this enterprise, Yizhar's father has a place: he is a peasant, a farmer, "a tiller of soil," with a substantial role in "the thrilling show/play [which] is about to begin." The father is also a writer who publishes essays in the Hebrew journals of the period, explaining the rationale behind the Zionist program. He

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[209] *Preliminarie*s, p. 35; *Mikdamot*, p. 7.

[210] The color of orange is, of course, metonymic for the orange fruit, itself representing, perhaps more than anything else, the Zionist fantasy – and the Palestinian reality – of a territorial belonging. It is interesting to see how Yizhar tries to untangle this forceful symbol of territoriality, by cutting off the metonymic chain: the land and the fruit become here only a color or even a sensation of a color.

[211] Ibid.

[212] "Historicism offers the 'eternal' image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past." Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Concept of History," *Selected Writings: IV*, p. 396.

[213] *Preliminaries*, pp. 43-5; *Mikdamot*, p. 13-4.

settles in the place, works it, writes about it. But the infant is only the son of a settler, not working the land, not yet a writer; and still, he is the narrator of *Preliminaries*, whose question, subsequently, is not about the Jewish settlement as the taking place of the Zionist place, but rather about the writing of self-consciousness: "What is it like to be a son of a settler?"[214]; what is the taking place of the out-of-place? The beginning of the chapter's second section suggests a point of departure:

> Did he cry out? Did he hear a cry? – he can't remember but he's already at the boy's side, already he's in his arm, everything, dropped, everything; and runs, runs stumbling, runs to him, and the mule continues with the plough on its side leaping and cutting with the handle on its side, the child, what is it, my boy, what is it, but he knows already, too shocked to believe, a scorpion? A snake? No, bees?... wasps... what is it, my boy, gurgling now for lack of air and the shock of the burning pain, trying to catch some air, not to choke... God, not screaming because he can't, now he's fainting, my boy, my boy... both of them one now, all fastened to his breast, what is it, my boy, what is it, my boy, impossible pain, deadly pain, oh no, oh no, God, run run, fear, crazed with fear, a helpless urge, and the impossible pain... running with heavy shoes, with no feet, and already, and calling for help too, or not calling and running, or running and calling... God, don't let, breathing, choking fainting, so small so small, why? why?[215]

The out-of-placeness in *Preliminaries* comes in the form of a cry: Wasps sting the infant while he is playing under a tree, and he cries out. This "onslaught of hornets on the child" is undoubtedly "a symbol... of the clash between Zionism and Palestine" that "also serves as a political parable."[216] But the cry heard here – "Did he cry out [*tza'ak*]? Did he hear a cry [*shama tze'akah*]? – is also another instantiation of the 1948 cry in "Khirbet Khizeh," simultaneously going back and forth in time: from 1948 to 1992 (the time of narrating), and from 1948 to 1916-7 (the narrated time). The cry revisits, or is further circulated within, *Preliminaries* in a rich, saturated orchestration. In a scene of great, urgent, totalizing pain, it remains nevertheless inexpressible, uncommunicable, and resides within the pre-verbal realm of "gurgling," "screaming," "choking." It comes at once and touches the impossible, on the verge of death. Here too, like in "Khirbet Khizeh," it vacillates between various subject-positions: The paragraph is launched with a moment of undecidability between the agent and the recipient of the cry which ultimately complicates its entire focalization: the father's point-of-view, from which this section is allegedly written, is now entangled with that of the infant, as if they are one crying entity ("both of them one now"). The text itself becomes the site of the cry – a cry which keeps disseminating as the father and son hurry and run, and as the frantic text continues (many paragraphs end with this urgent "quick, quick") – and the cry is eventually, and repeatedly, addressed to God, bearing an ethical pathos: "God, so small so small, why? why?"

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[214] *Preliminaries*, p. 52; *Mikdamot*, p. 21.
[215] *Preliminaries*, pp. 60-1; *Mikdamot*, pp. 27-8.
[216] Miron, "Introduction," p. 12.

Instead of dwelling in a place – Jews inhabiting the land of Zion – the infant is revealed as a site of vulnerability: a precarious self-consciousness, at the risk of extinction. The place is here nothing but a sting and a cry, *akitzah / tze'akah:*[217] not a solid ground or a mediated land, but a site of injury and pain, a vocal wound. The cry as place is constituted precisely as the mark of out-of-placeness, of a foreignness to the land: to be a son of a settler is to be harmed by the land of Palestine, to be stung and to cry out. But at the same time, this does not become a position within an oedipal drama in which the settler and his son, personifying two opposing attitudes to the place, struggle to the death. The cry – as we have already seen in "Khirbet Khizeh" – is a de-focalizing, un-individuating force. Never only somebody's cry but rather a movement in and of the text itself, the cry assembles the father and the son, and later on also the mother into a journey in search of a cure in a land which is not theirs, a voyage made possible through "the first, terrible [cry] that rent the world and the air and the sunlight."[218] From the cry as a place of opening – a textualization of the bodily wound[219] – the land is indeed torn, so that something else takes place: the place of the out-of-place as a place of exile; this "place" will be disseminated, from that moment on, through the different characters. The cry, that started as the infant's cry, passes on to the mother, who utters it, in the *mameloshn* – the mother's tongue, the mother tongue, Yiddish: "Then he knows not how Mummy is here, he is in her arms... here is Mummy, in her arms already, *Mein Kind*, Mummy, *mein Kind*, to wrap in something, and she kisses him and counts where, and breathes kisses near the edge of his breath... and Mummy more to her heart, *oy, Gott Gottenyu*, wrapping him all up and to her heart, *mein Kind*."[220] The mother wraps her baby, and is also wrapped in him, bringing the forbidden deterritorial language of exile as close as possible to the cry of the out-of-place: the infant's voice and her language, his breath and her kisses, these two uprooted, unsignifying mouths are intertwined in a dialogue indexically wandering between two characters and two languages – "*Mein Kind*, Mummy [*Ima*], *Mein Kind*" – both leading a cry finally addressed to, or gathered in God in a motherly, diminutive idiom ("*oy, Gott Gottenyu*"). This Jewish family of settlers is not in a place, but rather running, "quick, quick," "wishing to get somewhere [to a place, *le-hagia el makom*]." In an Abramowitch-like journey,[221] "A cart [*agalah*] hurrying along in the middle of the empty plain... and there is no shade and no tree." The land is indeed empty; not the Palestinian land waiting for Jewish settlement, as the Zionist story goes, but the actual land of Jewish settlement which remains abandoned, whereas "maybe only at the approach to the [Palestinian] village will there be some big ball-like fig trees offering dark shades." Here there are no

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[217] These two words, placed one next to another at the beginning of the section, have the same root letters in metathesis: *a.k.tz / tz.a.k.*

[218] *Preliminaries*, p. 69; *Mikdamot*, p. 34.

[219] For the classical text on the wounded body, see Elaine Scary, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). For a recent assessment of the wounded, torn, open body as the locus of writing, see Galili Shahar, "*Ha-po'etika shel ha-guf ha-patzu'a*" ["The Poetics of the Wounded Body"], *Ot: A Journal of Literary Criticism and Theory* 1 (Fall 2010): 7-37.

[220] *Preliminaries*, p. 62; *Mikdamot*, p. 29.

[221] I am alluding here to S.Y. Abramowitch's story "*Shem ve-yefet ba-agalah*" ["Shem and Japheth on the Train"], as well as to Abramowitch's persona as *Mendele mocher sforim* [Mendele the Book Peddler].

trees, and yet the mother "hugging [her baby] close to her, what else can she do, now sings to him almost soundlessly *oifn veg shtey a boym* [On the road there stands a tree]."[222] With no trees, driving an uncertain road, the mother nevertheless starts singing Itzik Manger's popular Yiddish song about a tree and a road.[223] In the East-European language of exile, uttered almost in silence, the text becomes devoid from any reality it can refer to: in her song the mother imagines a place precisely because such a place is nowhere to be found in actual reality. The family's quest for a place becomes futile since "hurry as it will it will change nothing nor get closer to anything or to any place."[224] Yes, their goal is to inhabit the place, to work the soil, and to change the land, but here, on the contrary, they only wander without an end in "a place in the world, a place lacking, a place lacking a place"[225]; a place taking place only in the cry, the scream, the song – only in the text.

It is thus no great surprise that even the father – allegedly the protagonist of rural Zionist settlement in Palestine – regresses, or rather opens up, to a form of textual-exilic existence: In trying to cope with his pain-stricken son, to assess his condition, to discover how to heal him, and to find the place where he can be cured, the father strangely and ironically evokes the plethora of Jewish textuality he was supposed to leave behind in his reterritorialized Zionist formation. Instead of writing – writing Zionist pamphlets about "this place" in a modernized Hebrew – the father, struck and stung by an out-of-placeness, returns to reading, reciting, and recollecting texts written in Aramaic, Yiddish, and non-modern Hebrew. Contemplating "what is this pain," the father – "since he has already read and never forgets a thing from what he's read" – goes back to the Talmudic Tractates of Sanhedrin and Sabbath, then to different dictionaries and medical books now used as the ultimate sources of unworldly wisdom as if they were part of the Scriptures, and finally dramatically, to Isaiah ("Who asked this of you, to trample my courts? Saith the Lord [*omer ha-makom*; saith the place] in Isaiah"[226]), to a non-verbal enunciation when "he is soundlessly humming some melody, a soundless sobbing, some y*am bim bam*, some kind of Hasidic tune from long ago,"[227] and finally to the Psalmic prayer itself, "Lend an ear to my prayer that goes not out of my lips, Daddy says soundlessly."[228] The wounded infant, the terrified mother, and now also the helpless father, all set out in a voyage not to a place but from a place, not in a language but from the threshold of language outside it, not through the process of individual differentiation but as a family wrapped up upon itself; in their counter-odyssey, away from home, through the Palestinian village as the only cultivated place in Palestine, they all seem to be "burning and mourning... atop the trucks of exile."[229]

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[222] *Preliminaries*, p. 70; *Mikdamot*, p. 35.
[223] Manger actually wrote this song years after the narrated time of this passage in the late 1910s.
[224] *Preliminaries*, p. 72; *Mikdamot*, p. 37.
[225] *Preliminaries*, p. 67; *Mikdamot*, p. 32.
[226] *Preliminaries*, p. 87; *Mikdamot*, p. 49.
[227] *Preliminaries*, p. 90; *Mikdamot*, p. 51.
[228] *Preliminaries*, p. 93; *Mikdamot*, p. 53.
[229] *Khirbet Khizeh*, p. 105; "Chirbet chizeh," p. 75.

But what might indeed be surprising, and also most significant, in this exilic voyage out, is that while *Preliminaries* stresses the status of Palestinians as the native inhabitants of the land at the beginning of the 20ᵗʰ century, it also remembers – from the later point in time when the text itself was written – the history of exile into which the Palestinians were thrown in the middle of the century. The first section of the book gets gradually filled with a tragic recognition, pronounced in the words of the father and through an inclusive turn to the first-person plural, "that maybe it was a fundamental mistake. That maybe the land doesn't want us at all, really.... with the necessary stinging of anyone who tries to push in where he has no right to push in, be this stranger as little as he may."[230] However, the foreignness of the Jew to the land itself, the way Jewish settlers in Palestine only "destroy the wisdom of the thousand slow years,"[231] as much as it undoes the modernizing, progressive, transformative logic of Zionism, might at the same time reinforce what is in itself a colonialist European phantasy – that of the non-Western as the nativist, earth-bound, uncultivated, evidently entangled in the slow, unchanging temporality of nature. But the Palestinians of *Preliminaries* do not only primordially belong to the land but are also uprooted from it; the Palestinian place is not the only non-textual place which exists in actuality, but eventually also a place of remembrance, of longing and mourning, to be reconstructed only within the confines of the text. On the family's way to find a doctor, right after the stinging episode, the narrator – both the possibly dying infant and the old man reconstructing the story – describes the roads taken and not taken:

> First of all they must go straight down and the shortest way to the beaten track, and then they'll have to avoid Mansoura, and hurry around its edge, today there is no Mansoura and you won't find it, it has been wiped out, it no longer exists, and in its place there is just a road, eucalyptus trees, and some stone ruins, but once you had to go around the edge of it...[232]

The Christian Palestinian village Al-Mansoura, ruined in 1948, becomes here a locus of a double negation: the family abstains from crossing it, and in so doing only signifies the contours of the place; and the old narrator, in whose reality the village is already absent, can nevertheless retrieve it from the famous symbols of Zionist re-cultivation of Palestine (the road, the eucalyptus) as well as from the traces of loss (stone ruins). Thus, the Palestinian place also has no place: what we are left with – phenomenologically and historically – is only what exists "in its place [*bi-mekomah*]"; only from the lack of an actual place Mansoura can be found in the no-place of the text. The out-of-placeness here is therefore not only Jewish, and exile is not just recovered as the ultimate predicate of Jewish existence. Rather, this opening onto the Jewish-exilic, in itself another instantiation of the outcry of the Palestinian exile from "Khirbet Khizeh," is immediately connected to the ruined village and its absent inhabitants who

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[230] *Preliminaries*, pp. 86-8; *Mikdamot*, pp. 48-9.
[231] *Preliminaries*, p. 86; *Mikdamot*, p. 48.
[232] *Preliminaries*, p. 64; *Mikdamot*, p. 30.

became strangers to the place not unlike the infant/narrator/writer himself. In the last account, and through the different punctuations of time, the place in *Preliminaries* is either the not-yet (Jewish-Israeli) or the already-not (Palestinian), and its occupants, future or past (but not quite present), reside or wander in it, wounded by it or expelled from it, all as foreigners. Yizhar's texts – commonly seen as writing the Israeli land[233] – are rooted in this foreignness.[234] Here is one of the last passages of *Preliminaries*:

> But who really knows it is so... no man here is a prophet and even a prophet would not know, a child might perhaps, with his unspoilt innocence, as though he has listened and heard and knows without any confirmation that the vineyard will not remain, but that even the boundary between the settled land and the threatening silence of the dangerous mystery beyond the boundary will not remain, and these Arabs will not remain, the men and the women, and that Zarnuga will not remain and Yibne will not remain, they will all go away to start to live in Gaza, woe for them... and only another generation or two, or two and a half at the most, will hold on here, only one generation of farmers or two, or two and a half at the most, one day they will all go and they will all change places and the place itself will change places too...[235]

The transience of time is known only to the child who, being an heir to the prophet, can see the passing of the present and the disappearance of place. The writer-as-child interrupts the course of time, as he is located at once before and after the place, in pre-1948 as well as after the fact. This allows him to know what is yet to happen, or better still, yet to be lost, and to give a melancholic account thereof: The agricultural Jewish settlement will soon be gone, the divide between the cultivated parts and nature dismantled, the Palestinian village destroyed, and finally, not only land and people, but "the place itself will change places [*ve-gam ha-makom atzmo yachlif makom*]." The child/writer could know this much already at such an early stage of personal and collective history since for him, from the preliminary moment of the sting and wandering onward, the place has never had a solid place. The place was from the very start a self-consciousness divorced from the world, then wounded and thus traveling outside the factuality of historical time and phenomenological experience, constantly construing textuality itself. Exiled from progressive-teleological timely world, it opens up to a catastrophe to come, to the loss that will take place, to what "will not remain" (punctuating this entire passage from the end of *Preliminaries*, like a menacing basso continuo). The wound, the pain, the cry, the wandering, as well as the expulsion, the loss, the ruins – all these take place in lieu of a place. The first chapter of *Preliminaries*

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[233] See Gershon Shaked, *Ha-siporet ha-ivrit 1880-1980 vol. IV* [*Hebrew Fiction 1880-1980 vol. IV*], p. 224; Gidi Nevo, *Shiv'ah yamim ba-negev* [*Seven Days in the Negev*], esp. pp. 205-215.

[234] And see Dan Miron's poignant assertion in his Introduction to the English translation of *Preliminaries*: "[T]he protagonist grows up without ever feeling safely ensconced in a place he belongs to, and in the middle of the realization of the Zionist dream he lives a life that is nothing less than exilic if not nomadic." Miron, "Introduction," p. 20.

[235] *Preliminaries*, pp. 295-96; *Mikdamot*, pp. 222-23.

ends with a prophecy, given upon arriving at the doctor's house: "If he [the child] is not dead – the doctor says, to them and to all the crowd round about – then he will live".[236] This sentence can be read not only as the successful end for Zionism's rite of passage, eventually validating Jewish life in the place itself, written as a nationalist variation on the Freudian initiation narrative: *Wo Es* – the out-of-placeness of infancy – *war, soll Ich* – national mature life in a sovereign place – *werden*.[237] Instead of this initiation into linear-teleological national historical time – Zionism's famous "return to history" – Yizhar's *Preliminaries* might suggest a different movement, in which a certain mode of life is indeed made possible precisely when the out-of-placeness ceases to necessarily signify a death sentence; a way of wandering in a place based on the knowledge that "the place itself will change place"; a vindication of a non-nationalist existence addressed to a collectivity, "all the crowd [*ha-kahal*] round about," while perhaps also generating it. "The question," writes Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin in his groundbreaking article "Exile within Sovereignty," "is not the experience of exile for Jews outside of Israel (an important question in itself), but rather how to go back and experience exile here in the land, and to do so without forgetting those who exist in the state of real exile, the third world oppressed, the dwellers of the refugee camps."[238]

In the 1992 *Preliminaries* as in the 1949 "Khirbet Khizeh," Yizhar does not adhere to the post-1948 sovereign time of the state, to the progressive novelistic temporality anchored in the present, to an actualized place of conquest and dwelling validated by the partition of the land, or to the boundaries of the national collectivity. Writing against his own historical positioning as an Israeli writer through and through, Yizhar's texts are very much at odds with all these figurations of Israeliness. Instead, they potentially constitute Israel/Palestine as a space of out-of-placeness attuned to the exilic histories of both Jews and Palestinians; circulating an outcry traversing national geographies and identities, these texts insist on writing Israel/Palestine in ways it has historically ceased to exist.

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[236] *Preliminaries*, p. 94; *Mikdamot*, p. 55.

[237] This is, despite his poignant assessment of the exilic tendency in *Prelimiaries*, Dan Miron's reading of the end of the first chapter. See Dan Miron, *Ha-sifriya Ha-iveret* [*The Blind Library]* (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot acharonot, 2006] pp. 365-375.

[238] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile within Sovereignty," p. 35.

Chapter Two

Collective Enunciation and Its Afterlife:

Jean-Luc Godard and the Palestinian Struggle

The 1948 war carved a new historical reality in Israel/Palestine, culminating in a partition of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, and cementing a division between two national collectivities and the courses of two divergent "histories": a realized national history of return to the motherland, on the one hand, and an exilic history of expulsion from the motherland, on the other. Yizhar's textuality, discussed in Chapter One, can be seen – to return to Gil Anidjar's formulation of the 1948 "*partage des voies*"[239] – to be shaping alternative collective formations that refuse the post-1948 political configuration. His works keep returning to 1948 as a moment of historical rupture, opening up from within it to a textual potentiality of what was otherwise – historically – lost. Through the speculative workings of these texts – a non-novelistic temporality deferring and then negating transformative action, an un-focalized cry forming a collective ethical space and an envisioned exilic literary history – they reject post-1948 history: the Israeli national subject, Israeli collectivity, and ultimately the very category of Israeli literature. Yizhar's texts, in other words, never leave 1948 – as both origin and interruption – and in so doing, they formulate a realm in which the *1948-time* is experienced even decades after the historical year itself.

The following decades saw profound change in Israel/Palestine, with organized Palestinian resistance emerging in the 1960s – first Fatah (The Palestinian Liberation Movement), founded in 1959, and then the PLO (The Palestinian Liberation Organization), founded in 1964 – and becoming, by the end of the decade, a crucial force in the region. In this chapter I revisit these years of revolutionary Palestinian resistance on the cusp of the 1960s and 1970s through the vantage point of an important work of the period: Jean-Luc Godard's 1976 film *Ici et ailleurs* [*Here and Elsewhere*].[240] I first lay out the film's complex production history as illuminated by Godard's early cinematic oeuvre and its changing artistic investments and political claims through the 1960s; I then go on to discuss the film as part of the Palestinian struggle itself. I will therefore try to think about Godard's cinematic enterprise and the Palestinian political struggle not as two separate and static objects of analysis, i.e. the film as an object of cinematographic research (with the Palestinian struggle serving only as its contingent subject-matter) and the struggle as an object of political research (with the film serving as its archive). Rather, it is precisely the constituent interrelations between the audiovisual project and the political campaign that this chapter aims to conceptualize by following their different permutations. The first iteration (1969-1970)

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[239] Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*, p. 115.
[240] *Ici et* ailleurs. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville (France, 1976).

sees the Dziga Vertov cinematic collective (in which Godard participated) traveling to Palestinian refugee camps to form what I consider a revolutionary political "audiovisual" project of collective enunciation; the second evinces the collapse of this project after the events of Black September (1970); and the third, Godard's 1976 film produced in collaboration with Anne-Marie Miéville, is construed as the afterlife of that collective enunciation. Far from following Godard's artistic trajectory separately (i.e., construing *Ici et ailleurs* as simply a film produced by one of France's most celebrated *auteurs*), the chapter discusses the vicissitudes of the project in the hope of shedding light on the death of a certain revolutionary modality that informed the Palestinian struggle until the early 1970s. *Ici et ailleurs*, now broadly understood not as a cinematic object but rather as what I call "an audiovisual enterprise", is analyzed in this chapter as a testimony to its very demise. I aim to examine the early 1970s as a moment of interruption in the Palestinian struggle and to reflect, through and with *Ici et ailleurs*, on the potential survival of this revolutionary modality even after it has been historically lost. Thus, this chapter revolves around various interruptive ends – in Godard's creative endeavor, in Palestinian politics of resistance – but also ventures into ways of potentially outliving them.

1. Within the End: *Jusqu'à la victoire*

As for so many, May 1968 marked a certain ending for Jean-Luc Godard; this ending was quickly doubled when the claim to the end of a certain political and aesthetic regime was followed by the almost immediate ending of the revolution itself. This twofold ending marks an artistic endeavor which, from its very inception, was immersed in thoughts of the end. Godard was motivated by a desire to end academic, literary French cinema of the 1940s and -50s; to bring traditional values of cinematic production (comprehensive narrative, round characters, the cohesive beauty of the image) to a close; to bury the old procedures of film-making (fully-written script, smoothly constructive montage, correspondence between image and sound). Indeed, the modernist rebellion of the French *Nouvelle Vague* – in a medium whose short history still allowed for modernist moves as late as the 1960s[241] – demanded a decisive rupture with the past, a distinct turn from tradition and an opening of a new trajectory in the history of cinema. But the ending of an old world resulted, in Godard's work (somewhat in accordance with Paul de Man's famous account of the history of modernity),[242] in a deep sense of "the end" already informing the new modernist modalities themselves.

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[241] Fredric Jameson famously argued that post-World War II (neo-)modernism was a nothing but a late-ideological, depoliticized version of the work of the modernist groups of the 1920s and 1930s, who coupled a radical form-based artistic production with militant leftist politics. See his *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London and New York: Verso. 2002). He fails, however, to discuss the belated and short history of cinema, which allowed for a 1960s version of modernist activity that even Jameson himself might approve of as non-ideological.

[242] Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

Thus even his debut feature film, *À bout de souffle* (1960), notwithstanding its fresh, speedy and playful energy (which was to become his distinctive signature in the following years), is quite bleak and revolves around death.[243] The Eisensteinian dialectical montages, the furious jump-cuts, the actors' exaggerated gestures – all lead to the last long tracking shot that almost operatically follows the protaginst's inevitable death. It was, in François Truffaut's view, the saddest of Godard's films.[244] The end is, therefore, not only a form of distinction, a mode of exclusion and then a relation to an outside; it is also the very technique of the modernist new. Visual breaks, audiovisual asynchrony, dense cinematic allusions, overt dictation and quotation – all lay bare the techniques of the cinematic apparatus as a medium of cutting, of rupture, of multiple endings. As he nears 1968, Godard's formal experimentation becomes gradually more political: the title of his 1966 film, *Made in USA*, for example, already explores a double critique.[245] That which is "made in the USA" – political intrigue, colonialist moves, ultra-capitalist consumerism on the one hand, and Hollywood cinematic production with its ideologically anesthetizing effects on the other – is brought together by the political-economic superpower producing, in Godard terms at the beginning of *Historie(s) du cinema*, "*une usine des rêves*" ("a dream factory").[246] The road from formal experimentation to political radicalism – the latter saving the former in the course of saving the world by putting an end to American economic, political, and artistic imperialism – was a short one.

However gradual Godard's initiation into political radicalism, May 1968 marked a decisive break. Godard made "political" films throughout the 1960s, but the political demand of 1968 was much greater: it didn't consist only of a radical laying bare of the cinematic form and a critical study of the cinematic apparatus but indeed ultimately strove to negate them *tout court*. Godard tried to answer this political call, but his cultural position at that time was already too complicated: a successful avant-garde director working within a long cinematic tradition, Godard epitomized that high-modernist, sophisticated, emphatically formalist *haute culture* – much celebrated in France and inevitably connected to traditional cultural genealogies and national chauvinistic pride – that many of the 1968 revolutionary forces most strongly opposed. A graffiti from the streets of 1968 Paris – "L'art est mort. Godard n'y pourra rien"[247] – exemplifies almost tragically Godard's double-bind. Art, understood as a cultural procedure, an aesthetic realm, even an Althusserian ideological apparatus, is presented as a reactionary force, a bourgeois activity, part of a de-politicized vanishing world, and

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[243] *À bout de souffle.* Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1960). 90 min., b/w.

[244] Richard Brody, *Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), p. 72. Truffaut wrote the first version of this film's script, a significantly brighter one. Godard himself described "the sense of urgency" in this film as "adolescence, youth, fear, despair, solitude." Ibid. As David Sterritt notes, the French title of this film, *À bout de souffle* – unlike its already canonical, well-known English translation, *Breathless* – "points to a different meaning...: being winded, maybe exhausted, or even at the *end of breath*." David Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 39 (emphasis in the original).

[245] *Made in USA.* Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1966). 90 min., Eastmancolor.

[246] *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1988-98). 265 min., b/w and col.

[247] "Art is dead. Godard can do nothing about it." http://www.bopsecrets.org/French/graffiti.htm

as such it should be abolished, if indeed it isn't already dead. Godard, one of its leading advocates, indeed one of its very personifications, becomes emphatically irrelevant for the revolutionary cause. Yet Godard himself wanted to surpass art, to negate culture: "We have to destroy culture," he wrote in June 1968, adding, in August, "we cannot speak of being... an artist or making a piece of art. This has to be completely destroyed."[248] Together with some Maoist groups with which he was affiliated, as well as with his new, young and highly radical collaborator, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Godard tried to set the terms for the abolition of culture and art – the art of cinema included – from within; in Richard Brody's apt words, notwithstanding their overly-factual and triumphalist a tone, "Godard left his orbit and, without ceasing to make films, dropped out of cinema."[249] The question with which Godard dealt around 1968 was precisely what kind of audiovisual activity might remain once the end of cinema has been declared. However, in posing this question, Godard didn't simply depart from a particular tradition – an artistic tradition in which he was immersed, and which by then had featured his theoretical writing and cultural activity for almost two decades – but simultaneously joined a different tradition (or counter-tradition), that of anti-art. The roots of this tradition may be found in the Hegelian conception of the end of art;[250] its influential 20th century manifestations stretch from the Dadaists Surrealists in the 1920s and 30s to the Situationists in the 1960s.[251] But while Hegel understands the end of art as its inevitable dialectical negation into philosophical, conceptual thought (a process whose logical and teleological movement is motivated by and leads to the end as a mode of realization and completion), the Surrealists understood the end of art, i.e. its penetration into social reality in a mode of interruption. Art is not done with its social role by fulfilling it but, on the contrary, cannot but betray – by virtue of its very aesthetic form – the social-revolutionary cause.[252] Godard, who was thinking at that time of the necessary 'destruction' of art and culture, clearly tried to adhere to the Maoist-Situationist "interruptive" position; and this required a significant shift in his creative activity.

Godard's radicalization in the late 1960s is anchored in a shift from a strong investment in an inquiry into the cinematic medium, its possible techniques and political potentialities, to a direct audiovisual operation that is indifferent to the political signification of formal cinematic mechanisms. While the former stance still presupposes the artistic medium as the necessary realm for radical formal/political inquiry, the latter critiques the cinematic apparatus as such, and is directed at its disappearance

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[248] *Everything Is Cinema*, p. 336.

[249] *Everything Is Cinema*, p. 320.

[250] "Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our ideas instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place." *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts.* trans, T. M. Knox (Oxford: Calderon, 1975), p. 10.

[251] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

[252] On the notion of interruption in relation to modernist art movement, see John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998). On the techniques of interruption in Surrealist visual art, see Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1986).

altogether. Godard's 1967 film *La chinoise* speaks to this shift: the film, which tells the story of a group of young Maoists through a long exploration of their discourse and actions, bears many resemblances to some of Godard's later post-1968 revolutionary films, invested as they are in conveying and communicating political struggles from around the globe.[253] Yet the Brechtian operations on which *La chinoise* is based – an anti-psychological didactic tendency, alienation effects, theatrical gestures, the presentation of short social scenes, an exploration of the actor/character split – leave the cinematic apparatus, as a pedagogical means and a thinking form, intact.[254] The film's trenchant self-reflexivity; its inherent ambivalence toward the Maoists, whom it simultaneously adores and mocks; its pessimistic (and thus perhaps also prophetic) gaze at the prospects of what is to eventually become a failed bourgeois revolution – all of these led some French Maoist revolutionaries at the time to furiously dismiss the film as counter-revolutionary.[255] Indeed the very politico-formalist virtuosity of Godard's pre-1968 films (his juxtaposition of the voice-over conceptual discourse and the simultaneous cinematic image in *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*, the testimony from a violent demonstration as an exercise in theatrical gestures in *La chinoise*, the 9-minute almost-single-shot traffic jam in *Weekend*), is what suddenly became, after 1968, cinema's ultimate pitfall. As Godard declares in the last moments of *Weekend*, "The end of the film," i.e. the end of that specific film as well as his films in general, calls for "the end of cinema."[256]

After 1968, Godard attacked cinema itself – and indeed he stopped making "films," if by "film" we mean an artistic object with well-defined boundaries made by a recognizable *auteur* and produced for aesthetic consumption. The year 1968 sees a flood of audiovisual material referred to as *Ciné-tracts:* Most of the *Ciné-tracts* were unedited; those that were edited were mostly not realized as discrete creative pieces; those that were realized in this fashion were mostly not circulated; and those that were circulated were definitely not done so for aesthetic consumption. These "aborted films" – assuming we still take "film" as their necessary point of reference, the ultimate goal they failed to reach – took part in actual political events and were as transient as them; some of them were handed over to activists as "working material", for motivation and persuasion.

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[253] *La Chinoise*. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1967). 96 min., Eastmancolor.

[254] Perhaps the most trenchant of those is the opening sequence of *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*, where Godard's voice-over presents the female figure on the screen twice: first as the actress ("Her. She is Marina Vlady, an actress,") then as the character ("Her. She is Juliette Janson. She lives here"); the voice-over narrator goes on to describe the identical physical attributes of the two, nodding to "Old father Brecht [who] said that actors should quote." *2 ou 3 choses je sais d'elle* . Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1966). 90 min., Eastmancolor.

[255] Back in *Made in USA*, the protagonist dismissively defines "political film" as "Walt Disney with blood." This may be at least one reason why Godard's films from earlier in the 1960s remain his most popular and enjoyable. I can personally testify that the constant laughter of the highly-educated Parisian audience during a screening which I attended of *La chinoise* at the Centre Pompidou in 2005 could have led someone who happened to stroll in to believe that what was being screened was some lowbrow comedy.

[256] Douglas Morrey names the chapter of his book devoted to Godard's films of 1966-1967 "End of the Beginning / Beginning of the End." Douglas Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Manchester and New York: Manchester. University Press, 2005), pp. 47-80.

Much of this audiovisual material was not, at least not always, only the spontaneous, presumably authentic, unmediated recordings of the cinematic *objectif:* it existed and was indeed presented in numerous versions, under different edits and with different non-diegetic audio attached to the same visual material. These *Ciné-tracts* did not enjoy the status of finished projects; did not yearn for closure; they were sometimes useful and sometimes produced just like that; most of the time, they were easily forgotten.[257] Godard was responsible for several of them; but this doesn't mean he was their "author." *La politique des auteurs*,[258] attributed so often to Godard (whose mock-autobiographical mode – unlike Truffaut's sincere personal films – was yet another self-referential, ultra-modernist and unmistakably authorial technique), was suddenly reversed when the emphatically single-authored films became, post-1968, collective projects.[259] Godard, together with Gorin and several other (often changing) cinematographers established a cinematic collective dramatically named after avant-garde Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov.[260] Dziga-Vertov projects were created collectively, dealt with various collective uprisings and were addressed at – or offered to – a collectivity: Not the anonymous, ad hoc collectivity of the cinema theatre audience, though, but that political collectivity from which these projects emerged and to which they returned – not only by reflecting it but indeed in the hope of further shaping it.

Thus, the artist's signature was replaced by a collaborative imprint. Rather than producing more "Godard films" in France, Godard now turned his back on the French film industry, on state-subsidized modes of production and on the privileged sites of cinematic circulation (for instance, the big film festivals that had so recently canonized him as a leading French filmmaker)[261] – in short, on French cinema as such. He chose

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[257] Here is Godard's own account of these Ciné-tracts: "Surtout l'intérêt est moins la diffusion que la fabrication. Ça a un intérêt local de travailler ensemble et de discuter. Ça fait progresser. Et puis la diffusion peut se fair dans les appartements, les réuniuons... Ça permet de repenser à un niveau très simple et très concret le cinéma." *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard: Tome I 1950-1984* (Paris: Cahiers du cinema, 1998), p. 332

[258] A term suggested by Truffaut to describe the aesthetics of New Wave directors, originally, individually and authoritatively producing their films as if writing them in a *camréa-stylo*. Andrew Sarris famously developed this notion in his "Note on the Author Theory in 1962" in *Film Culture* (Winter 1962-63), and since then it has become one of the most recognizable, but ultimately the least representative notions associated with the New Wave.

[259] Godard: "La vraie gauche, c'est tel qui essaie de ne plus être 'auteur'." In *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard,* p. 337.

[260] Colin MacCabe explains that the choice to endorse Vertov – rather than Sergei Eisenstein – as the group's paragon was by no means accidental: "Whereas Eisenstein's theoretical writing suggested that the montage was an operation limited to the moments of shooting and editing, for Vertov montage was a principle which had primacy in every moment of filming – the Dziga-Vertov group formulated this principle in the slogan: Montage before shooting, montage during shooting and montage after the shooting." Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Image, Sounds, Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 42-43. Furthermore, whereas Eisenstein collaborated, however unwillingly, with the Stalinist regime, Vertov famously remained an oppositional figure throughout his life.

[261] Godard was one of the leading figures to sabotage the 1968 Cannes festival in the name of solidarity with the students and workers' strikes taking place at that time, and a month later he tried to organize a public opposition to the Avignon festival. Truffaut, on the other hand, while originally helpful in sabotaging Cannes, eventually "took up the position of Pasolini," who declared he couldn't side with

instead to collaborate with the Dziga-Vertov group that launched an international enterprise of partisan audiovisual projects. These "films," frequently sponsored by different European television companies, were meant to document, encourage, accelerate, comment on and participate in contemporary political struggles and provide them with different sensory, perceptive and intellectual fodder for various ends. Following the1968 tradition of the *Ciné-tracts*, they were hardly ever properly produced and never quite circulated in real time. They remained unrealized to a large extent, an integral part of a revolutionary effort that was not quite fulfilled, both a sign and an index of a certain failure.

As part of this non-artistic, anti-cinematic endeavor, the Dziga-Vertov group visited the Middle East to shoot a "film" about the Palestinian struggle. Godard himself traveled a total of six times to Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank between November 1969 and August 1970, spending days and nights in the Palestinian refugee camps with the Palestinian fighters, the *fedayeen,* and shooting footage of their preparation for armed revolt to gain back confiscated Palestinian lands. Work with the Palestinians was by far the Dziga-Vertov group's most elaborate project on non-European soil, a profound involvement in Third World, anti-colonial political revolutions. Shooting – commissioned and sponsored by the Arab League – was conducted with close Palestinian guidance and largely endorsed by Fatah (and even more specifically by Yasser Arafat himself, whom Godard interviewed). The project was suggestively named – prior to its final realization, which never actually took place as originally planned – *Jusqu'à la victoire* (*Until Victory*).

Jusqu'à la victoire – the first stage of the project's long, surprising unfolding – remains in many ways the peak of the Dziga-Vertov group's revolutionary audiovisual creativity. It required not only a decisive withdrawal from the cinematic apparatus, its conventions and form (including those of radical, revolutionary European film), but indeed a change in the audiovisual project's geopolitical locus. France in particular, and Europe in general, ceased to be the natural, ultimate arena of revolutionary action and reflection: influenced by the New Left's suspicion of what it saw as traditional Marxism's Eurocentrism in its revolutionary outlook, the Dziga-Vertov group turned away from Europe to an anti-colonial struggle – indeed a struggle waged against non-European forces.[262] Moving outside Europe, a crucial effort was made to fashion a language of struggle without falling back on Eurocentric liberal-humanist frames, continually reaching out for a foreign language – such as the Arabic language of the Palestinian

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the bourgeois students in their fight against working-class policemen, according to Anne Wiazemisnky, Godard's lover and actress. "Truffaut said, 'I will never be on the side of the sons of the bourgeoisie,'" she adds, referring probably to Godard's upper-middle-class roots. Quoted and discussed in E*verything Is Cinema,* pp. 334-35.

[262] Defining which exact political entities the Palestinians were revolting against in the 1960s is a complicated affair. As will be made clear later on in the chapter, I suggest moving away from the common, statist answers – against Israel, against Jordan or even possibly against Nasser's Egypt. None of these forces, although connected to the West in geopolitical as well as phantasmatic ways, is at any rate a colonial European power as such.

revolt – and indexing a different political language of struggle. That effort ultimately meant a negation of French colonial history in the Middle East – a history in which French cinema was intricately implicated from its very founding moments.[263] The problematic facing the Dziga-Vertov group was tightly linked to the colonial context that has been haunting the Palestinian struggle: how could such a project serve, not as a belated force of the *mission civilisatrice*, but as its negative and negating image? What would be the coordinates of a creative project that is neither *about* the indigenous people nor *for* them and *with* them in any simple way – but which is concerned with new configurations of the audiovisual apparatus and the political revolt, and the collectivity defined by both?

In his 1985 essay, *Cinema II: Time-Image,* Gilles Deleuze suggested a decisive shift in post-World War II political cinema: in a world where the long-awaited rise of the masses had already been realized to catastrophic consequences, left-wing political cinema – unlike the cinema created in the beginning of the 20th century – could not presuppose an already-existing collectivity. In modern political cinema, "the people" are missing – or more accurately, inhabit a liminal space between the no-longer and the not-yet, always in the process of becoming: "[a]rt, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people."[264] Post-World War II political cinema thus focuses, according to Deleuze, not on the mobilization of an existing group but on the formation of a collectivity from the ruins of its own past and toward a future that doesn't necessarily expect it; the collectivities Deleuze discusses are Third World, anti-colonial, minority collectivities. Moreover, creative activity has a crucial role in the articulation of these collectivities: passing necessarily through the realms of the imaginary, of invention, of the dream and the trance, political cinema serves as a privileged realm for conjuring this "people to come [*peuple à-venir*]."[265] This effort by "political cinema," Deleuze hastens to emphasizes, not only changes the meaning of the "political" – invention rather than mobilization, minor collectivities rather than qualitative universal power, "coming into history" rather than bringing history to a happy close – but indeed the contours of "cinema" itself. A political cinema centered on Third World collectivities reformulates the filmmaker's position and the film's form, therefore reformulating the film's mode of enunciation: "[b]ecause the people are missing, the author is in a situation of producing utterances which are already collective, which are like the seeds of the people to come, and whose political impact is immediate and inescapable."[266] Political Third World film no longer records an anti-colonial, struggling collectivity from without; nor does it narrate the struggle through a story of a representative individual from within. Instead of a differentiation between the individual and the collective, the

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[263] See, for example, the 50-second 1897 *Les pyramides (vue générale),* produced by the Lumière Brothers' film company. And see Michael Allan, "Deserted Histories: The Lumière Brothers, the Pyramids, and Early Film Form," in *Early Popular Visual Culture* 6:2 *(*July 2008): 159-70.

[264] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 217.

[265] Ibid, p. 223.

[266] Ibid, p. 221.

single-authored film and the multitude of political reality, the singular protagonist and multivalent historical occurrences, the audiovisual form and apparatus take an integral part in the effort – the task, the enterprise – of politically formulating Third World collectivities.

Although formulated more than a decade after the Dziga-Vertov group ceased to exist (i.e., after its "failure") and never directly referring to the collective's projects, Deleuze's book is haunted by the their spirit. It is hard to believe that Deleuze failed to notice Godard's turn from Brechtian, pre-1968 political cinema (discussed at length in the first half of the book) to the post-1968 projects of the Dziga-Vertov collective; I believe that it was one of the models for Deleuze's discussion of political cinema. His formulation of collectivity as produced through political cinema in collective enunciation echoes the Dziga-Vertov collective's audiovisual practices: Godard's recognizable voice, heard constantly in his pre-1968 films as the magisterial voice-over of the *caméra-stylo* itself, is transformed in the group's work into the collective enunciation of a struggling collectivity-in-the-making. Deleuze's formulation also harkens back to his work, in the mid-1970s, with Félix Guattari in their book on Kafka and minor literature.[267] There, collective enunciation is posited as the main revolutionary qualification of minor literature as it constantly negates the structure of subjectivity reigning supreme in European major literature, a subjectivity on whose basis the individuation of – as well as the separation between – character, narrator, writer, and reader rests. Starting with enunciation itself, minor literature is structured not on a solidified subject of enunciation (in both senses: neither locatable origin nor definite content), but on collective *agencement* – in complete contradistinction to the subjective *agent* – which derives its political signification from the collapse of the distinction between individual and collective and the representational relation between them. Instead of the oedipal structure of individuation-through-separation, as both ontogenetic and phylogenetic developmental narrative, minor literature suggests the transformational flows of *becoming* and *unbecoming*, always within the horizon of a debris or a community, of the "dividual" or the singularity, rather than an individual, personal voice.

At the beginning of *Ici et ailleurs* Godard reflects, in his own voice, on the making of *Jusqu'à la victoire:*

> Voilà c'était au milieu du début de 1970 qu'on va au Moyen Orient. Qui ça
> "on"? En février, en juillet 1970 il y a je, il y a tous, il y a elle, il y a il qui va
> au Moyen Orient chez les palestiniens pour faire un film.[268]

The usage of the anonymous, impersonal subject pronoun "*on*" enables Godard to oscillate between various subject positions ("I," "she," "he") and a generalizing plural one, implying an abstract, unmarked participation (even of the spectators themselves:

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[267] Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure (*Paris: Minuit, 1975).

[268] *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 6.31. "It was in the middle of the beginning of 1970 that we went to the Middle East. Who is "we"? In February, in July 1970, there is I, there is everyone, there is she, there is he who goes to the Middle East, among the Palestinians to make a film."

"everyone"), and a return to the "*on*" as a collective subject position. In posing the question "*Qui ça 'on*'?" Godard focuses on the inclusive yet undecidable collective position of the otherwise idiomatic "*on*"; but in posing this question in his own singular, recognizable voice, Godard opens up, from the very beginning of his 1976 film, the gap between the initial political-creative motivation of the project and the final form it has undertaken. As a result of "going among the Palestinians," an anonymous collective enunciation was supposed to take shape; but the individual utterance with which the film starts already signifies the chasm between the actual voice of the film and its supposed plural collective utterance (as it now exists only in the film's *enoncé*).[269] "Voilà ce que on, ce que il, ce que je, ce que elle, ce que tous avez filmé ailleurs. Ailleurs – 1970 [This is what we, what he, what I, what she, what everyone shot elsewhere. Elsewhere – in 1970.]" The year 1970 thus marks the possibility, and impossibility, of what is now only being reported in the director's voice.

Jusqu'à la victoire echoes the theory of minor literature, formed approximately around the same time. The desired mode of its audiovisual writing was emphatically minor in the sense developed by Deleuze and Guattari: the film and the struggle, the apparatus and anti-colonial history, were not separated into two opposing/relating poles, with the former representing the latter and the latter structuring the former. They were rather both part of a collective struggle aimed at imagining and creating a struggling collectivity: emerging collectivities in revolt, carving out new forms of revolutionary political enunciation. These formerly separate groups – the Palestinian fighters, the French filmmakers – now form one another in the hope of creating a further form of assemblage, an *agencement* produced by collective speech. In its absorption into the collective enunciation of the Palestinian struggle, *Jusqu'à la victoire* can be seen as something other than a European project: produced in a "major" language but following a minor thread within it, it was imagined from a state of deterritorialization, an 'out-of-placeness' – of both the audiovisual apparatus and the political struggle. The "major" language, i.e. French cinema's European high-modernist language, was displaced and negated, absorbed into an anti-colonial struggle forming a minor trajectory that – much like Kafka's German – speaks a foreign version of the language, deprived of its proper cultural lineage while informed by improper, aberrant sources.

Chana Kronfeld has convincingly argued that minor literature (as formulated by Deleuze and Guattari, but even more so by their mediators in American Academe of the 1980s) is still a privilege enjoyed by majoritarian literary traditions written in the major European languages. Advocating and validating good old "international modernism" – to which it is almost identical – the category of minor literature, with its grandiose revolutionary qualification,[270] runs the risk of running over the very position of minority in literature written in "minor" languages and marginal traditions.[271] This argument may be

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[269] This becomes much more complicated later on in the film since *Ici et ailleurs* is structured around two voices: Godard's and his new collaborator, Anne-Marie Miéville's. I return to this point below.

[270] "Il n'y a de grand, et de révolutionnaire, que le mineur", Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p. 48.

[271] Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, esp. pp. 1-20. Indeed, *Jusqu'à la victoire* (as well as *Ici et ailleurs*, which can be seen as its ultimate culmination) could be construed as a yet another part

problematized within the field of Cinema Studies, however, if one takes into account Paul Willemen's concept of Third Cinema as "an ideological project... adhering to a certain political and aesthetic [radical] program, whether or not... produced by Third World peoples themselves."[272] Rather than re-present the Palestinians' minor, marginal and oppositional stance (that stance that Godard was in such a rush to appropriate for his own artistic project), the Dziga-Vertov group attempted to align itself with the Palestinians, albeit in French, to jointly create a collective political-audiovisual project – a "speech-act [that] has several heads, and, little by little, plants the element of a people to come as the free indirect discourse of Africa about itself, about America or about Paris."[273]

This "free indirect discourse," although crowned as the virtuoso narratological technique of the 19th century European novel, has here the potential of becoming its very negation: rather than be formed as a technique for the construction or expression of the self, complicating the relationship between narrator and character while thickening the fictional realm of psychological individuation, it is reformulated in a plural enunciation ("of several heads") supposed to constitute ("plant the elements of") a people-to-come outside the fictional realm. The collective enunciation of "minor literature", then, can ultimately find a *ligne de fuite* from Deleuze and Guattari's major language, understood first and foremost as languages of artistic production in the aesthetic realm. Minor literature's deterritorialization entails an escape from the territory of art and its generic forms (the novel, the short story and the film) to a non-generic space of anti-art: the diary and the letter, as in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of Kafka's writing and the Dziga-Vertov enterprise: 1968 *Ciné-tracts*-cum-diaries and the 1972 film *Letter to Jane*.[274] *Jusqu'à la victoire* may be understood as an attempt at creative enunciation coupled with political desire. If, by the end of the 1960s, a great deal of revolutionary political and social desire was invested in the Palestinian struggle – moving, as I argue bellow, beyond social laws, state-centered configurations and recognized political regimes – then *Jusqu'à la victoire* took part in this desire in a mode of audiovisual "writing" which had little to do with proper "literature" or "cinema." This political audiovisual enterprise is no longer "film" as a self-enclosed aesthetic object, a product for consumption, a cinematic event. It is rather itself the very process of struggle and revolt spanning, from inception to realization, such entangled activities as contemplation, audiovisual shooting and editing, radical socialization and revolutionary

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of the Godard canonical corpus, another twist in a rich modernist oeuvre choosing to speak, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "as a foreigner in one's own language." Almost all of the critical discussions of the project are framed in this way (a Godard project through and through), and one of the main questions I try to pose in this chapter is whether this project can be thought outside of this framework, and if so how.

[272] Robert Stam and Ella Shohat have further suggested that Third World Cinema (cinema produced by and for third world people) might be considered as part of Third Cinema. See Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 27-28.

[273] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, pp. 223-24.

[274] "L'écriture de Kafka, le primat de l'écriture ne signifie qu'une chose: pas du tout de la littérature, mais que l'énonciation ne fait qu'un avec le désir, par-déssous les lois, les Etats, les régimes. Pourtant enonciation toujours historique elle-même, politique et sociale." Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka,* p. 76.

learning; all of these activities lead the way *Jusqu'a la victoire*, to victory. In an interview he gave in July 1970, Godard said the film,

> se propose un double but: 1. aider les gens qui luttent d'une manière ou d'une autre dans leur pays, contre l'impérialisme; 2. présenter un nouveau genre de film. Une sorte de brochure politique."[275]

For political anti-colonial struggle, the meaning of considering these two goals as mutually constitutive, especially against the context of French imperialism and the aftermath of the Algerian war, is aligning with the Palestinian revolt – not just sympathizing with it – through a cinematic modality altogether different: making "[u]n film arabe" in which "les membres de la résistance palestinienne participent à sa réalisation" [the members of the Palestinian resistance take part in its realization];[276] an anti-imperialist, non-French collective enunciation, outside the reach of "cinema." This "end of cinema" through the workings of collective enunciation was itself to come to an end all too soon.

2. After the End : *Ici et ailleurs*

Jusqu'à la victoire failed to find a form in which it could be realized. Richard Brody gives the following account of the events:

> The filming was interrupted by Black September, the Jordanian army's attack in September 1970 on Palestinians fighters. For the next two years, Godard and Gorin spent endless hours in the editing room working on the footage ... But the project, like so many that they undertook, was never completed – at least not in that form.[277]

I believe that this historical narrative – even as it touches upon main aspects of *Jusqu'à la victoire*'s failure – needs to be completely rewritten. What exactly was the interruption that precipitated the end of the project? If indeed it was, as Brody argues, the political events of Black September that interrupted the artistic project of filming then these two realms – the political and the artistic – are again separated into two poles. The former presumably put an end to the latter: aesthetic effort – creative, imaginary, alas secondary – was blocked by the crude, valid ontology of historical reality. But strictly speaking, Black September did not actually stop the filming of *Jusqu'à la victoire*: the last time the Dziga-Vertov group arrived in the Middle East was actually several months

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[275] Jean-Luc Godard, "Godard chez les feddayin," in Bergala, Alain, ed. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, tome 1: 1950-1984 (*Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1988), p. 341. "proposes a double end: 1. helping those who are struggling, in one way or another in their own country, against Imperialism; 2. presenting a new kind of film. A kind of political pamphlet."

[276] Ibid, pp. 340-41.

[277] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* p. 353.

prior to September 1970. Following the catastrophic events – which the group did not experience first-hand – its members decided not to return to the region. The interruption thus happened on an altogether different level. Black September did not interrupt an artistic project already separated from historical reality but enacted a rupture within the political/audiovisual reality: It arrested the emergence of a collective revolutionary enunciation that would have brought together paramilitary and audiovisual forces. Black September put an end to the possibility of the coming-into-being of a collective utterance in a realm which is neither exclusively that of reality nor of the imagination but rather that of struggle. It was not an intrusion of reality into the imaginary, but an interruption that tore apart the collective formation of the cinematographic-armed, audiovisual-political resistance in the process of its becoming.

In other words, Black September put an end not only to *Jusqu'à la victoire* but also to the political modality from which it evolved. The events of Black September indeed signify a crucial turning point in the history of the Palestinian struggle. During September 1970, the Jordanian army attacked Palestinian guerrilla forces spread around the country – in refugee camps (such as Irbid and Baq'a), paramilitary bases (like Zarqa), and major cities (most significantly, their headquarters in Amman). The Hashemite Army of the Jordanian Army, using heavy armor, artillery and air strikes, killed thousands of Palestinian fighters (upwards of ten thousand, according to some accounts), in effect bringing the Palestinian liberation forces' sojourn on Jordanian soil to its end.[278] Ostensibly a response to a series of plane hijackings by George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the attacks were geared to end the extensive political and military Palestinian presence on Jordan's East Bank, which by 1970 posed a potential threat to the Hashemite minority rule of Jordan, a country with a significant Palestinian population. Bordering on the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and characterized by weak political rule, Jordan hosted most of the Palestinian leadership and guerilla forces after the June 1967 war, and it was from its territory that the Palestinian armed resistance launched many of its campaigns, such as the 1968 battle of Karameh.[279] The "civil war" in Jordan escalated due to the events of September 1970, which effectively eliminated the armed Palestinian presence there; by the end of 1971, most of the surviving Palestinian resistance forces had already moved to Lebanon.[280]

The Palestinian presence in Jordan through the 1960s was the defining – though later almost completely forgotten – moment of the Palestinian struggle. It is known as "the Palestinian revolution" [*al-thawra al-falistinyia*], a term repeatedly reiterated during the

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[278] Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949-1993* (Oxford: Clarendoon, 1997), esp. pp. 262-81.

[279] In March 1968, combat units of the Israeli Army crossed the Israeli-Jordanian border, entering the Karameh refugee camp in a military operation that was meant to put an end to Palestinian guerrilla attacks. However, the soldiers were ambushed and 25 of them were killed in what became one of the glorious moments the of Palestinian resistance, and (at least at the time) an important source of recruitment for the fighting forces.

[280] Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 224.

first minutes of *Ici et* ailleurs); as the time of "the revolutionary generation" [*jil al-thawra*]; or as "the time of the freedom fighter" [*waqt al-feday*], the era that consolidated the armed struggle as the center of Palestinian resistance.[281] Newly-founded Fatah, not yet recruited into the PLO (which was founded in 1964 and was considered a marginal organization until the 1970s), joined other left-wing Palestinian organizations – The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine among them – not to solidify a political plan for the liberation of Palestine but rather to organize paramilitary militia forces. Those numbered, by the end of the 1960s in Jordan alone, upwards of 10,000 full-uniform armed fighters. More than a struggle for national independence with the formation of a sovereign state as its ultimate goal, the Palestinian struggle of the 1960s was a radical-leftist revolutionary one: it was modeled on other anti-colonial movements such as the FLN in Algeria and the Mau Mau in Kenya; it was influenced by contemporary anti-colonial thought (almost all the fighters carried Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* in their pockets, or so the myth goes); and it stood in direct contact with other radical left-wing guerrilla groups (the IRA, the Japanese Red Army, the Italian Red Brigades, and the Red Army Faction, also known as the Baader-Meinhof "gang"). Many leftist groups and individuals indeed traveled to the Palestinian camps during these years – as an expression of solidarity, collaboration, political education, and training (the best-known being the Baader-Meinhof group, and Jean Genet, discussed at length in the next chapter). An integral part of a revolutionary wave sweeping the world in the 1960s (or at least , the global political imaginary), the Palestinian resistance quickly became the paradigmatic revolt of the downtrodden against the major political powers of the time: American Imperialism, Israeli militarism, and Nasser's authoritarian Pan-Arabism. Fatah's underground journal, *Filastinuna*, habitually carried this the call for an armed liberation struggle modeled on other Third World revolts and making use of the language of "revolution":

> Revolutions all over the world are inspiring us. The revolution in Algeria lights our way like a bright torch of hope. When the Algerians took up their revolution in 1954, they were only some hundred Arabs facing 20,000 French troops and well-armed settlers. […] The revolution in Algeria proved to us that a people can organize itself and build its military strength in the very process of fighting.[282]

While their particular political claims, plans and goals remained vague or undetermined (were they fighting for a Palestinian state between the river and the sea, recognizing only the rights of pre-1917 Jewish settlers? for one secular-democratic state for all inhabitants of Mandatory Palestine? for a Palestinian state alongside Israel in its pre-1967 borders?), the Palestinians' sheer revolutionary eros was perhaps the most the remarkable characteristic of their uprising, an uprising sometimes understood in terms of a metaphysical, indeed ontological, revolt.[283]

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[281] Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 2003), p. 243.

[282] *Filastinuna* 11 (November 1960), p. 3. Cited in Helga Baumgarten, "The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism 1948-2005," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34:4 (Summer 2005), p. 33.

[283] For a further discussion of the Palestinian struggle as a "metaphysical" revolt see Chapter Three.

It was this modality of the Palestinian revolt that was squelched in the early 1970s. With their forced move to Lebanon, the Palestinians changed their strategy, slowly entering into the intelligible realm of international politics. "From the mid-1970s onward," writes Rashid Khalidi, "PLO rhetoric had been increasingly focused on the establishment of a Palestinian state."[284] Indeed, in 1972 the Democratic Front initiated a political plan calling for the liberation of the Palestinian lands that Israel had occupied during the 1967 war. By 1974, following more than a year of internal negotiation between the different Palestinian organizations, a Ten Points Plan was unanimously accepted as the PLO's official political program. For the first time, the Palestinians officially talked about the establishment of an independent national entity while also implicitly recognizing the state of Israel. With this plan at his disposal, Yasser Arafat went to the UN in November 1974 and was received not as the commander of a revolutionary militia but a future head of state. Samera Esmeir regards Arafat's famous UN speech as a symbolic watershed moment separating an armed struggle waged by different groups of refugee-fighters to reclaim their lands and a struggle led by a political organization claiming to represent the entire Palestinian people over its right to statehood – a people gradually disciplined into the shape of a "civilized nation" within the family of nations.[285] In line with the general post-revolutionary mood of the mid- and late 1970s, throughout their sojourn in Lebanon (where they formed proto-governmental institutions known as a "state-within-a-state" or even "Fatahland"), the Palestinians' political pursuit of national independence became the core their cause. The fine balance between "the olive branch" and "the freedom fighter's gun," in Arafat's memorable formulation in his 1974 UN speech, was examined from that point on solely on the basis of its contribution to the national enterprise, i.e. the establishment of an independent sovereign state.[286]

This significant shift in the Palestinian modality of resistance at the beginning of the 1970s eventually resulted in a crucial historiographic bias: many current historical accounts of the Palestinian resistance tend to downplay its revolutionary period – and especially its non-statist political investments – narrating instead the Palestinian struggle in its entirety as a "struggle for statehood." By the same token, many of Godard's critics, Brody and MacCabe included, understand his work from late 1970s on, starting with the 1976 hour-long *Ici et ailleurs*, as a return to avant-garde cinematic

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Godard himself told Andrew Sarris in1970: "The Palestinians are the real Marxist revolutionaries, the disinherited of the earth, but they never speak of socialism and radicalism." *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews,* ed. David Sterritt (Mississipi: University Press of Mississipi, 1998), p. 56.

[284] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage,* p.158. This book, as can be readily inferred from its title, frames the Palestinian struggle as a struggle for a national, independent state. Consequently, it pays scant attention to those pre-1970s Palestinian revolutionary trajectories not necessarily aimed at statehood and definitely doesn't sympathize with them.

[285] Samera Esmeir, "Times of Engagement: International Strategies of Rule and Liberation Struggles," paper delivered at UC Berkeley, 5 May, 2010.

[286] This was the case at least as far as the hegemonic political discourse goes – from the mid 1970s through the 1988 Algiers Convention, the 1993 Oslo Accords and the formation of the Palestinian Authority. The horrific political developments of the past few decades may signify a dramatic change precisely in this tenet in the political discourse, a change which has definitely influenced the formulation of this very project.

production after a short detour through the desert of failed revolutions.[287] In both cases, revolutionary collective enunciation is papered over for the sake of a teleological-political or aesthetic narrative – the independent nation-state as the Palestinian struggle's only possible goal, and the master's cinematographic product (his "film") as the ultimate moment towards which his audiovisual corpus is geared. Within the framework of such a progressive-teleological narrative of initiation (into statist, liberal, civilized politics; into cultural, aesthetic, modernist production), the collective revolutionary experience can be either subsumed under the arch of the narrative (as a state-oriented struggle to begin with, as part of the master's oeuvre in the final account), or bracketed instead as an unfortunate historical accident (the turn to violence without any political plan, the turn to non-film and anti-art), from which one is in need of rescuing.[288]

In light of this political and aesthetic historiographical bias, I suggest a very different genealogy of both the Palestinian struggle and "Godard's" audiovisual enterprise. The turn from failed revolutionary struggle to politically-intelligible Palestinian statist claim – from the aborted *Jusqu'à la victoire* to the realized *Ici at ailleurs* – should be analyzed neither as a corrective move within a progressivist narrative nor as an accidental detour within a teleological one. If *Ici et ailleurs* was indeed made after the unrealized, abruptly interrupted "original" project of *Jusqu'à la victoire,* this interrupted project was, as I have already argued, in itself a project *of* interruption, i.e. aimed at ending cinema, cinematic authorship and cinematic form. *Ici et ailleurs* therefore serves as the Benjaminian afterlife of interruption itself; it manages to carry on a chain of failures, and is thus composed of recurring endings. Endings and failures are not easily eliminated from an otherwise progressivist historical account; they persistently recur, forming the very origin of a genealogical chain. What lingers after the failure of revolutionary collective enunciation may be the very transmission – in lieu of negation – of that enunciation as a failed one, a transmission calling for a genealogy of endings as interruptions, a genealogy of non-genealogical moments.

The film's very title and its few first seconds present the genealogical concept that informs *Ici et ailleurs*'s throughout. The title is construed around a gap between two notions – "ici" and "ailleurs" – brought together while also always being kept separate.

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[287] In his discussion of the film – the only extensive scholarly discussion of the film available, to the best of my knowledge, in the English language – John E. Drabinski articulates a more nuanced position regarding the cinematic afterlife of what started as a non-cinematic project: "In *Ici et ailleurs*, Godard, animated by the ethical cinema programmatically articulated in the late sixties and early seventies, enacts just that parricide in and to cinematic language, slaying film in order to let what remains – the ruin of image and sound – be haunted by a radical absence. In that haunting, we catch sight of what is perhaps Godard's best effort at stating, in cinematic language, the site and sight of heterology: the melancholic image." John E. Drabinski, *Godard Between Identity and Difference* (New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 49. Drabinski's Levinasian analysis, however, in which the Palestinian is doomed, no matter what, to remain the Other, is very different from the trajectory developed in my analysis here.

[288] The accident metaphor is not accidental here, since Godard had indeed had an accident, which put an end both practically and symbolically, to his Dziga-Vertov period.

The anti-dialectical conjunction "*et*" stresses the mode of movement enacted in this project not as a metabolizing form of mediation, but as the labor of multiple transformations, always punctuated through double occurrences. The film begins with a visual figure of a dramatically enlarged and constantly repeated signifier "et," like a mantra or a spell (a few years later, Godard was to write that "the real title of the film is *Et*, it is neither *Ici* nor *Ailleurs*").[289] But this duality is neither consecutive nor stable, and is dysfunctional on either the synchronic or the diachronic level. True, the *ici* and *ailleurs* might refer to the *here* of 1974 France versus the *elsewhere* of 1970 Palestine; the *here* of the editing process, in the aftermath of the struggle, versus the *elsewhere* of the revolutionary collective enunciation; the *here* of a working-class French family sitting in their living room and watching a television screen versus the *elsewhere* of the Palestinian fighters, shown on the television screen. But since all of these dual formations already appear as part of *Ici et ailleurs,* the workings of the film itself cannot be situated only on one side of the equation: the film is at once *ici* and *ici et ailleurs*. Perhaps more precisely, the film formulates its *ici* – its present time and place, its cinematic operation, its contemporary moment – in a relational modality that is neither unifying nor symmetrical; as Godard writes, the "*et*" is the only "*ici*" of the film.

What is then this "*ici*" which becomes an "*et,*" a deixis which becomes a conjunction? *Ici et ailleurs* is narrated in two voice-overs: Godard's and Anne-Marie Miéville's, the film's two directors. This newly-formed collaboration between the two – the first in a series of collaborations that continues to this day – positions the relation between these two narrating voices at the core of the "*ici*" of the film, while also embodying the afterlife of the collective enunciation of the film's "*ailleurs*", the unrealized *Jusqu'à la victoire*.[290] The end of the collective enunciation produced by the Dziga-Vertov group and the Palestinians does not result in a singular individual voice (that of the film as a discrete aesthetic work and its director as authorial origin), in an individual enunciation constituted in opposition either to the past collective revolt or to its present-time absence. Rather, *Ici et ailleurs* works out a mode of relationality formed by the collapse of collective enunciation – not as its abolishment but rather its transformation. The two voices heard in *Ici et ailleurs* are definitely individual ones, structured through various differences (most notably, the sexual), but these also enable the formation of what is not entirely an individuated enunciation (however failed its past experience and future prospects may be). The "*et*" of the film is thus also that of "Jean-Luc Godard *et* Anne-Marie Miéville" (as in one of the opening titles); together they both form the *ici* of the film precisely as the relationality of *ici* and *ailleurs*, of Miéville and Godard.

Let me now turn to the first moments of *Ici et ailleurs*. Within a few seconds, and through a thick orchestration of various registers, the film's genealogical gesture is exposed. The film begins with Godard's voice-over presenting the film's background, which is immediately followed by Miéville's own voice-over repeating Godard's words:

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[289] Quoted in Drabinski, *Godard,* p. 57. "[The film is] finally devoted to hat is between."
[290] Colin MacCabe stresses that "[t]he distinguishing feature of the Dziga-Vertov films is not therefore their collective production, which continued after the group's demise." MacCabe, *Godard*, p. 58.

> (Godard:) En 1970 ce film s'appellait *Victoire*. En 1974 il s'appelle *Ici et Ailleurs*. Et Ailleurs. Et ... (Miéville:) En 1970 ce film s'appellait *Victoire*. En 1974 il s'appelle *Ici et Ailleurs*. Et Ailleurs. Et ...[291]

On the level of the *énoncé*, these statements are a mere duplication; but on the level of *enunciation* the duplication serves as a transition and a conjunction, adding a second, other, even contrapuntal voice – through the "*et*" as a signifier of difference – to the film.[292] This other voice adds a second layer to the film: although identical in signification, it establishes a positional discrepancy that structures the entire film: echoing a split between what appears to be structurally parallel ("In 1970 this film was called *Victory* / in 1974 it is called *Here and Elsewhere*"), it nevertheless encapsulates a whole drama of failure, endings, and passage into the afterlife by a mere transition from one hemistich of the statement to the other. The levels of *énoncé* and *énonciation* not only oppose each other – the first signifying repetition, the second signifying difference – but simultaneously fold over each other, in a cyclical movement of a *mise-en-abîme*: the abyss between the two voices realizes an abyss which already exists in each of the voices – the gap between 1970 and 1974, and within 1974 itself, between *ici* and *ailleurs*. At the same time, this cyclical movement always tends towards the second hemistich – that of 1974, that of *Ici et ailleurs*, that of Anne-Marie Miéville's – as the counter-pole inhabiting the project's afterlife itself. Miéville's voice serves throughout the film as the more critical and pointed one, distancing itself from the original revolutionary project of the Dziga-Vertov group. It is no accident that her voice utters the concluding sentences of the film.[293] This movement toward the afterlife of the text is doubled at the register of the image during the first seconds of *Ici et ailleurs*, specifically in its relation to signification and sound. Throughout Godard's above-described statement, the visual material is emphatically of a signifying nature, hardly image-bound: a few signifiers appear on a completely black background (like that of a board or a writing pad):

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[291] *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 0.21. "(Godard): In 1970 this film was called *Victory*. In 1974 this film is called *Here and Elsewhere*. And Elsewhere. And.... (Miéville:) In 1970 this film was called *Victory*, in 1974 it is called *Here and Elsewhere*. And Elsewhere. And...."

[292] I follow Stefania Pandolfo's discussion of counterpoint in her "Testimony in Counterpoint: Psychiatric Fragments in the Aftermath of Culture," *Qui Parle* 17:1 (Fall/Winter 2008), esp. pp. 99-102. See also Theodor W. Adorno, "The Function of Counterpoint in Modern Music," in *Sound Figures*, trans. R. Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[293] See Kaja Silverman's understanding of Miéville's voice as the voice of truth, in Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking about Godard* (New York: NYU Press, 1998), pp. 180-82.
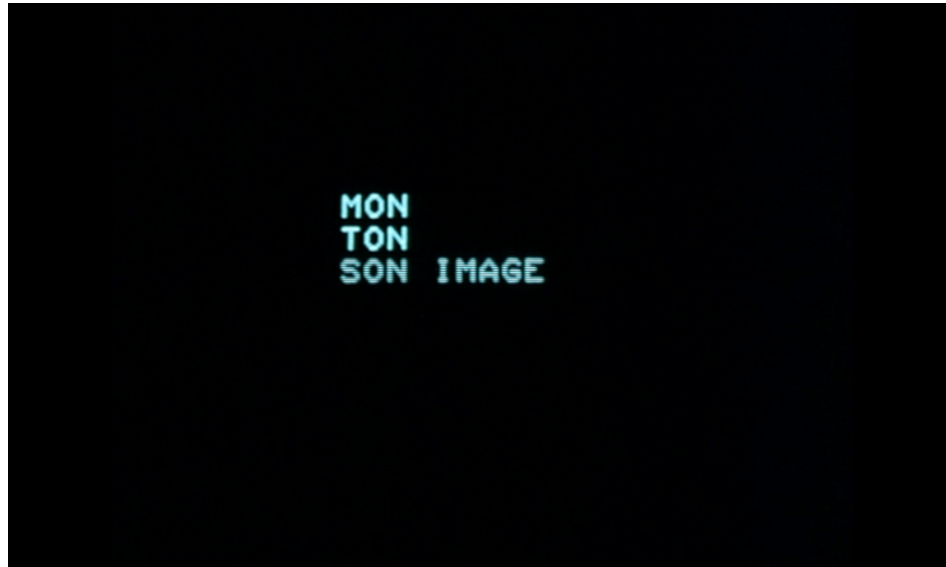
The two axes give sense to two different systems of meaning: The vertical charts the singular possessive pronouns ["my," "your," "his/her"], and the horizontal names the paradigmatic components of the cinematic apparatus combining "sound" and "image." While the vertical axis stays still, the horizontal one flickers, thus distinguishing between the axes while focusing on the horizontal one. What is made available through this construction is not only the juxtaposition of the two axes as yet another manifestation of the conjunction "*et*" – again, as before, duplicating the "*et*" which already implicitly exists within the domain of a single level, the horizontal one, through Godard's famous formulation "*son* et *image*" – but also the possible transformation of the "*son image*" from "sound image" to "his/her image." This transformation is formed as a Benjaminian translation exposing of the relationships between different languages[294] – the vertical axis being the original language, the horizontal that of translation, and significantly that of the audiovisual apparatus. In other words, even before the first proper image is shown, the vertical axis enables the transformation of the allegedly formal investments of cinema (sound-image) in questions regarding the possible claim of authorial ownership on the audiovisual production (his/her image).

Whose image are these – *mon, ton, ou son image*?[295] Bearing in mind Godard's voice-over which accompanies this text, this chain of possessives might stand for "Godard's, Miéville's, or the Palestinian fighter's image." But what might a possession of an image

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[294] "Translation... ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the innermost relationship of languages to one another." Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator." Selected Writings: Volume 1 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 255.

[295] In an influential text about the film, distributed during its 1977 screening in New York, Serge Daney wrote: "The impossibility of obtaining a new type of filmic contract has thus led [Godard] to keep (to retain) images and sounds without finding anyone to whom he can return them, restore them. Godard's cinema is a painful meditation on the theme of restitution, or better, of reparation. Reparation would mean returning images and sounds to those from whom they were taken."
http://kinoslang.blogspot.com/2009/01/preface-to-here-and-elsewhere-by-serge.html

even mean in this context – after the dispersal of the authorial revolutionary collectivity into only singular possessive pronouns, the post-factum remnants of a ruined collectivity in the form of undecidable possibilities for individuality? Furthermore, "Sonimage" was the name of Godard and Miéville's production company, founded in Grénoble in 1972: *Ici et ailleurs* was its first film.[296] It's also the film's opening title – on the threshold of the film as its conditions of production, i.e. precisely the historical problematics both structuring the film and developed in it.
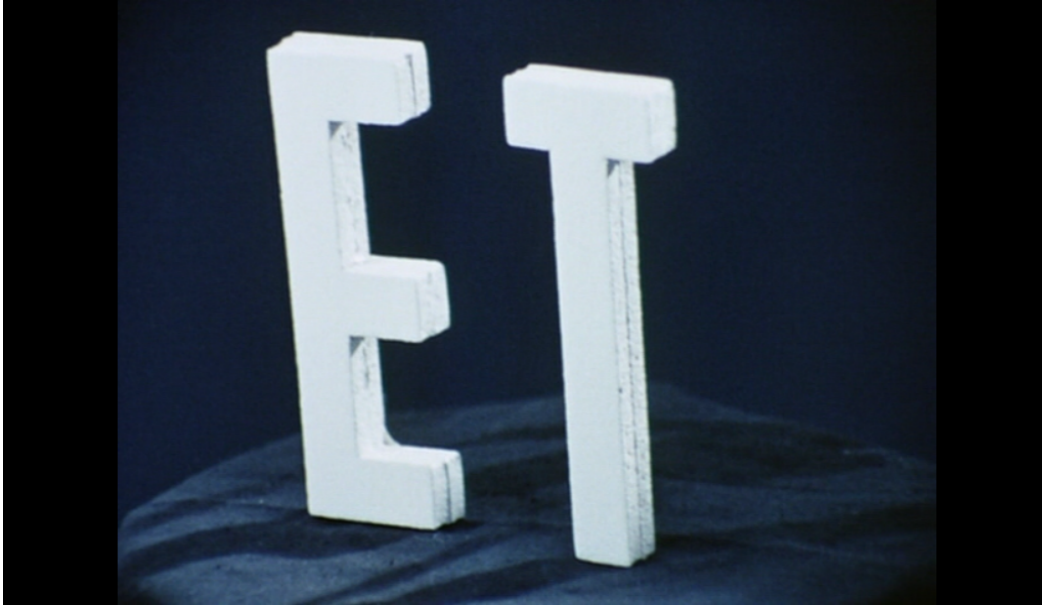
The film then turns to the first correspondence between sound and image, between what is heard and what is seen, between "his/her" image and the film's; and it is then also that the film silences Godard and his overdetermined signifiers, and turns to Miéville. With Miéville's voice-over, a flow of images appears for the first time on the screen: a female Palestinian fighter training, briskly drawing half-circles with her rifle, a French family sitting in its living room watching television, then back to the Palestinian fighters. These images tell the story of the "*et*" as that of a gap between two poles – moving from the active Palestinian struggle to the French family already in the passive position of spectators and back to the Palestinians being now constituted, through the traditional cinematic focalizing technique of shot/counter-shot, as the televised spectacle itself.

In a brilliant visual move, the first image of the Palestinian struggle in *Ici et ailleurs* opens onto a "visual archive" of what could be termed (sadly, only in English) "shooting images." The images presented, of guerillas shooting, is reminiscent of Godard's famous image of cinematic shooting at the beginning of his 1963 film, *Le mépris* (*Contempt*), depicting the cinematic apparatus as the carrier of a gaze ultimately

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[296] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* p. 375.

addressed at the spectators.[297] Another version of this image appears, for example, on the cover of Richard Brody's recent intellectual biography of Godard. And yet in modeling the image of the Palestinian fighter on the image of the cinematic camera, the Palestinian fighters are no longer only the already-objectified, ready-to-be-consumed objects of the French family's televised gaze. They also carry the gaze as that of the struggle – combining the audiovisual shooting and the guerrilla shooting – a collective gaze which, however dead, appears as a trace of that struggle, at once objectified (in the return to the cinematic form) and non-objectified (in challenging this form).

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[297] See Christian Metz's influential analysis in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Indiana: Indiana University Press. 1986).
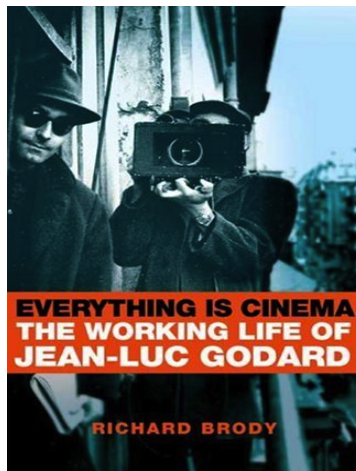
Thus, Miéville's pole, the pole of the flow of image, of the alleged return to the moving pictures (as the common critical narrative goes), of the *ici*, embeds nonetheless the shooting collective as an image directed at the spectators – either the French family or the spectators of *Ici et ailleurs* – as the still potent afterlife of the struggle; it is precisely as an image of *ici, ici* as *et, Ici et ailleurs,* that this struggle is still performed.

The "et" in this film thus signifies a very different operation than the accumulation of images that was supposed to be at the heart of *Jusqu'à la victoire* (as they are presented at the beginning of *Ici et ailleurs)*: "La volonté du peuple plus La lutte armée plus Le travail politique plus Le guerre prolongée Jusqu'à la victoire [The People's Will plus The Armed Struggle plus The Political Work plus The War Prolonged Until Victory]."[298] The linear, teleological narrative of resistance – from an already-existing people, to struggle, politics, actual fighting, finally leading to victory – is expressed here in five consecutive images, one added to the other, one following the other, resulting in a movement towards (*jusque*) an end, with "victory" being the ultimate "end." *Jusqu'à la victoire* was part of this revolutionary effort, an enterprise placed within a movement aiming toward / until victory.[299] *Ici et ailleurs* is set as a reflection on the failure of this teleological accumulation, elaborated later in the film as "erreurs d'addition," the mistake of adding one revolutionary image to the other – from the 1917 Soviet revolution to the 1936 popular front, to 1968 Paris, striving to the last, final revolution; this "chaîne des images" is revealed as emphatically Eurocentric, as constituting the image of the future revolution exclusively from images of European revolutions. The "chain of images" is presented within the logic of capitalism as an endless accumulation of imaginary-revolutionary capital; its goal is to become "millionaires en images des revolutions."

Both the "*et*" of disjunction (this and that, this *versus* that, *either* this *or* that) and the "et" of accumulation (this *plus* that *plus* that) are replaced with a different "*et*" – that of transformation, of repetitive interruption, of a recurrent passage to the afterlife; this "*et*" is not that of combination, association or negation, writes Deleuze about *Ici et ailleurs*, but "it is a method of BETWEEN, 'between two images', which does away with the cinema of the One. It is a method of AND, 'this and then that', which does away with all the cinema of Being = is."[300] *Ici et ailleurs* presents the space of *ici* cum *et*, the space

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[298] *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 6.02.

[299] Thus *Jusqu'à la victoire* is not the end but the movement itself. It is interesting in that respect that Godard and Miéville both say, in this passage, that "this film was called *Victoire*" rather than *Jusqu'à la victore;* as if *Jusqu'à la victoire* cannot be the name given to that "film," only the telos of the revolutionary movement in which it takes part.

[300] Delueze, *Cinema 2*, p. 180. Deleuze develops an argument concerning *Ici et ailleurs* that was to become crucial to him and Guattari in their critique of oedipal thinking: instead of the absent One, the phallus, which structures the exclusive disjunction of sexual differentiation (male vs. female) and the different reactions to it, Deleuze and Guattari have called for an inclusive disjunction (*either* that, *or* that, *or* that...) which refuses the binary positions in relation to an omnipotent One. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), esp. pp. 75-78. The AND of *Ici at ailleurs* serves here for Deleuze as the marker of this inclusive disjunction: non-oppositional differentiation.

that sets the contemporary moment as a double punctuation of two images, two voices, two periods: "En 1974 il s'appelle *Ici et Ailleurs*. Et Ailleurs. Et ... [In 1974 it was called *Here and Elsewhere*. And Elsewhere. And...]." In Godard's voice, immediately later duplicated with Miéville's, the "*et*" indeed literally becomes equivalent to the film's title: the sentence which starts with "*Ici et ailleurs*" ends with the "*et*." But this "et" also stands for the ongoing movement of, and within, this counter-text of 1974, a post-revolutionary effort that has victory behind it, not ahead of it, and is therefore written not so much in the language of teleological growing, but rather in a repetitive language which folds over itself as it unfolds. The 1976 film entails this drama of relationality of "here and elsewhere," *ici et ailleurs*, as they inform the film's contemporary time of the "*et.*"[301]

In this respect, *ailleurs* is precisely *not* the opposite of *ici*; the latter should have been "there" [*là, là-bas*], and not "elsewhere" [*ailleurs*].[302] Rather, if *ici* is the 1976 film understood as the space of the *et,* "between two images," then *ailleurs* is the past to the extent that it is being reconfigured in that space of the *et*, in *Ici et ailleurs* itself; if the *ici cum et* of *Ici et ailleurs* is the afterlife of a certain revolutionary modality, *ailleurs* is that modality both already past and transformed into the space of *Ici et ailleurs*. This "elsewhere" stands as an indefinable alterity, not only relational and so mutually constitutive. Within the domain of the *et, ailleurs* is simultaneously the past of the interrupted Palestinian revolution – "Ailleurs. Fevrier, juillet 1970. Ailleurs, Jordanie, Liban, Syrie. Ailleurs [Elsewhere. February, July 1970. Elsewhere, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria]" – on which the 1976 film is based and which the interrupted past the film nevertheless transmits onward. In other words, if *ailleurs* also means the other realm, i.e. death, then how is death – now brought into the *ici* of the film – to be renegotiated to exist both as an image and between the images? And if it is the death of the Palestinian fighters in the events of Black September, in what way is it inscribed into a post-revolutionary audiovisual and political project?

3. Death and the Image

Ici et ailleurs revolves around the passage to death: in a repeated sequence, images of Palestinian fighters training in the refugee camps are interrupted by an image of a dead Palestinian fighter. Godard's voice-over follows the sequence: "Parce-que ceci... ceci... ceci... est devenu cela. Ou parce-que cela... cela... cela... est devenu ceci. [Because this... this... this.. became that. Or because that.. that... that.. became this.]" This becoming-of-death in the form of a recurring interruption possesses and conditions the film: without September 1970 there would have been a film such as *Ici et ailleurs*, while

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[301] The near homophone "est" [is] – *Ici est ailleurs* – further complicates the disjunctive relation between "ici" and "ailleurs": what are the conditions under which the "ici" (1976, the film, the afterlife of collective enunciation) can indeed be equivocated to the "ailleurs"(1969-70, the audio-visual enterprise, collective enunciation)?

[302] Drabinski also discusses this shift from the binary opposition "here-there"; p. 60.

after September 1970 it becomes unclear whether such a film is even possible. What "happened" as a result of – or after – Black September was the Palestinian fighters' death (and with them, the end of a certain modality of the Palestinian struggle and of an audiovisual enunciation); and what "became" of it was a deadly, if not deadening, image of that death. At this crucial moment in *Ici et ailleurs*, the image of the dead Palestinian fighter is painted in overwhelming blue shades, as if it were a photographic document extricated from some forsaken archive, his wounded face filling the screen, the entire image immobile for a few seconds with only the words "Amman September 1970" flickering over the dead body – in total opposition to the previous sequence of vital paramilitary and political activity, energized through quick editing. Inanimate corpse and immobile image are tied here together. Godard's declaration following this dead cinematic moment, "Presque tous les acteurs sont morts [Almost all of the actors are dead]," uses the rich semantic content of "acteurs" to further signify this passage to death: The Palestinians were not merely actors in any cynical cinematic theater, docile participants in an aesthetic apparatus, but agents of action, the ones who act in the revolutionary struggle. Their death was thus necessarily an end of a certain movement, a halt in a movement of political/audiovisual activity; this moment appears in *Ici et ailleurs* as an image of death and a deadly image.

The Palestinian *fedayeen*'s death in *Ici et ailleurs* also serves as a reflection on the medium through which such death is shown. Indeed, from its inception the cinematic medium was supposed to undo the deadening effect of the stable, static photographic image. Whereas photographic operation cuts reality off – the moving, developing continuum of action becomes a series of decontextualized moments, instant eternities – cinema returned to the reality of movement, rescuing the image's indexicality from the desert of deadly immobility. "Cinema is objectivity in time," wrote André Bazin, "[t]he image of things is the image of their duration, change mummified."[303] Binding image to

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[303] André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema? Vol. 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 9.

movement, moving pictures could finally provide a consecutive narrative in images based on the deeds of a protagonist-qua-actor who causes change in a storyline and whose image-in-change lies at the center of the medium. Cinema becomes, according to Deleuze, "a world where IMAGE = MOVEMENT... Every thing, that is to say every image, is indistinguishable from its actions and reactions."[304] Cinema, in other words, is both realistic "correction" to photography (infusing action into the artificially static image) and fetishistic/ontological "correction" to theater (action is projected onto the screen as if taking place at the very moment of screening). However, Deleuze suggests that cinematic production itself was going through a dramatic change to the opposite at the exact same time Bazin was formulating its "ontological realism." Post-World War II neo-modernist cinema stopped being the medium of narrative movement in image and sound, gradually becoming "an analytic of the image:"[305] a reflexive project, which rather than tying together all audiovisual tools into a narrative movement of action, separates, concentrates on, and analyzes "the purely optical and sound situations," "as if the action floats in the situation, rather than bringing it in to a conclusion or strengthening it."[306] According to Deleuze, rather than breathe life into the image, cinema engages in a critical endeavor whose object is the image itself, and thus it presumably reinforces the objective status of the static image.

Letter to Jane, Godard and Gorin's short film from 1972, epitomizes this tendency, (some would say, *ad absurdum*).[307] In their last collaborative work, after the Dziga-Vertov group had already fallen apart, the two directors turn to a single photograph of Jane Fonda in Vietnam, giving it an almost hour-long dialogic interpretation. Nothing but one still image blocked from time to time by a black screen is shown throughout the film, accompanied by the voices of the two directors engaged in critical discourse, scrutinizing Fonda's hypocrisy in her superstar anti-war political stance in Vietnam. When one bears in mind that only a few months prior, Godard and Gorin had directed Fonda (alongside Yves Montand) in Dziga-Vertov's last project, *Tout va bien, Letter to Jane* may indeed signify a decisive shift to cinema as "an analytic of the image." The moving picture is replaced with one still, and in lieu of consecutive narrative the film turns into one long cynical and pitiless critical reflection on the pitfalls of First World leftist political engagement with anti-colonial struggles in the Third World.

However, seen through the reactionary sexual politics underpinning this essay-film – two male directors, themselves First World leftist "superstars," who exercise their intellectualized discourse from the no-place of a voice-over gazing at, penetrating into, and ultimately destroying, a speechless image of a female actress – the critical, reflexive analytic of the image in *Letter to Jane* is drawn from the process of

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[304] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 58.

[305] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 22.

[306] Ibid,. p. 19 and p. 4 respectively.

[307] *Letter to Jane*. Jean-Luc Godard et Jean-Pierre Gorin (France, 1972). 52 min., b/w and col. Significantly enough, the text of this film, published at the same year in its entirety in Tel Quel (n. 52, hiver 1972), is titled: "Enquête sur une image."

objectification itself, rooted in the voyeuristic and fetishistic tendencies of the cinematic medium; it treats both the image and the figure in it as mute objects of a destructive apparatus.

Ici et ailleurs proposes a totally different "analytic of the image" than that of the already-dead photograph in *Letter to Jane,* while simultaneously also veering away from Deleuze's suggested analytic, which is centered around a "crystal image" that combines past and present in one moment (replacing the developing movement of classic cinematic narrative, this is an image of "the vanishing limit between the immediate past which is already no longer and the immediate future which is not yet," an image of eternal contemporaneity as the ultimate critical locus).[308] Indeed, the "flow of images" presented at the very start of *Ici et ailleurs* declares nothing but the Palestinians' passage to death – these "actors" in an audiovisual-political revolutionary enterprise are soon to die and, appearing at the beginning of the film as already-dead. The contemporaneity of the collective enunciation in *Jusqu'à la victoire* becomes, in *Ici et ailleurs,* an already-past, failed – even dead to a certain extent – revolutionary modality, which far from binding past to present actually exposes the rift between the two. *Ici et ailleurs* presents this transformation from the contemporaneous to the already-lost – "Parce-que ceci... ceci... ceci... est devenu cela" – as a *devenir* of death (to use the Deleuzian idiom against the grain): the becoming-dead of the actors in an interrupted revolutionary modality. In *Ici et ailleurs*, both the explicit and implicit analytic of the image takes the form of this transmission of interruptions:

> Presque tous les acteurs sont morts. / Le film a filmé les acteurs en danger de mort. / Le mort est represent̩ au film par un flot d'images. / Un flot d'images et de sons qui cachent du silence. / Un silence qui devient mortel parce qu'on l'empêche de s'en sortir vivant. / Peut-être que dans mille et un jours Scheherzade racontera cela autrement.[309]

These statements, uttered by Godard and written in blue over a black screen, are accompanied, in the intervals between one sentence and another, with images from the time of struggle: organizational gatherings, fighters walking in their guerilla warfare gear and cleaning their rifles, villagers working in the fields, and so on. These critical statements – analyzing the image while themselves remaining image-free – interrupt the flow of images; they are anchored in a time when this flow of revolutionary images is actually no longer possible. But the interruption in fact already occurs within the images themselves: "a flow of images and sounds that hide silence;" silence already exists within the continuum of images to begin with, and is thus only being teased out by the analytic of the image written after the fact on the black screen. The interrupting "silence" of the empty screen becomes a silence-effect imposed on one series of images – a

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[308] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 81.

[309] *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 9.05. "Almost all actors are dead. / The actors in the film were filmed in danger of death. / Death is represented in the film by a flow of images. / A flow of images and sounds that hide silence. / A silence that becomes deathly because it is prevented from coming out alive. / Maybe in a thousand and one days Scheherzade will tell this differently."

rowdy gathering of Palestinians in a village, suddenly muted via editing – which then becomes a silence already shaping the 1970 footage itself: the fighters lying in ambush, waiting to fight the enemy in complete silence, leaving an empty aural register open entirely to the twittering of birds and the hum of the wind. The relative silence of *Ici et ailleurs* brings out the 'hidden silence' already structuring the revolutionary time of *Jusqu'à la victoire*; the death of the fighters hovers over all of their "actions." The present-time interruption opens up a genealogy of past interruptions, of the past as an archive of interruptions: after all, it is the flow of images itself that "represents" death, the death of the struggling "actors" – the end of the revolutionary image.

However, *Ici et ailleurs* exposes not only the already-dead moment of the audiovisual political revolutionary path – its own death as well as the path of recurring death it marks; it also proposes the critical work that will transform the deadly into some other thing. If such a silence "becomes deadly because it is prevented from coming out alive," then externalizing that silence – opening up a genealogy of deadly silence within the revolutionary effort itself – may carve out a different way for Scheherezade ("Maybe in a thousand and one days Scheherezade will tell this differently"). Indeed, acting "in danger of death," the Palestinian fighters resemble the fabled Persian queen who postponed her own death each night by telling King Shahryar her stories; both the character and the ultimate storyteller of an oral collection of stories which has been subject to numerous transformations, Scheherazade, like the Palestinian fighters, is an actor/narrator in an effort of collective (un-subjective, not individuated) enunciation, crafting an uninterrupted flow of speech (sounds and images) which is also punctuated by the danger of death (the silent danger of death and silence as danger of death). For ages, Scheherazade's stories have served as some of the most prominent allegories for the anesthetizing/liberating allure of the artistic narrative in their ability to continuously defer, and finally overturn, a death-sentence. But *Ici et ailleurs* asks what could be the mode of narration after the thousand and one nights are over – when the danger of death no longer structures it – not because there is no death in sight but precisely because it is hidden no more, but rather externalized as a silence that "comes out alive." How would Schehrezade tell her story of enunciating interruptive silences – and tell it otherwise (*autrement*), perhaps (*peut-être*)? What would be the image of such a recurring interruption – what, if at all, would it look like?

Ici et ailleurs may be seen as that story told by a Palestinian Scheherazade on the thousand and second night: no longer that history she both enacted and narrated – a history of struggle conditioned by the danger of death deferred and avoided – it is now a post-history of a post-story where death is no more that singular, ultimate, un-crossable boundary, but indeed a recurring, interruptive occurrence. The film starts with the image of the Palestinian fighter's body, not as the end point of an inverted narratological movement (that is, as a foreshadowing) but rather as an analysis of a space already saturated with death and its images. As such, *Ici et ailleurs* refuses to follow many modernist formulations of the image-death relationship, in which death is either the internal or the external boundary of imaginary labor. In Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-*

Philosophicus (1929), for example, the image/picture (*das Bild*) is a model for the organization of reality as a continuous set of facts – both the form in which the world appears and the subjective mental representation of it. As such, "[t]he world and life are one" and "[d]eath is not an event of life. It is not lived through" [Der Tod ist kein Ereignis des Lebens. Den Tod erlebt man nicht.].[310] Death, like the limits of our subjective vision, is not apparent in the image of the world we first constitute and then perceive; it is the event delimiting image-like life and therefore in no way part of it. These assertions, written as a direct response to Heidegger's 1926 *Sein und Zeit* and using Heideggerian language while negating it, are in fact somewhat close to the phenomenological language of Da-sein's life-towards-death. And it is indeed this phenomenological sensitivity – albeit an affective phenomenology, one filled with sentiment, desire, and mourning[311] – that leads Roland Barthes many decades later to inscribe death into the working of photography. Barthes does so with his idea of the *punctum* – not only one unexpected, shocking, penetrative, wounding detail in a photograph, but indeed the photographic deadly temporality itself; the ontological "ça-a-été" of the photographic image – a vacillation between the photograph of a living figure (when taken) and the figure's potential state of death (when the photograph is perceived), with the image portraying death as "un catastrophe qui a déjà eu lieu."[312] Death is thus what Barthes's photographic image always gestures toward, indicates, refers to, as that which "will have happened," in the photographic time of the *futur anterior* – without, however, being shown as such within the image. This formulation has recently enabled Judith Butler to theorize an argument for the "grievability of life" as the precondition of life, one that is discovered retrospectively through the temporality instituted by the photograph itself. "'Someone will have lived' is spoken within the present, but it refers to a time and a loss to come. Thus the anticipation of the past underwrites the photograph's distinctive capacity to establish grievability as a precondition of a knowable human life – to be haunted is precisely to apprehend that life before precisely knowing it."[313] The death within the photographic image, the death towards which the image points, which hovers over it, nevertheless signifies the limit of the image, unattainable and thus unfigurable in it, a condition or precondition of life; it remains, as in Sheherezade's first thousand and one nights, *the danger of death as the structuring element of life* working to defer the death-sentence that "will-have-come."

The image in *Ici et ailleurs,* by contrast, does not anticipate death as a loss-to-come, the melancholic condition of life yet to be lived. The image that opens the film (the dead Palestinian fighter) does not exclude death or move towards it; nor is it surrounded or

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[310] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* 2.12., 5.621 6.4311.Wittgenstein's formulation here is interesting: "Our life is endless in the way that our visual field is without limit." It conveys the necessarily subjective viewpoint from which the visual field is limitless, and life endless; without the subject, death – as an experience – does not exist at all.

[311] Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), pp. 40-42.

[312] Ibid,. p. 150.

[313] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: Is Life Grieveable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 98. Butler takes Barthes's "will have died" and inverts it to a "will have lived" – so that "livable life" is conditioned inversely and backward, from its state of loss.

preconditioned by it, indicating without showing it. It is rather an image of a dead figure, of the figure of death, which from that moment on populates the film. *Ici et ailleurs* ceaselessly returns to the image of death; indeed, the image of the dead Palestinian fighter is reflected, at the end of the film, by an image simultaneously distant and intimate, recognized and unimaginable – that of "the living dead," "the staggering corpse," the Muselmann.[314] Decades before Giorgio Agamben made it one the most pointed metonymies for our time, for the state of exception becoming the rule in the post-1945 world, *Ici et ailleurs* had presented the Muselmann – the Jew, the Palestinian, the Muslim – at the core of the relation between death and the image. The image of the Muselmann appears in one of the last scenes of the film, flickering on the working class French family's television screen, in a shot/counter-shot technique, seemingly as part of a French television show "about" the Holocaust.

These haunting images – of human bodies (still alive? already dead?) thrown into a mass grave – are being commented upon by Miéville, always in a counterpoint to the televised discourse (transcribed here in parentheses):

> (Les crimes contre l'humanité: Cette fois, on va franchir les portes de l'enfer.)

> Pas trop de grandes phrases. J'ai remarqué une chose, tu sais, en lisant des livres sur des camps de concentration. Quand les déportés ne pouvaient pas plus debout, ils n'étaient plus bons à rien, en dernier étape de déchéance physique, un déporté est appellé un musulman.

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[314] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 41.

(Douze millions d'hommes, de femmes, et d'enfants ont été déportés, neuf millions étaient morts, pour six millions d'entre-eux, leur seul crime était d'être juif.)

Voila donc un juif dans un tel état que les SS appelle un musulman.[315]

What starts as a television show presenting the figure of the Muselmann to the French audience – in a scene conflating the civilizing mission of educating, state-run television with the *ennui* of its viewers – becomes, through Miéville's voice-over, a counter-discourse invoking the problematics of the image as it relates to the Jewish question, the question of Palestine, or, simply put, the Semites.[316] Miéville begins her commentary with the books from which she gathered the notion, or maybe the name, of the Muselmann; these are most likely the books of testimonies from the camps – Jean Améry's, Primo Levi's – that the European intelligentsia of the time read, the same books Agamben himself would comment upon later. By the end of the scene, however, this name – drawn from textual sources – is visually realized when Miéville points to the images on the screen as the direct referents of the "Muselmann": "Voila donc... un musulman." But this very act of naming the images is in fact twice estranged, first by channeling the act of naming made by the SS and then in its paradoxical underpinning – calling the Jews, on the verge of their death, Muslims ("Voila donc un juif dans un tel état que les SS appelle un musulman").[317] So that in contradistinction to the "pompous" declaration of the television show (reported in a free indirect style), "leur seul crime était d'être juif," and bearing in mind another image of a "staggering corpse" presented not only at the beginning of film but also just a few seconds before this scene – the body of the Palestinian fighter, himself a "Muselmann" – *Ici et ailleurs* asks, very much like Agamben and later on Gil Anidjar, who was – who could be – this Muslim/Muselmann?

However, the Muselmann had been an image all along: "[I]f I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me," writers Primo Levi; "This image was the origin of the term used at Auschwitz for people dying of malnutrition: Muslims," say Ryn and Klodzinski; and, in Agamben's words, "perhaps only now, almost fifty years later, is the Muslemann becoming visible."[318] The question of the Muselmann thus becomes that of the analytic of the image anchored in the Muselmann, or the Muselmann as an image, indeed the image of the Jewish-Palestinian

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[315] *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 45.32. "(Crimes against humanity: This time the gates of heaven will be passed.) OK, Not too many pompous sentences. I noticed something, you know, while reading books about concentration camps. Whenever the prisoners couldn't stand on their feet, and were no longer good for anything, at the last stage of physical decay, then, a prisoner was called a Muselmann. (Twelve million men, women, and children were deported, nine million were dead. For six million of them, their only crime was being Jewish.) Here, then, is a Jew reduced to such a state that the SS called a Muslim [Musulmann]."

[316] And see Gil Anidjar, "Muslims," in *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 113-149.

[317] In Agamben's famous provocative phrasing: "the Jews knew that they would not die at Auschwitz as Jews." Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 45.

[318] Ibid, pp. 43, 44, 52.

Muselmann. What would that image look like? The Muselmann (who, according to Primo Levi, saw the Gorgon) becomes "unbearable to human eyes:" s/he circulates invisibility itself, beyond any subject-object focalized distinction, as "one gaze."[319] The invisibility entangled with the Muselmann as such – "the persistent invisibility of that word (an invisibility that is all the more remarkable given its dissemination)"[320] – could, however, be ascribed not only to a linguistic register (the impossibility of bearing witness, or the inapparent but expansive signifier of the "Muselmann" itself); but indeed to a rupture in the imaginary realm itself. The *Muselmänner* as *Figuren* – dolls, corpses not brought to burial, figures stripped of any dignity – might very well be the figures opening up the audiovisual modality of *Ici et ailleurs.* These "unfigured" figures, thoroughly unimaginable, where the human disappears into the inhuman, the Jew as Muslim, are the soon-to-be-"dead actors" that *Ici et ailleurs* strives to bring onto the screen – those who could not die a proper death, death as the finite limit of life, and thus keep hanging on, as a cadaverous presence, in the other night to which this film finally strives: the appearance of the failure to appear as the repetitive movement of interruptive moments.

In figuring the unfigured Muselmann, *Ici et ailleurs* works precisely against the fantasy of "the flow of image" and the apparatus of television which produces and circulates it. As an apparatus for the accumulation of images, television operates within the confines of a capitalistic economy where the goal is to become, in Godard's own words in this film, "millionaires in revolutionary images;" as an apparatus for a worldwide distribution of images, always in close relations with the unequal distribution of political and economic power, television also circulates the Orientalist framework through which these images will be consumed. Footage of television broadcasts of the kidnapping of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games - juxtaposed with footage of a lynching committed in France, by "juifs orientaux" against Palestinians suspected of terrorism – explores this blurring of the necessarily imperialist narrative into which the flow of images is written (the Palestinian "terrorists" in 1972), as well as the Orientalist imagination, with its constant search for "the non-European" (the Oriental Jews). The familiar, familial, popular, allegedly democratic apparatus of television – and Godard's declared enemy from the 1970s onward[321] – manages to control this flow of images, alongside the Muselmann's image popping on the screen, under a coherent narrative in which the amassed images meanings are stabilized. In *Ici et ailleurs*, the Muselmann then appears not only as the object of an Orientalist gaze – the ultimate figure of the

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[319] Levi: "The Gorgon and he who has seen her and the Muselmann and he who bears witness to him are one gaze; they are a single impossibility of seeing." Quoted in Agamben, *Remnanats*., p. 54. On non-focalized circulation, see Chapter One.

[320] Anidjar, *The Jew*, p. 142.

[321] See, for example, his 1986 short film *Meetin' W. A.* [Meeting Woody Allen], where the main axis of the conversation between the two directors is the influence of television on cinema. At one point Godard even says that the power of television is like that of radioactivity – it affects the making of films. *Meetin' W. A.* Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1986). 60 min., Eastmancolor. In the 1988 Cannes Festival, when closely approached by a television cameraman while giving a press conference, Godard passionately reacted: "This is the enemy. Not the man himself, but the culture... The way they shoot me is disgusting...." http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGG61dzoxKs

non-European within a visual procedure which is highly European. Instead of a figure set within the accumulation of images aiming at a documentary truth or a historical narrative, the Muselmann, positioned on the recurring threshold of death, becomes visible as that which cannot be thoroughly seen and potentially forms a rupture in the imaginary realm: with the Muselmann, the film forms a critique aimed not only at the televisual apparatus, but also at an entire notion of the image.

4. The Image of the Palestinian Revolution

I have analyzed *Ici et ailleurs* as a study in the afterlife of the revolutionary modality in the Palestinian struggle. Granted, the film records an interruption in that revolutionary modality – the bloody events of Black September and the death of "almost all the actors" – but it simultaneously refuses to abide by the hegemonic narrative of the Palestinian struggle, according to which this interruptive moment at the beginning of the 1970s led to the consolidation of the Palestinian cause as a struggle for self-rule in the form of the establishment of a sovereign, independent state. Insisting on recurring moments of interruption, on the counter-history recounted by Scheherzade of the thousand and second night and on the unimaginable image of the Muselmann, *Ici et ailleurs* inaugurates an alternative potential *transmission* of that Palestinian revolutionary modality. So if, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the Palestinian revolution was at its core an anti-colonial struggle against global and regional superpowers (the U.S., Israel and to a certain extent, Egypt); and against the great ideologies of the time (capitalist neo-imperialism and belated territorial colonialism), then its afterlife would resist alignment with these very forces in order to gain better intelligibility in international politics, aiming instead to continue on an anti-colonial trajectory. The afterlife of the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle results – as suggested in *Ici et ailleurs* – in an anti-colonial critique of the accumulation of images-as-capital in the television of the Empire and of the Orientalist gaze constituting the non-European Muselamnn as its prototypical object. In this sense, *Ici et ailleurs* works as a critique of the European imaginary order, which finds its ultimate manifestation in the televised "uninterrupted chains of images enslaving one another," an order whose genealogy is however much older, going all the way back to the cinematic "*son et image.*" The unassailable figure of the semitic Muselmann, persistently situated on the disruptive threshold of that cinematic image, launches this mode of critique.

The critique of the accumulated flow of images is sanctioned in *Ici et ailleurs* through the film's insistence on video. *Ici et ailleurs* was the first among Godard's films using this medium as their main production technique, launching "Les années vidéo" which would culminate in the 1998 magnum opus, *Histoire(s) du cinema*.[322] The ascent of video in the 1960s as a simple, affordable, individual and "democratic" shooting technique

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[322] See "Les années video," in Bergala, Alain, ed. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, tome 1: 1950-1984*. (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1988).

initially aroused a skeptical response in Godard: he saw the wide distribution of the apparatus as yet another modality in the production and circulation of images, more ideological than democratic, like the television making its users "millionaires in images" and poor in revolutionary ideas. But even back then, in the late 1960s and early -70s, a certain sense of wonder accompanied this total rejection of video, informed by a certain potentiality for cessation embedded in the apparatus itself: "We are puzzled by it," said Jean-Pierre Gorin in 1972; and Godard added, "if you can grab it [the video camera] more easily, maybe you can put it down more easily and think about it better".[323] From that moment on – until Godard and Youssef Ishaghpour's conceptualization of *Histoire(s) du cinema* as "a thinking form"[324] – video became, for Godard, more and more dissociated from the processes of shooting, recording, production and distribution of audiovisual materials and taken rather as a mode of editing, hence of belated mediation, transformation, and critique, a constant re-visitation of the audiovisual archive and therefore a modality of history-writing – the history of cinema included.[325] Video as an editing technique became the way to resist the immediate and uninterrupted accumulative character of television: instead of one-time showing without reserve, the use of video was invested in the work of reconfiguration. Even in its embryonic form in Godard's films – when the (fictional) Maoists employ video cameras in *La chinoise* (1967) or when the Dziga-Vetrov group gives them to the Palestinian fighters during the shooting of *Juaqu'à la victoire* (1969-1970) – it is quickly transformed into an editing apparatus used not for some liberal "focalizing" end ("one should really shoot oneself") but rather for the transformative imperative of the revolutionary cause ("one should edit reality oneself").[326] In a 1975 interview, Godard explains, without explicitly mentioning video, the motivation behind the his turn "to make other films":

> Faire d'autres films, c'est vivre le travail de faire un film autrement, tant économiquement que psychologiquement. C'est partir de là où on est plutôt que de là où on n'est pas. Ce n'est par dire: "Je vais voir ce qui se passe au Portugal," c'est prendre durement le temps de dire: "Je suis parti d'ici, et voilà ce que cet ailleurs m'apporte, ou m'enlève, ici."[327]

Godard is resisting the very logic of the television broadcast – that of making something seen in a place where it is not *as if* it were there, thus flattening the time/space

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[323] Sterritt, pp. 65-6.

[324] Jean-Luc Godard and Youssef Ishaghpour, *Cinema:The Archeology of Film and the Memory of a Century*, trans. John Howe (New York: Berg, 2005), p. 3.

[325] Ibid, esp. pp. 31-9.

[326] "I remember when I tried to use one of the first video outfits made by Philips in '67 in *La Chinoise*. I wanted the characters to shoot themselves and then use the footage for self-criticism." (Godard cited in MacCabe, *Godard: Image, Sounds, Politics,* p. 133).

[327] Jean-Luc Godard, "Faire les films possibles là où on est." Entertien réalisé par Yvone Baby Le Monde, 25 Septembre 1975. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 385. "Making other films means living the work of making films otherwise, economically as well as psychologically. It means leaving where one is the most for where one isn't. It is not saying: 'I am going to see what happens in Portugal'; it is rather taking the time to say: 'I departed from here, and here is what this elsewhere brought to me, here.'"

difference with the (fetishistic) illusion of visual presentation. He endorsed, instead, a different logic, one based on a dynamic yet unbridgeable gap between a "here" that doesn't exist anymore (from which the "I" departs) and an "elsewhere" that brings something to the "here." Indeed, he uses, in the above-quoted passage, the very words "*ici*" and "*ailleurs*" – and implicitly the un-mediating, non-dialectical "*et*" between them – in laying out his interest in video as a technique of belated editing rather than as a means of showing or making-seen. The punctuation of "elsewhere" through "here" transforms our perception of an apparatus supposedly based on the presentation of an "elsewhere" "here", thus resisting shooting, exposition, and distribution altogether. The many television screens in *Ici et ailleurs,* together with the spectators doomed to stare at them (like the working-class French family), serve not as an emblem of the function of the film but rather form the central object of its analytical and critical inquiry.

As a form of organization, editing, and analysis, video refuses the logic of "the chain" (*la chaîne*) – the cinematic chain of images, the Fordian production line, the capitalist factory as a "factory of death" (as Godard stresses in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*) and the above-mentioned view of Hollywood as a "dream factory." It equally rejects the logic of being chained (*enchaîné*), one image chained to another, each one of us chained to his/her own image, so that every event and every person "have their own proper image." Video, as a technique of interruption, becomes in *Ici et ailleurs* the very mode of "the analytic of the image," unchaining the image, separating it from the flow, isolating it as a complex entity since "there is no more a simple image." This analytic of the image departs both from Godard's pre-1968 Eisensteinian cinematic montage, which used simple images in order to create – through their dialectical conflation – cinematic "meaning;" and from the post-1968 revolutionary practices of the Dziga-Vertov group, whose site of analysis was "a correct sound-track [which] is possible .... a correct analysis of the situation."[328] "The sound was too loud," Godard says numerous times in *Ici et ailleurs*: the framing of the images within an explanatory chain of revolutionary discourse was too cohesive. And the sound, signified in this film with the two letters "VU," is what ultimately chains all the images into an uninterrupted flow within the realm of what exposes itself, visually presents itself, lets itself be seen ["*vu*"].

In his dialogue with Godard about *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Ishaghpour explains video's crucial role in the totalizing but un-mediating gaze backwards that constitutes the reflection on history and the history of cinema, and asks: "isn't video the historical condition making this film possible, since video in a sense also means the end of cinema?"[329] Ishaghpour suggests that video replaced the cinema and inherited from it the role of the audio-visual technique capable of writing the history of cinema. Video both brings about the end of cinema and carries it further as it writes its own history. Yet, if we bear in mind that as early as 1967, in the closing sequence of *Weekend,* Godard declared "the end of the film, the end of cinema," video is revealed as yet *another* end of cinema, set within a genealogy of endings: from the 1968 turn to revolutionary collective

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[328] MacCabe, *Godard: Image, Sounds, Politics,* p. 119.
[329] Godard and Ishaghpour, *Cinema*, p. 32.

audiovisual projects up to their termination and the turn to *Ici et ailleurs* – and then onward to Godard's video projects of the 1980s and -90s. Godard had struggled with the "end of cinema" throughout his cinematic production; and indeed the history of cinema itself, as he later recounted it in *Histoire(s) du cinema* – a history archived by video – is not one of exposure, presentation and composition, but of analysis, decomposition, and cessation. In many ways, *Ici et ailleurs* launched Godard's decades-long investment in writing the history of cinema – further developed, after *Histoire(s) du cinema*, in his 2004 reflection on cinema and war in *Notre Musique* and the historico-mythical ship cruise in his 2010 *Film socialisme.* In these works, the history of cinema is conceptualized as a lost history, history continuously on the verge of collapse, overtaken by mass-media imagery, diminished by the televised "flow of images." A 19th Century art form (as Godard provocatively defined it), cinema has a history that is nothing but the history of its recurring endings.

It is therefore not surprising that the Palestinian struggle, and Israel/Palestine more generally, have become a prominent locus for Godard's reflections on cinema's ends. Not only was Godard's usage of the video technique launched in *Ici et ailleurs,* but the very structure of history as the genealogy of recurring ends lies at the core of his engagement with the Palestinian struggle in this film. *Ici et ailleurs* opens with the image of the dead Palestinian *feday* and inquires into a potential afterlife – of the feday, of the image and of the interrupted revolutionary struggle for which they serve as a synecdoche. This image would keep haunting Godard's examination of the history of cinema. It functions in Godard's oeuvre as a place of critique: positioned on the threshold of the cinematic image, this image questions the cohesiveness and comprehensiveness of the cinematic imaginary regime. An unfigured figure of the non-European, it continuously challenges, in Godard's films, the emphatically European "art of cinema." Yet this challenge remains enmeshed in a mode of critique enacted from a European vantage point: as the afterlife of a failed attempt for a collective enunciation, *Ici et ailleurs* stresses the unresolved gap between "*ici*" and "*ailleurs*." It is on the ruins of the collaboration between a Third World anti-colonial struggle and an audio-visual creative enterprise that Godard wages his critique of the cinematic image. He doesn't step outside of the European tradition of cinema: his genealogy of ends remains an intrinsic one, internal to the cinematic tradition itself. The unimaginable image of the dead *feday* is looked at from within the cinematic apparatus and video as its archive: it threatens to disrupt the cinematic image but it eventually does so as part of the cinematic production of a European auteur. This image attests of an interruptive moment in the history of cinema; but this very history, Godard emphasizes, is made of these recurrent interruptions.

However, Godard's image of the dead *feday* is not the only synecdochical image of the revolutionary trajectory in the Palestinian struggle. During the same years of Godard's activity with the Palestinians, Jean Genet – the renowned French writer, queer outlaw and political figure – was also deeply involved with the Palestinian struggle. The next chapter will be dedicated to Genet's long entanglement with the Palestinians .Yet I

would like to end this chapter by turning to a short passage from the beginning of Genet's 1986 massive book about the Palestinian struggle, *Un captif amoureux,* in which he also portrays the image of the *feday.* Although it bears some resemblance to the image repeatedly invoked in *Ici et ailleurs*, Genet's image of the *feday* dramatically diverges from Godard's, opening up a different way of negotiating with the Palestinian struggle:

> Cette image du feddai est de plus en plus ineffaçable. Il se tourne dans le sentier; je ne verrai plus son visage, seulement son dos et son ombre. C'est alors que je ne pourrai plus lui parler ni l'entendre que j'aurai le besion d'en parler.
>
> Il semble que l'effacement ne soit pas seulement la disparition mais aussi la nécessité de la combler par quelque chose de différent, par peut-être le contraire de ce qu'il efface. Comme s'il y avait eu un trou dans cet endroit où le feddai disparaît c'est qu'un dessin, une photographie, un portrait veulent le rappeler dans tous les sens de ce mot. Ils rappellent le feddai d'assez loin – dans tous les sens de cette expression. Voulut-il disparaître afain qu'apparût le portrait?[330]

For Godard, the image of the *feday* is omnipresent. As a result of Black September, the Palestinian fighter is dead; his image, the image of his dead body, appears on the screen over and over again. It cannot be avoided. *Ici et ailleurs* starts with the still images of the dead *fedayeen*, and from that moment on it tells the story of a political space punctuated with the death of its political "actors." The image of the *feday* becomes determinative for both the "*ici*" and the "*ailleurs*" – for the present time and the past events, for the European existence and the Palestinian revolt. Indeed, the image of the dead *feday* marks the very parting of the "*ici*" from the "*ailleurs*": it signifies both the collapse of the revolutionary, collective enunciation and the split between the abruptly failed Palestinian revolutionary enterprise, and the finally conceived French artistic film. Thus, *Ici et ailleurs* is determined by the image of the dead *feday*.

Yet, in Genet's above-quoted passage, the image of the *feday* is in the process of vanishing; it runs the risk of total disappearance as it is assigned to a long movement of withdrawal. Genet suggests that the *feday* cannot be encountered directly, frontally, and so no scene of recognition can take place; only his traces – his back as he flees, or his

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[330] Jean Genet, *Un Captif amoureux* (Paris: Gallimard folio, 1986), p. 37. "The image of the fedayee grows more and more indelible; he turns into the path, and I'll no longer be able to see his face, only his back and shadow. It's when I can neither talk to him any more, nor he to me, that I'll need to talk about him. The disappearance seems to be not only a vanishing but also a need to fill the gap with something different, perhaps the opposite of what is gone. As if there were a hole where the fedayee disappeared, a drawing, a photograph, any sort of portrait, seems to call him back in every sense of the term. It calls him back from afar – again, in every sense of the word. Did he vanish deliberately in order that the portrait might appear?"Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: New York Review Books, 2003).

shadow once he is already gone – can be deciphered. The *feday*'s presence, whether alive or dead, is no longer certain. Instead of an image – even a still image of a dead body, yet one entirely present – Genet is left with a gap, a hole, a spatial form of absence. And it is this absence, caused by the *feday*'s withdrawal, that Genet seeks to fill by conjuring the *feday* and his image in the political and textual realm. Genet describes his own task – the task of depicting and ultimately the task of writing – as invoking, calling back, re-calling or summoning the lost image of the *feday* ("*le rappeler").[331]* "From afar," after the *feday* is (almost) lost, Genet strives to recreate his image once again.

Genet's image of the *feday* is utterly different from the one Godard depicts in his work: whereas in the latter the image is abundantly, and also tragically, present, for Genet it is in the course of becoming absent; what for Godard punctuates an entire film – the inability to avoid the dead *feday*'s body, the unimaginable image of his corpse – is, in Genet's text, an image to look for, a figure to invoke. This difference stands for two distinct positions vis-à-vis the Palestinian revolution. For Godard, the dead *feday* marks the traumatic collapse of the revolutionary moment in the Palestinian struggle, originally accompanied with the attempt to constitute a collective enunciation; the image of death indicates the abrupt end of *Jusqu'à la victoire;* yet it also becomes the starting point, and the structuring figure, of *Ici et ailleurs* – a film itself formed as the afterlife of a political/creative revolutionary trajectory. The death of the Palestinian fighter is, in Godard's project, an interruptive moment, and *Ici et ailleurs* is made of the repetition of these moments. Historically, the death of the *fedayeen* in Black September signified, for Godard, the collapse of the revolutionary trajectory in the Palestinian revolt; critical to the new diplomatic, benign, national trajectory the revolt took in the mid-1970s, *Ici et ailleurs* stages the images of dead *fedayeen* as a recurrent interruption which cannot, and should not, cease. Godard's critical stance is constructed out of these repetitive ends, which themselves form the history of the Palestinian struggle – as well as the history of cinema.

Genet's stance, in comparison, is not only critical: the dead *feday* doesn't only stand for the tragic fact of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle – its ultimate point of collapse, repeated again and again through the course of the struggle's afterlife. For Genet, the image of the *feday* is not an end point but a space, a realm, a domain that needs to be summoned anew. Even as an image of death – the death of the Palestinian *feday* or of the Palestinian revolutionary trajectory from the mid-1970s onward – it runs the risk of oblivion, of total disappearance from the political sphere, and thus has to be re-called. The image of the revolutionary struggle, however filled with death, should be re-invoked. This image no longer divides between the past struggle and its present afterlife, between "elsewhere" and "here," but on the contrary has the potential of bringing back a shared, intimate space in which actions and death, struggle and images, politics and

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[331] This term, which Genet stresses in the passage, bears poetic, psychological and theological meanings. I will return to it in the next chapter, while discussing Genet's bearing witness to the Palestinian revolution.

writing, merge anew. Without revisiting the enterprise of collective enunciation before its interruptive moment – as if such a simple return were even possible – Genet overcomes Godard's dead end, however recurring and repetitive, and the rupture between the political struggle and its writing. Summoning the image of the *feday* and of (what he called) the metaphysical, poetic Palestinian revolt, he opens up a potential political-textual space unimaginable in Godard's project.

Chapter Three

The Scripted Revolution:

Jean Genet's Address to a Collectivity-in-Struggle

The previous chapter ended with the image of the *feday* – the Palestinian fighter – as an encounter point between Godard and Miéville's *Ici et ailleurs* and Genet's *Un captif amoureux. Ici et ailleurs* shows still images of dead Palestinian fighters and asks what film can be made when "almost all the actors are dead."[332] *Un captif amoureux* starts with the vanishing image of the *feday* – an image fading out, no longer accessible, lost or erased – and asks how to recover this image, to recall or evoke it [*la rappeler*], to call it back into the textual and political realm.[333] I have argued that the disappearing image of the Palestinian fighter, or the image of the fighter's own disappearance, attests to a crucial historical change in the course of the Palestinian struggle: the armed resistance of the late 1960s, exercised in the mode of an anti-colonial revolutionary struggle closely connected to other Third-World liberation movements and global guerilla groups, suffered, at the beginning of the 1970s, a series of military defeats and gradually ceased to be the defining trajectory of the Palestinian struggle. Instead, from the mid-1970s onward, the Palestinian struggle was formalized as a bid for a sovereign state merely on parts of historical Palestine; revolutionary struggle was replaced by a national one. This collapse of the revolutionary trajectory – which I have called the moment of interruption – is signified in the disappearance of the Palestinian fighter: whether by actual death in the battlefield or by symbolic withdrawal from the center of political discourse, whether as dead body in *Ici et ailleurs* or as a vanishing image in *Un captif amoureux*, the feday has stopped being the representative figure of the Palestinian struggle.

In the previous chapter, I attempted to understand Godard's project through that moment of interruption. Together with the Dziga-Vertov Collective, Godard visited the Palestinian resistance forces in the refugee camps several times in 1969 and 1970, trying to join the Palestinians in forming a creative-political project of revolutionary collective enunciation. But after Black September, with the Palestinian fighters' actual and symbolic death – i.e., in the midst of the struggle's interruptive moment – the project was aborted; only years later would Godard return to it, and from a very different position, making – now in collaboration with Anne-Marie Miéville – the film *Ici et ailleurs*. That film is an attempt to come to terms with the collapse of the Palestinian struggle's revolutionary trajectory: Godard, who began his voyage with the Palestinians in the heyday of the armed struggle and whose original "artistic" project was intertwined with

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[332] Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 09:05.

[333] Jean Genet, *Un captif amoureux*, p. 37. Hereafter cited as *CA*. Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love* , p. 23; hereafter cited as *PoL*.

the Palestinian political revolt, experienced that collapse first-hand; his 1976 film expresses an attempt to theorize that moment of interruption from its other end. It conveys a critical refusal to accept the Palestinian struggle's change of course – its alleged evolution into a national struggle for the formation of a sovereign state – and instead lingers on moments of rupture and death in order to rethink the afterlife of a political, as well as a creative, revolutionary trajectory. In its images of the *fedayeen*'s bodies, *Ici et ailleurs* challenges the flow of historical time and the progression of realized politics, doing so in the form of a speculative mediation on the Palestinian struggle's interrupted, unfulfilled historical possibilities.

Genet's project, to which this chapter is dedicated, is of a different nature. While Godard joined the Palestinian struggle at its peak of its revolutionary zeal and witnessed its moment of collapse, Genet first arrived to the Palestinian camps in November 1970 – right after the events of Black September. Thus, he joined the Palestinian struggle during – or even after – its moment of interruption, when the anti-colonial, revolutionary armed resistance was already in decline. Unlike Godard, he did not experience one abrupt moment of rupture that transformed his entire creative project but rather predicated his project, from its inception, on a preliminary sense of loss: "Quand, en septembre 1971, je revins rôder autout d'Ajloun, je restai d'abord stupide devant l'effondrement de la résistance palestinienne."[334] Thus, the haunting presence of the *fedayeen*'s dead bodies in *Ici et ailleurs* – as images which, even years after they were taken, refuse to fade out and make a place for a more benign, less violent bid for a state – turns, in Genet's writing, into an absence, a hole created by the long vanishing of the *feday*'s image. The question here is not how to cope with the collapse of that revolutionary moment but rather how to recall it, to bring it back into political consciousness. Genet started writing *Un captif amoureux* only in 1983 – more than a decade into the strategic change in the struggle and after Israel's invasion into Lebanon and the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps; indeed, the book is made up of two large sections of *Souvenirs*. But one of his early short essays about the struggle, originally written in 1971, is already dedicated "À la mémoire de tous les feddayin."[335] Like Godard, and against the historical course of the Palestinian struggle, Genet is still concerned in his book with the image of the *feday*; but this image is now punctuated, from its very introduction, by its own disappearance, thus needing to be – in both a political and a textual manner – *invoked*. It is not the shock of interruption which informs Genet's writing but rather the vanishing of a certain image of the Palestinian revolt and the attempt to potentially summon it up.

Thus, whereas Godard's project culminated in an inquiry into the afterlife of the Palestinian struggle's revolutionary trajectory (to which his work remained always

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[334] *CA*, p. 605; "When I wandered round Ajloun again in September 1971, I was bemused at first by the collapse of the Palestinian resistance." *PoL*, p. 425.

[335] Jean Genet, "Près d'Ajloun," *L'Ennemi déclaré: texts et entretiens*, ed. Albert Dichy (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 177; hereafter cited as *ED*. Jean Genet, *The Declared Enemy: Texts and Interviews*, tr. Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 152; hereafter cited as *DE*. "Près d'Ajloun" was published only in 1977, but there is no indication that the dedication was added only then.

closely attached), Genet – who was further removed from the events – seems to be chasing after this trajectory in search of its lost images. In terms of this dissertation's title, Genet is indeed "after the fact." If the *fact* – the historical fact, that which was politically realized – is first the revolutionary struggle and then its collapse and decline, then Genet is tragically positioned *after* it: he arrives in the Middle East after the fact has already been established, doomed to forever search for its traces. In this chapter, however, I will argue that this modality of "after the fact" – from the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* through Derrida's *après coup* all the way to Gayatri Spivak's translation of the term into English[336] – applies not only to Genet's, or his writing's, position vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle but indeed to the Palestinian struggle itself. For Genet, the revolutionary moment of the Palestinian struggle is itself already marked as "after the fact." He conceptualizes the Palestinian revolutionary struggle as a formalized revolt, rife with deferred or unrealized action: a revolt of specters, gestures, and rituals, a poetic or theatrical struggle – a scripted revolutionary modality. The Palestinian revolt thus poses for him the question of political reality – the ways in which it can be approached, inhabited, and transformed; he considers the various modalities of stylized revolutionary action and examines the different forms of exercising violence. Genet therefore challenges the very historical factuality of the revolutionary enterprise – its division into discrete historical events located on the course of chronological time, its realpolitik successes and failures – contemplating instead the revolution's symbolic, mythical or even "metaphysical" sense. This conceptualization of the revolution's formalized, gestural or textual character – its *after-the-factness* – brings Genet to reformulate his own act of writing, supposedly the epitome of *after-the-factness*, through its complex position vis-à-vis the revolutionary struggle. Examining these questions, Genet articulates in his writing what I take to be a political theory of an anti-colonial struggling collectivity, analyzing its formation, erotic modalities and the decisive role it ascribes to poetic writing, theatrical happenings and pictorial imagining. "J'ai fait ce que j'ai pu," Genet writes in the last lines of *Un captif amoureux*, "pour comprendre à quel point cette révolution ressemblait peu aux autres."[337]

1. Writing in Struggle

> They were talking about the theatre. Genet said that it was no longer a viable form of art.
> I asked him what form he thought was valid today.
> Something that doesn't exist yet.
>
> (Mohamed Choukri, Tangier, 1969)[338]

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[336] See the Introduction for a discussion of the different formulations of the term.

[337] *CA,* p. 611. "I did the best I could to understand how different this revolution was from the others." PoL, p. 430.

[338] Mohamed Choukri, "Jean Genet in Tangier," *In Tangier*, tr. John Bowles (Minnesota: Telegram, [1974] 2010).

The genealogy of Genet's writing in the 1970s and -80s, which culminated, only a couple of months after the author's death, in the publication of *Un captif amoureux*, is a complicated affair. It is commonly assumed that for a long period, throughout the years of his political engagement, Genet abstained from writing – or at least from literary writing. Stephen Barber, his recent biographer, writes that "Genet would maintain silence in his creative work from 1958 [...] until 1983, when he began to write *A Loving Captive* – but it would be an idiosyncratic, often garrulous silence of twenty-five years' duration, encompassing the writing of many newspaper articles and outbursts of revolutionary provocation, within its overwhelming medium of a bleak, mute void: refusal to speak as well as to write."[339] Edmund White, Genet's famous biographer, is a bit more cautious due, at least in part, to the length of his account of Genet's life (after all, what is a literary biographer to do with decades-long of 'non-writing'?). Employing the genre-appropriate, free indirect style he asserts: "No wonder that this text ["Quatre heures à Chatila," written at the end of 1982] signaled for Genet his return to 'the act of writing.'"[340] What these biographical descriptions postulate is that at a certain historical moment, Genet went back to "writing" – actual, serious, literary one – and that it occurred at the beginning of 1983, after the Sabra and Shatila massacres and his account thereof, when Genet decided to start working on his last book, *Un captif amoureux*. This book, so the story goes, is decisively different from any other writing Genet did in the years beforehand and became the realization of his return to "creative work" (Barber) or to "the act of writing" (White). Yet in what way does *Un captif amoureux* – whose generic status is highly debatable and whose literariness is constantly put into question, a book which bears more resemblance to Genet's "revolutionary provocations" from the 1970s than to his earlier novels – signify Genet's return, after so many years of silence, to writing?

In an intriguing invocation of the pervasive trope of "the author's silence," after having dismissed the modernist avant-garde art's claims and promises in the first pages of his *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno addresses the figure of Arthur Rimbaud: "Just as Rimbaud's stunning dictum ['*Il faut être absolument moderne*'] one hundred years ago divined definitely the history of new art, his later silence, his stepping into line as an employee, anticipated art's decline."[341] Rimbaud's artistic silence is portrayed as a horrific and pitiful parable for the demise of modern art: what started out as a creative explosion of "a new art" came to an end – indeed quite quickly in this specific case – with the silence of "an employee," not to say a petty-colonialist. For Adorno, this is a story emblematic of all avant-garde eventually turning into commodity. But what might happen if we tried to squeeze Genet's "silence in creative work" in between Rimbaud's high-modernist aesthetic call to arms and its ultimate demise in the exclusively empirical world of exchange-value – i.e., *not* Rimbaud's silence during his years in Africa but rather a "garrulous silence" rife with political and textual activity?[342] To put it differently, of

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[339] Stephen Barber, *Jean Genet* (London: Reaktion, 2004), p. 113.

[340] Edmund White, *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1993), p. 613.

[341] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, tr. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp.3-4.

[342] In a 1982 filmed interview Genet gave to Bertrand Poirot-Delpech he was asked about Rimbaud's

what is Genet's "silence" comprised, and how does it inform his non-silent period, as well as the writing of *Un captif amoureux*? What I would like to suggest here is an alternative genealogy for Genet's later writing, one that refuses the dichotomy between revolutionary activity accompanied by textual "political provocations" during the 1970s and the beginning of the -80s on the one hand, and an act of creative writing or a return to literary expression with *Un captif amoureux* on the other. Thus, I am calling into question the distinction between the revolutionary *fact* and literature's *after-the-factness and propose instead to think ab*out the ways the two are intertwined and inform one another – the search for a new modality of writing through the new political experience of revolutionary struggle.

Genet's direct involvement in radical political struggles began in 1970. He traveled with the Black Panthers during the first months of 1970; and then spent six months with the Palestinians at their camps in Jordan in late 1970 and early 1971. He returned to the Middle East several times during 1971 and 1972, and then again a decade later – to Lebanon in 1982, and to Jordan in 1984. In between, throughout the 1970s he kept up close relations with several key activists in the Black Panthers Party and in the Palestinian forces and became active in the *Groupe d'informations sur les prisons*, dedicated to prisoners' rights in France. This timeline is commonly framed as "Genet's period of political engagement," and hence as "the period of his creative silence." But throughout this time Genet undertook various discursive projects, exercising different forms of "writing": he wrote numerous articles for French newspapers and journals, made speeches that were immediately transcribed and published, gave some extensive, widely circulated interviews, helped shoot a video essay in Irbid (Jordan), tried to put together two anthologies of political essays, began writing an opera with Pierre Boulez, and authored a full-scale film script. There is some evidence that as early as 1973, Genet was "preparing a book about the Black Panthers and the Palestinians," provisionally (and intriguingly) titled *Description du réel* [*Description of the Real*]; by the mid-1970s there were already "some thirty large pages... the content of [which]... consist[ed] of verse as well as prose reflections on homosexuality, the Panthers, the Palestinians and the Japanese."[343] In light of all this, one could say that Genet was writing – and indeed quite "creatively" – all along. Moreover, the many projects he undertook, the different media he used and the various forms of textuality he entertained, all reveal Genet's investment, throughout the 1970s and the beginning of the -80s, in the question of writing; his experimentation with and inquiry into new ways of writing – always in relation to the political struggles in which he was immersed.[344]

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silence and its relation to his own "silence" and said: "I don't know why Rimbaud chose silence... For me, it seems to me that, since all my books were written in prison, I wrote them to get out of prison. Once I was out of prison, there was no longer any reason to write." *DE,* p. 197 (*ED,* p. 230). To the extent that Genet accepts the description of his "silence," he distinguishes it from Rimbaud's, and explains it as putting an end to his literary writing at the moment of getting out of prison; according to this logic, not only his texts from the 1970s, but also *Un captif amoureux*, take part in this silence with respect to literary writing, engaging perhaps in a writing of a different sort.

[343] White, *Genet*, pp. 578-9. All of these themes would eventually appear in *Un captif amoureux*.

[344] I therefore do not accept Jérôme Neutres's model – in his otherwise stimulating and thoughtful book on Genet's travels to the "South" – which distinguishes between two periods of time and two modes of

Take, for example, his introduction to a collection of George Jackson's prison letters, *Soledad Brother*, written in July 1970.[345] Jackson, a member of the Black Panthers Party, was convicted of armed robbery at the age of seventeen, and spent the entire 1960s in prison, including the Soledad prison, where he became part of the Soledad Brothers. In early 1970, the three were charged with killing a prison guard; they were expected to face the gas chamber. A self-taught writer, Jackson was about to publish a collection of his prison letters, and Genet – by then a full-fledged admirer of the Black Panthers, as well as a well-known European author – was asked to write the introduction for the book. The introduction, this short piece of partisan writing, turned in Genet's hands into a dense reflection – as early as 1970 – on the act of revolutionary writing and on the book as a locus for this act. Genet begins his introduction with the assertion that, "[t]out écrivain authentique découvre non seulement un style nouveau, mais une composition du récit qui n'est qu'à lui-même, et que généralement il épuise."[346] It is unclear whether Genet is referring here to Jackson, a young writer in the process of retooling his own language, or to himself, an already-established "authentic" writer anointing his young follower. Indeed, a convicted prisoner writing in his own cell as a form of self-liberation – that is all-too-familiar a scene to Genet's readers from his early novels. But Genet's description of Jackson's letters – "qui deviennent un extraordinaire développement, sorte d'essai et de poème," some of them "dont on ne connaît pas le destinataire," no letter "a été voulu, écrit ni composé afin de construire un livre; cependant le livre est là, dur, certain.. à la fois arme de combat pour une libération et poème d'amour"[347] – already conveys some of the most urgent problematics to be featured in Genet's future writing, as fully realized in *Un captif amoureux* sixteen years later. In writing this introduction to Jackson's letters, Genet revisits the book as a form and rethinks the act of writing. What he is particularly drawn to is the position of the writer who is on the verge of death; from beginning to end, this writing is deeply informed by the threat of death. And so Jackson's book appears to Genet as a revolutionary weapon ("un arme de combat"),[348] at once a call for revolt and a central object within it. It is therefore not only Genet that is written, through Jackson, into what

writing in Genet's voyages: "There are at least two *voyages à l'oeuvre* in *Un captif amoureux*: the voyage of a militant who covers his travels in the 1970s, and the writer's voyage in the 1980s. This itinerary of two epochs portrays necessarily two pictures [*tableaux*] of the South. There is the author of political articles who lives the desire to say 'we,' and Genet the writer who keeps the implacable 'you' of narratives [*récits*]." Jérôme Neutres, *Genet sur les routes du Sud* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), p. 120. I suggest that there is not a "we" of the 1970s real political struggle, interrupted in the 1980s with the inauguration of the book project and the split into an authorial "I" and the addressee's "you" (as there is, in fact, in Godard's project, discussed in the previous chapter). Rather, Genet's "we" is, from the very start, not only that of struggle, but also one of writing; of struggle and writing interweaved in ways yet to be deciphered.

[345] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

[346] *ED*, p. 63. "Every authentic writer discovers not only a new style, but a narrative form that is his alone and he tends to exhaust." *DE*, p. 49.

[347] Ibid. "that develop into something extraordinary, part essay and part poem. So of them addressed to an unknown recipient; no letter willed, written, or composed for the purpose of putting together a book; and yet... a book, hard and sure... both a weapon in a struggle for liberation and a love poem."

[348] *ED*, p. 64; "a weapon in a struggle" *DE*, p. 50.

he calls "l'enterprise révolutionnaire,"[349] but also a certain modality of writing, a particular form of book.

In an article written a year later, significantly titled after a canonical French literary work (Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*), Genet reaffirms Jackson's complete innocence: "Alors que l'assassinat s'accomplissait, Jackson écrivait son meurtre (son livre meurtier)."[350] According to Genet, the two acts cannot be carried out together, as, whereas assassination is "a lone, individual act" of revenge and has little revolutionary implications, writing has many further consequences:

> Le livre de George Jackson est un meurtre, demésuré, jamais démentiel... c'est un meurtre radical, entrepris dans la solitude du cachot avec la sûreté qui lui fut donnée d'appartenir à un peuple encore en esclavage, le peuple noir et ce meurtre qui se continue... c'est le meurtre systématique et concreté de tout le monde blanc avide de se parer de dépouilles des peuples non blancs, c'est le meurtre – espérons-le définitif – de la bêtise agissante.[351]

For Genet, the book is the utmost violent act of revolt, underwriting any action of killing: unlike assassination it is not a calculated revenge but an act "beyond all measure"; even though it springs from the extreme solitude of the prison cell, it is not an individual act but an act indicating a form of "belonging to a people" and taking part in a dispossessed collectivity; rather than a one-time action, it is "ongoing," continuous and "systematic," potentially endless. The book is thus a most radical act of murder: "un acte de violence extrême: le livre."[352]

It is quite striking how, in an article allegedly written inside the contours of liberal legal discourse – pledging Angela Davis and George Jackson's innocence, claiming the former didn't smuggle weapons into prison and the latter didn't assassinate a prison guard – Genet actually transvaluates the actions, asserting that precisely in refuting the allegations and writing their books, Black Panther members indeed committed the most murderous, violent acts possible. Writing was not – as the liberal doxa would have it – Jackson's way of portraying different forms of life, letting his imagination free, expressing himself or even reflecting on violence, all as benign substitutes for an engagement in violent activism. On the contrary, a writing modality which gives form to a particular kind of book – this becomes, in Genet's thinking from 1970 onward, a prominent revolutionary act, the most violent of all.

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[349] *ED*, p. 69; revolutionary enterprise" *DE*, p. 54.

[350] *ED*, p. 101. "When the assassination [of the guard] occurred, Jackson was writing his murder (his murderous book)." *DE*, p. 81.

[351] *ED*, 101. "George Jackson's book is a murderous act, beyond all measures, but never demented... it is a radical murder, undertaken in the solitude of the cell and with the certainty of belonging to a people still living under slavery, and this murder, which is ongoing, … is the systematic and concerned murder of the whole white world greedy to drape itself in the hides of nonwhite people; it is the – hopefully definitive – murder of stupidity in action." *DE*, p. 81.

[352] *ED*, 103; "an act of extreme violence: the book." *DE*, p. 83.

This violence of the book was not a new concept for Genet. Indeed, his own sudden appearance on the French literary scene was accompanied by violent images concerning his literary objects. Upon reading the manuscript of Genet's first novel, *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, in 1943, Jean Cocteau wrote in his journal: "The Genet bomb. The book is here, in the apartment, extraordinary, obscure, unpublishable, inevitable. One doesn't know how to approach it." In a later entry, Cocteau recounts: "Last night at dinner I spoke to Valéry about Genet and stupidly I asked him for advice through his layers of senility. 'Burn it,' he said."[353] Anything *but* a repository of signs, "the book" here is a menacing object, a terrorist's explosive, indeed "un arme de combat;" it is potentially destructive and should be destroyed before it causes any harm. These accounts could, of course, be read as a literary metonymic shift from the social and cultural occurrence of Genet's unexpected emergence into the literary world to the physical entity encompassing Genet's creativity. But at this early stage in the novel's circulation within the literary field, it had not as yet entered the general economy of the literary object's mass reproduction:[354] the sign was still very much attached to the object, and had Cocteau followed Valéry's (serious?) advice and burned the only manuscript of *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, this novel, at least in the version known to us today, would not have existed.[355] Furthermore, Genet's own relation to "the book," from the very beginning of his career, did not belong in the realm of the aesthetic object, where a book stands for its disembodied, abstract and arbitrary signifying qualities, having "peeled off" its object/material origins. At the same time that Genet started writing books, in the early 1940s, he was also selling books in one of the bookstalls along the Seine; that was where Cocteau went to look for him after reading his poem cycle "Le Condamné à mort." And when not writing or selling books, Genet stole them: his most recurrent felony was book theft – from bookstores, libraries, and private collections. In this sense, Genet was a book-fetishist who metamorphosed into a book-writer;[356] or, using a less pathologizing discourse, he was deeply invested – first for lack of money, then as a habit, and ultimately since it has become one of his most distinguishing features – in the book as a tactile, material object, circulating in the social world.[357] Indeed, Genet

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[353] White, *Genet,* pp. 197-98.

[354] Genet's early works in general have an interesting, complex publication history, having been at first addressed to a specific "counter-public" in restricted circulation. See Michael Lucey, *Someone* (forthcoming).

[355] Although the disappearance, or destruction, of book manuscripts is a prominent feature in Genet's creative life (or, alternatively, in the Genet myth) – from the first version of *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* having been itself thrown to the toilet while Genet was in prison by one of the guards, to a lost or deliberately forgotten part of the manuscript of *Un captif amoureux*.

[356] And not only, as Sartre famously structures his book, the three-fold metamorphosis from a Cain to an aesthete and then to a writer (as if Genet's first encounter with the book was indeed already as a writer). Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet: comédien et martyr* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952). The metamorphosis I am sketching here, somewhat like the one in Sartre's book, was however never quite complete: Genet probably kept stealing books throughout his life.

[357] A Parisian newspaper dated December 1940 transcribes Genet's declaration in one of his trials: "If I hadn't been a thief I would have stayed ignorant and all the beauties of literature would have remained foreign to me, since I stole my first book to learn my ABCs. A second followed, then a third." On another occasion, he "gave his profession as a 'broker' of books." White, *Genet*, p. 166. In the early 1940s, Genet established a closed economy of book circulation: he stole books; then went to prison as

occupied different positions within books' circuits of circulation, disturbing such disparate figures as the judge in one of his trials (who asked him, "what would you say if someone stole your books?") and Cocteau himself, who urged Genet – after the latter became the rising star in the French *république des lettres* – to stop stealing them.[358] The genealogy of Genet's writing is therefore, from its inception, the genealogy of his transgressive position vis-à-vis the aesthetic realm and its disembodied (non-)objects: for Genet, "the book" – unlawfully changing ownership within the field of circulation, non-peacefully operating within the arena of struggle – is first a "bomb" and later "the most violent act."

I suggest that it is this thinking about "the book" which launches Genet's own last book – precisely not as a return to "creative work" or to an "act of writing," i.e., a return to the realm of literary signification; but rather as another instantiation in a continuous effort to generate the book and the revolutionary act, reality and writing, from each other. These are the first words of *Un captif amoureux*:

> La page qui fut d'abord blanche, est maintenant parcourue du haut en bas de minuscules signes noirs, les lettres, les mots, les virgules, les points d'exclamation, et c'est grâce à eux qu'on dit que cette page est lisible. Cependant... la réalité est-elle cette totalité des signes noirs? Le blanc, ici, est un artifice qui remplace la translucidité du parchemin, l'ocre grifflé des tablettes de glaise et cet ocre en relief, comme la translucidité et le blanc ont peut-être une réalité plus forte que les signes qui les défigurent.[359]

Un captif amoureux starts with an elaborate scene of inscription, bringing together the Palestinians and the Black Panthers, the writing of the book and its possible legibility, into an "image," "drama," or "love affair" – these are all Genet's terms, later on in the passage – ending with a "translucency, a silence punctuated by words and phrases." The passage starts off, however, with what seems like a critique of representational theories of language, questioning the uninterrupted move from the accumulative sum of linguistic signs on the white page to the representation of, or creating a window to, reality: "la réalité est-elle cette totalité des signes noirs?" It is as if Genet is invoking a basic modernist sensibility, and in so doing inaugurates a somewhat-belated high-

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punishment; while in prison he read books (Genet's often-celebrated first encounter with Proust's *A la recherche*, for example); finally he wrote his own books there.

[358] Cocteau recounts this scene in his journals: "I said to the court: 'Take care. This is a great writer..' ….
   The Judge: What would you say if someone stole your books?
   Genet: I would be proud of it.
   The Judge: Do you know the price of this book?
   Genet: I don't know the price of it but I know its value."
   (Quoted in White, *Genet*, p. 224. See also p. 231).

[359] *CA*, p. 11. "The page that was blank to begin with is now crossed from top to bottom with tiny black marks – letters, words, commas, exclamation marks – and it's because of them that the page is said to be legible. But... do these marks add up to reality? The white of the paper is an artifice that's replaced the translucency of parchment and the ochre surface of clay tablets, but the ochre and the translucency and the whiteness may all posses more reality than the signs that mar them." *PoL*, p. 5.

modernist literary project, securely positioned within the aesthetic realm. The first sentences of Genet's book not only allude quite explicitly to Mallarmé's "Le Livre" – or for that matter, to the opening statements of "Un coup de dés"[360] – but also join a whole modernist pictorial tradition, stretching from Wassily Kandinsky to Clement Greenberg, which inquired into the reality of the white surface. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, for example, Kandinsky contrasts the thick, saturated with "black silence […] something burnt out, like the ashes of a funeral pyre, something motionless like the corpse," to the openness of the white silence, "not a dead silence, but one pregnant with possibilities."[361] This silence of the white platform – the silence of the conditions for creation and presentation – also materializes in actual space, as the wall upon which the white canvas hangs: "There comes a great silence which is materially represented like a cold, indestructible wall going on into the infinite."[362] It is a void rife with potentiality and thus the always-actual and very real entity of aesthetic activity; this whiteness – of the canvas, the wall, but also of the page, to return to Genet – might therefore "possess more reality than the signs that disfigure it."[363]

Genet's claim to the "reality" of his book's white page ["la page... blanche"], however, does not quite adhere to the modernist account of forms' indestructible reality; nor does it coincide with its later ("post-modernist") development, the one that stresses the indeterminate difference between the semantic and formal meaning of *blanc* – the color of no-color or the void object on the one hand, and the operation of setting intervals or spacing on the other – an indeterminacy which itself lies at the heart of the text's movement.[364] Rather, "the white of the paper" in the first paragraph of *Un captif amoureux* is "real" since it is first and foremost an *object*, an "artifice" bearing its own prehistory – the parchment and the clay tablets that preceded the white paper as materials for writing surfaces. In other words, the white paper doesn't only carry black signs – indeed it carries its own 'non-whiteness' (or de-whitening) object-as-status. The blank page doesn't derive its reality from being the only stable actuality of the surface enabling all options to be realized (a "nothingness before birth," "pregnant with possibilities," "going on into the infinite," as in Kandinsky), but conversely in Genet's non-aesthetic genealogy, it is "real" precisely due to the already-lost material qualities it

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[360] "Sois que l'Âbime blanchi, étale, furieux...": Mallarmé remains a constant point of reference in *Un captif amoureux:* the question of the book, of writing on the page, as well as reflections on necessity and chance.

[361] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: George Wittenborn Inc., 1970), pp. 59-60.

[362] Ibid.

[363] Ibid.

[364] This is, of course, Derrida's reading of the "dissemination of *blancs*" in Mallarmé (and, specifically, Mallarmé's "Mimique" with "le fântome blanc comme une page pas encore écrite"):
"Dans la constellation des 'blancs,' la place d'un conténu sémique reste quasiment vide: celle du sens 'blanc' en tant qu'il est référé au non-sens de l'espacement, au lieu où n'a lieu que lieu. Mais cette 'place' est partout, ce n'est pas un site fixe et déterminé, parce que l'espacement signifiant doit toujours se reproduire.... mais parce que l'affinité sémique, métaphorique, thématique, si l'on veut, entre le conténu 'blanc' et le conténu 'vide' (espacement, entre, etc.) fait que chaque blanc de la série, chaque blanc "plein de la série (neige, cygne, papier, virginité, etc.), est le trope du blanc 'vide.'"
Jacques Derrida, "Le double séance," *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil folio, 1972), pp. 314-5.

nonetheless carries, as if "the saturated dead silence of the black color" (Kandinsky) is inscribed already into the white paper, not only as black signs. Furthermore, if "reality" is immersed in "every little blank space between the words," this can no longer be the formalist reality of the surface *qua* conditions of possibility, one preceding the "birth" of the signs, but rather reality already generated from a certain relationship between the signs and the surface, between black and white. This relationship comes into being precisely through the processes, and not the conditions, of writing:

> Quand j'ai observé que les Noirs étaient les caractères sur la feuille blanche de l'Amérique, ce fut une image trop vite advenue, la réalité étant surtout dans ce que je ne sauris jamais précisément, là ou se joue le drame amoureux entre deux Américains de couleur différente.[365]

This image first introduced – only to be immediately rejected – of black Americans as black signs on a page, writing their own history on the blank page of white America, suggests a homology between the level of signification and the level of reference: the structure of writing resembles that of American political history – both are "black on white." But this "image," whether a representational or a formalist-modernist one, in which the signifying black writes itself on the empty white, is "too easy," according to Genet.[366] Instead, Genet suggests that "reality" [*la réalité*] exists in the amorous relationship between a black American and a white American: reality, construed now as a mode of romantic relationality between black and white, is no longer mapped on a signifying structure; it reveals not the sign inscribed on the surface, but an erotic drama that exceeds the realm of writing and traverses reality itself. Yet this seemingly non-textual reality, one no longer homologous with writing, happens "là où se joue le drame amoureux:" reality is thus also at the place where a theatrical drama is being played out. Political reality is not homologous here with writing, but is rather itself informed by a certain mode of theatrical inscription. Reality is underwritten with a form of theatricality that can bring together the black and the white precisely *not* according to the structure of signification – as though Genet returns after his years in political exile to the aesthetic realm – but as a violent act of amorous relationality. Indeed, in a book which portrays the rift between black and white America, what can be more violent than this absent romantic relationships? And where does the latter exist other than in the "drame amoureux" of "un Noir qui a les couleurs blanches ou roses, mais un Noir,"[367] the writer of *Un captif amoureux*?

The theater is "no longer a valid form of art," Genet told Mohamed Choukri in 1969. This might not only be because there exists a form of art *better* than theater, but rather

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[365] *CA*, p. 12. "When I said that Blacks were the characters on the white page of America, that was too easy an image: the truth really lies where I can never quite know it, in a love between two Americans of different colors." *PoL*, p. 5.

[366] This image, to which Genet refers here as already been said (or observed), is elaborated later on in the book: "Les Noirs en Amérique blanche sont les signes qui écrivent l'histoire; sur la page blanche ils sont l'encre qui lui donne un sens" (*CA*, p. 350).

[367] *ED*, p. 149. "Perhaps I'm a Black whose color is white or pink, but a Black." DE, p. 126.

because theater itself can work in a better vein than that of a *form of art*. It is as if Genet, who tried in his theatrical works from the late 1950s to make the structure of theater collapse onto itself – to tear down the theater hall so that it would open onto non-theatrical political reality – found out, in the 1970s and -80s, that this political theater had actually been performed in reality itself. But then what happens to the notion of reality – political, revolutionary reality – once the theater, with its *drame amoureux*, enters? In an often-quoted passage from an interview he gave in Vienna in 1983, Genet discusses the difference between his early prison writing and his years of struggle in terms of his changing attitude towards reality:

> Mais c'était du rêve. C'était en tout cas une rêverie. J'avais écrit en prison. Une fois libre, j'étais perdu. Et je ne me suis retrouvé réellement, et dans le monde réel, qu'avec ces deux mouvements révolutionnaires, les Panthères noires et les Palestiniens. Et alors je me soumettais au monde réel... bref, j'agissais en fonction du monde réel et plus en fonction du monde grammatical... Dans la mesure où on oppose le monde réel au monde de la rêverie. Bien sûr, si on pousse plus loin l'analyse, on sait bien que la rêverie appartient aussi au monde réel. Les rêves sont des réalités.[368]

At first it seems that Genet opposes reality and dream: whereas in his early years he mobilized dreams, fantasies and narratives in order to escape the grim reality of prison, in his later years he "submitted" himself to the real world of revolution and struggle. Reality here stands against dreams, action against writing, politics against literature, in a perfect homology: dreams are the materials of literary writing, a "grammatical world" turning its back on actual reality; and conversely, the locus of political action is the real world devoid of any fantasy or dream. But the clear-cut distinction between these two ontological realms does not hold up in Genet's discourse, since, as he is quick to assert, dreams themselves belong to the real world (as do reveries and fantasies). To follow the homology Genet sketches out here, novelistic writing and narratives, the "grammatical world" in general – these all take part in political action within the real world; politics, then, is not the cessation of writing but its continuation in other means, or rather in *other forms*. In fact, instead of the distinction between reality and dream, Genet analytically suggests two opposing concepts of *dream* – trying to direct a movement from the former to the latter. The first dream is an illusion, a way to escape reality, a refuge from the real world; his early novelistic writing served as such a refuge, Genet states here. This dream thus appears as a literary narrative situated within a Kantian aesthetic realm and therefore formed around the free play of imagination neither determined by empirical

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[368] *ED*, p. 277. "That was a dream. It was in any case a daydream, a reverie. I wrote in prison. Once I became free, I was lost. And I didn't find myself again in reality, in the real world, until I was with these two revolutionary movements, the Black Panthers and the Palestinians. And so then I submitted myself to the real world... in short, I was acting in relation to the real world and no longer in the grammatical world... To the extent that you can oppose the real world to the world of daydreaming. Of course if you press the issue further, we know very well that dreaming also belongs to the real world. Dreams are realities." *DE*, pp. 239-40.

reality nor derived from moral law. But in questioning the opposition between reality and dream, between politics and writing, Genet gestures toward a second modality of dream: here, dreaming happens within reality, so that the work of narratology and grammar is not only located in a realm separated from politics – in novels, in the theater, in literature – but is rather introduced into political action, and more specifically, revolutionary struggle.[369] Genet formulates in this 1983 interview – precisely when he starts writing *Un captif amoureux* – his interest in the textual modalities of the real: the grammar of reality, the narrativization of the politics of struggle, the place of dreams within revolutionary actions.

In *Un captif amoureux*, Genet would go back to his role as a dreamer ["un rêveur"]: "ma vie visible ne fut que feintes bien masquées."[370] What others considered brave transgressive actions – his numerous crimes, long years of prostitution, sudden moments of betrayal – he recognized as masked imitations. He calls himself a "spontané simulateur" – someone who refuses to follow the path of one recognizable identity, instead imitating various modalities of social action to the extent that his life is a constant and very active dreaming of his own subject-position.[371] But Genet explains this dreaming not in opposition to his life's reality but as a direct *result* of it: an orphan left by a mother he never knew, growing up in several foster families and later in governmental institutions and lacking any familial attachment, he constantly refused affinity for any specific place, and his reality consisted only of his own dreams of shifting identities and short-term occupations. Through his very life-conditions, he was destined to act as in a dream, and it is through his dreams that he entered reality. Thus, when he portrays his life as "une feuille de papier blanc que j'avais, à force de pliures, pu transformer en un objet nouveau que j'étais peut-être le seul à voir en trois

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[369] Jacqueline Rose also explores the complex relations between reality and dream in *Un captif amoureux* in her new book on Israel/Palestine: "It would be wrong, therefore, to think that Genet's acute ear for the real does not bring with it its own dimension of the dream, wrong too to think that he does not, finally, if perhaps surprisingly, bring Proust to Palestine." Jacqueline Rose, *Proust Among the Nations: From Dreyfus to the Middle East* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 274. Bringing Proust to Palestine has a twofold meaning here: introducing Proustian themes – dreams, daydreams, reality, and memory – into Genet's account of the Palestinian struggle and simultaneously thinking the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a European perspective. The dream here is indeed a Proustian dream, that is a European one; yet there is no Middle East (quite literally: there would be no *Middle East* as a term without Europe, without European colonialism as a European dream fulfilled in reality). For more on this subject, see the Introduction.

[370] *CA*, p. 247; "My visible life was nothing but a carefully masked pretense." *PoL*, p. 172.

[371] In his 1987 article in which he developed a critique of modern "aesthetic culture" and its mode of literary canonicity, David Lloyd turns to Genet's works as the marker of a decisive break with the identitarian and representational logic of "aesthetic culture": "[T]he identities imposed upon Genet by others and by himself – bastard, thief, homosexual, vagabond – are all simultaneously terms of non-identity, precisely insofar as what they invoke is a certain failure to undergo proper ethical development." David Lloyd, "Genet's Genealogy: European Minorities and the Ends of Canon," *Cultural Critique* 6 (Spring 1987): 175. For Lloyd, the identities Genet's texts present are all non-identities, hollowed out, devoid of any concrete, substantial, identifiable content: the bastard without familial origin, the homeless vagabond, the homosexual deprived of the phallus, the impoverished thief stealing other people's possessions and identities.

dimensions,"[372] he does not only attest to the dreamlike, invented, textual status of his life – just a white piece of paper – but actually marks the unique way in which this textual life takes part in reality. It is precisely as pages turned into three dimensional objects, that this writing of life is folded into reality; as in the first paragraphs of *Un captif amoureux*, the page of writing – the *drame amoureux* between the white page and the black signs – already forms the real. In so doing, it carries the dreams or narratives of the "grammatical world" into political reality.

This lack of a predetermined social reality, against which Genet became the *simulateur* of his own reality – a dreamer whose dreams are his mode of action in the real world – is what allows him to associate himself with Palestinians' revolutionary action:

> Que les Palestiniens me demandassent d'accepter un séjour en Palestine, c'est-à-dire à l'intérieur d'une fiction, avaient-ils plus ou moins clairement reconnu le *spontané simulateur*? Et leurs mouvements sont-ils simulacres où je ne risque rien d'autre que d'être anéanti, mais ne le suis-je pas déjà par une non-vie en creux? [...] En acceptant d'aller avec les Panthères, puis les Palestiniens, apportant ma fonction du rêveur à l'interieur du rêve, n'étais-je pas, un de plus, un élément déréalisateur des Mouvements? N'étais-je pas l'Européen qui au rêve vient dire: "Tu es rêve, surtout ne réveille pas le dormeur?" [373]

Genet is a dreamer, but a dreamer within what is, in and of itself, a dream: Palestine, he writes, is a "fiction," and the deeds of the Palestinian fighters are "simulacra."[374] Genet goes on to consider himself a de-realizing force in revolutionary movements, which are themselves marked by a certain dream-like quality: "For the [Panthers'] movement was a shifting dream about the doings of the Whites, a poetical revolt, an act."[375] This dream, however – by Genet, the Black Panthers movement, the Palestinian struggle – does not stand in opposition to grim political reality but rather as a modality of action within the real. Genet is drawn to the Palestinian struggle precisely because it mobilizes a certain fictive quality into the realm of political struggle. As far as he in concerned, Palestine is a fiction and doesn't exist as a distinct geographical unit; indeed, when Genet goes to "Palestine," he is actually traveling either to Jordan or to Lebanon in order to stay with

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[372] *CA*, p. 247; *PoL*, p. 171.

[373] *CA*, pp. 248-9. "and when the Palestinians invited me to go and stay in Palestine, in other words in a fiction, weren't they too more or less openly recognizing me as a natural sham? Even if I risked annihilation by being present at actions of theirs which were only shams, wasn't I already non-existent because of my own hollow non-life? [...] By agreeing to go first with the Panthers and then with the Palestinians, playing my role as a dreamer inside a dream, wasn't I just one more factor of unreality inside both movements? Wasn't I a European saying to a dream, 'You are a dream – don't wake the sleeper!'" *PoL,* pp.172-73.

[374] And compare Edward Said's famous words at the beginning of his 1978 book on the Palestinian struggle: "The fact of the matter is that today Palestine does not exist, except in a memory or, more importantly, as an idea, a political and human experience, and an act of sustained popular will." Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, [1978] 1992), p. 5.

[375] *CA*, p. 248; *PoL*, p. 172.

the Palestinian guerilla forces based in refugee camps or big cities such as Amman or Beirut. As I have argued in the previous chapter, the question of what Palestine *is*, or where exactly it is *located* – what its aspired borders are, what kind of political entity it might form – remained a basic, though deliberately unanswered, query in the struggle's revolutionary years. Genet captures this when he talks, in his 1973 notes, of "a Palestine without land" – not only a Palestinian *people* without a land but rather "Palestine" as a notion that can itself signify something other than a geographical unit; and goes on to state that "while the land was being forced under its feet, the Palestinian nation was finding itself in fantasy, but for it to be able to exist, to continue, it had to discover the revolutionary necessity."[376] Revolutionary struggle is therefore woven into fantasy, based on a certain void in political reality – the fact that the Palestinians have no land and were still unformed as a people and devoid of any recognized political institutions. Hence, they are compelled to launch their revolutionary struggle as a textual, poetic or theatrical revolt within political reality itself.

A dreamer within a dream, Genet's reality, full of "dreams" – narratives, texts, the grammatical world in general – brings him to conceptualize the Palestinian struggle as a revolutionary politics itself structured upon and enriched with fiction, fantasy, and simulation. As he notes at the end of the passage, he may indeed just be another European with a secure reality at his own disposal (a house, a land, national affinity, political collectivity); a European for whom the Palestinian struggle is only an arousing fantasy, a non-threatening escape from reality and a reverie of revolutionary struggle always distant from international political reality's nation-state-based organization; a western fascinated with the natives and their peculiar modes of struggle – whose realization should be deferred forever. But biographically as well as politically, I believe that Genet may occupy a very different position: himself an outlaw[377] – with no recognizable origin, secure social identity or decisive political affiliation – he is the dreamer within reality, who recognizes other political dreams active within it. To quote the authoritative words of Edward Said: "The challenge of Genet's writing, therefore, is its fierce antinomianism. Here is a man in love with 'the other,' an outcast and stranger himself, feeling the deepest sympathy for the Palestinian revolution as the 'metaphysical' uprising of outcasts and strangers."[378] If indeed the "law" both Genet and the Palestinians fight against in their "antinomianism" is the law of an identitarian social and political reality devoid of any dream, then Genet is the man of fiction involved in a politics that revolve around Palestine as a fiction; he is the one who writes – as a political act – the political struggle of the Palestinians.

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[376] Jean Genet, "The Palestinians," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3:1 (Autumn 1973), p. 5.
[377] See Leo Bersani, "The Gay Outlaw," in *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). esp. pp. 152-80.
[378] Edward Said, "On Jean Genet's Late Works," *Grand Street* 36 (1990), p. 36.

2. Struggle in Writing

> Le fait palestinien seul me fit écrire ce livre, mais pourquoi ai-je si bien adhéré à la logique apparement folle de cette guerre[?]
>
> (Genet)[379]

In one of the numerous beginnings of *Un captif amoureux*, Genet recounts his first encounter with the Palestinian struggle: in the summer of 1968, while he was staying in Tunisia, a hotel waiter took him to a bookshop where, in a secret, secluded, small room, opening "quelques plaquettes de poèmes arabes... Le jeune homme lut les premières poèmes dédiés à Fatah et aux feddayin."[380] Genet remarks that he did not like the poems, but was taken with "the beauty of the calligraphy." During the May 1968 uprising,[381] Genet "retrouva les mêmes plaquettes de poèmes en arabe, mais sans enluminures, à la gloire de Fatah dans la cour de Sorbonne à Paris;"[382] but as he is quick to notice, the Parisian scene received these poems only by virtue of their semantic quality, i.e., within the intellectual – and so, ultimately for Genet, unimpressive – "aesthetic realm." Back in Tunisia, though, something completely different had happened: what had begun as a failed scene of seduction ("Un garçon de l'hôtel me demanda si la Tunisie me plaisait – c'est toujours ainsi qu'après un regard échangé les rapports amoureux débutent. Je dis non"),[383] set in motion a different kind of encounter which launched Genet's long entanglement – *amorous*, as he kept insisting – with the Palestinian struggle.

Indeed, if it is to be located anywhere, Genet's "return to writing" may as well be located here – in this first engagement with the Palestinian struggle, an engagement mediated through poetry, informed by the beauty of the textual object and immersed in erotic imagination. From this moment on, Genet would participate in various anti-colonial revolutionary struggles, while simultaneously experimenting with forms of writing – both implicated in and deriving from them. These political struggles, and specifically the Palestinian one, were themselves portrayed by Genet as informed by a certain procedure of writing, or to put it in his own words, "poetic revolutions" (but also "metaphysical" and "erotic" ones).[384] Not only has Genet been "writing" all along –

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[379] *CA*, p. 550. "It was the Palestinian phenomenon that made me write this book, but why did I stick so closely to the obviously crazy logic of that war?" *PoL*, p. 386.

[380] *CA*, pp. 29-30; "some slim volumes of Arabic poetry hitherto safely concealed...., the young man read me the first poems dedicated to Fatah and the fedayeen." *PoL*, p. 18.

[381] There may be an anachronism in Genet's dating: how could the events of May 1968 come "a few weeks after" the start of the summer?

[382] *CA*, p. 32; "came across the same volumes of Arabic poems to the glory of Fatah, but without the decoration, in the courtyard of the Sorbonne in Paris; *PoL*, p. 20.

[383] *CA*, p. 29. "A waiter in my hotel asked me if I liked Tunisia. That's how, after preliminary exchanges of glance, amorous encounters always begin. I said I didn't." *PoL*, p. 18.

[384] To seriously claim the notion of "poetic revolution," we must first reclaim it from its orientalist connotation: in what has become by now an infamous orientalist literary tradition, the Western author, writing "literature," becomes fascinated with the natural poetry of the indigenous people and

experimenting with forms of writing and conceptualizing the status of the book vis-à-vis the revolutionary struggles in which he participated – but these struggles become intelligible for him only through their equivalent engagement with certain modalities of writing.

Genet argues for the poetic character of both the Black Panthers and the Palestinian *fedayeen* throughout his writings from the 1970s and -80s. In a talk he gave at the University of Connecticut in March 1970, he asserts that "la pensée politique des Black Panthers... se développe à partir de la vision poétique des Noirs américains."[385] This poetic vision – or "poetic emotion" as he would later call it – lies according to Genet at the origin of the uprising and is drawn from black peoples' lived experience as an oppressed people. So rather than an essentialist quality of a certain ethnicity, this "poetic emotion" might be something that "Black Americans" have in common with other struggling groups, a sharable quality at the heart of many anti-colonial struggles. Genet then claims that "le temps est venu d'user d'un vocabulaire également neuf et d'une syntaxe capable de rendre chacun attentif au double combat, poétique et révolutionnaire."[386] In his introduction to George Jackson's book, Genet tries to be attentive to this double struggle, commenting on Jackson's language of struggle while forming his own; he argues that the revolutionary enterprise "est la conclusion inévitable du génie poétique" which should be exalted.[387] In these essays, he is thus calling for a new political thinking, a theorizing of revolutionary struggle that has underlying poetic qualities; while simultaneously acknowledging that it is already the Black Panthers themselves who develop such a political thinking – "la pensée politique des Black Panthers" – in both their discourse and action. This "poetic genius," then, is at once the object of a new political theory for revolutionary anti-colonial struggle which Genet would try to compose in the following decade and a revolutionary modality of writing enacted by the forces of revolt themselves. Both are preoccupied with writing the "poetized" quality of struggle.[388]

It is in his first essay dedicated to the Palestinians – a commentary on a photo reportage composed of ten pictures from the Palestinian camps in Jordan – that Genet opens up the entire array of *poetized* revolutionary struggle. He discusses the different

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concomitantly aestheticizes every anti-colonial struggle as the *poetry of the dispossessed*. I hope that it is clear by now that Genet's project is very far from this orientalist tradition of writing: Genet does not come to the Middle East to write literature about the *poetry* of the natives; the status of his writing is put into question, and its tight relations with the "writing" of the struggle is, as I wish to show, what is actually at stake here.

[385] *ED*, p. 45. "[T]he political thought of the Black Panthers... originates in a poetic vision of the black Americans." *DE*, p. 32.

[386] *ED*, p. 46. "[T]he time has come also to use a new vocabulary and syntax capable of making everyone more aware of the double struggle, both poetic and revolutionary." *DE*, p. 32.

[387] *ED*, p. 69. "[T]he inevitable conclusion of poetic genius." *DE*, p. 54.

[388] I am using somewhat ironically he notion Walter Benjamin coined in his early essay on Friedrich Hölderlin, where he suggests that the relevant sphere for the discussion of poetry is that of "the poetized" [*das Gedichtete*]. p. 18. But, following both Genet and the struggles in which he participated, I ask: what if "the poetized" is also the relevant sphere for revolutionary politics?

images of the struggle and reveals its various formalized elements: the gestures of the *fedayeen* carrying their rifles, the organization of military training, the burial ritual of the fighters' bodies, the laments of mourning women. Genet insists that the formalized aspect of these different scenes is not only a result of the camera's eye – an external gaze that captures actions as gestures – but indeed the very modality of revolutionary struggle carried out by Palestinian fighters. Commenting on a photograph of a masked fighter lying down while holding his rifle, Genet writes that "Leur ironie nous fait comprendre qu'il s'agit d'un jeu, de la mise en scène du repos du guerrier. Les feddayin savent jouer et s'amuser."[389] The *fedayeen* themselves express the stylized nature of their struggle: they inaugurate a theater of revolt in which they perform, pose, put on an act, create a mise-en-scene, play with irony and amuse themselves. They are conscious of the gestural nature of their actions and present themselves as occupying a role in a revolutionary space. But this role is not entirely scripted – or it may be scripted to the extent that the *fedayeen* are also the ones who write, fashion and formalize it through their own actions. The revolutionary arena becomes, in Genet's precise words here, a theatrical space in which a certain game or play takes place. But this is a serious game – dead serious, as we shall see. It does not, however, make the *fedayeen*'s struggle any less real; it rather unveils the theatrical, dream-like, simulacral, fictional modality with which the reality of the revolutionary struggle is punctuated.[390]

One of the prominent scenes of the Palestinians' scripted struggle, which already appears in this 1971 essay and to which Genet keeps returning in *Un captif amoureux*, is that of the card game.[391] Genet was first drawn to these games when he served in the French colonial army in Damascus, in 1930: the existence of these moments of play within the highly serious military arena and the insertion of an element of chance into the otherwise seemingly organized space of colonial rule caught the young soldier's imagination. And although these card games were forbidden both by the colonial military authorities and by Islamic religious institutions, they were, according to Genet, quite popular, and managed to bring together, even if momentarily, colonizer and colonized, French and Arab, through the social place of the imagination they created.[392] It is no surprise, then, that Genet turns at the beginning of his book about the Palestinian

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[389] *ED*, p. 95.

[390] At various points throughout *Un captif amoureux*, Genet assesses the value of this gestural revolutionary modality, sometimes praising it and sometimes lamenting it, but in any case this is the way he portrays the uniqueness of the Palestinian struggle. In the last pages of the book, Genet concludes his analysis of this modality of struggle, recapturing its gestural, ceremonial nature, while expressing his dissatisfaction with it: "L'acte de tuer était devenu si lointain, enveloppé d'un numbreux rituel... toutes les ceremonies... le geste de tuer, à distance, en appuyant sur la détente, ne signifait plus ôter la vie, mais accomplir une obligation mondaine." *CA,* p. 605. "The act of killing had become distant, shrouded in complex ritual... all these were ceremonies... killing by remote control by pressing a trigger – all this no longer meant taking life but merely fulfilling obligation." *PoL*, pp. 425-26.

[391] He recounts this scene in his 1971 commentary on the photo reportage (*ED*, p. 92; *DE*, pp. 76-77); in an interview he gave in 1982, before his visit to Lebanon (*ED*, p. 228; *DE*, p. 194); and throughout *Un captif amoureux*.

[392] See ED, p. 228; and White, *Genet*, p. 90. In *Un captif amoureux* he calls this 1930 game in Syria "un jeu érotique" (*CA*, p. 403)

struggle – a struggle he joined "plutôt par jeu que par conviction"[393] – to the card games in the arbors of Ajloun. Genet tells the story of one of those games, giving a long, detailed, and sometime elusive description of the numerous *fedayeen* sitting on benches: two of them play while others intervene with advice, and Genet himself, with his limited knowledge of Arabic, nevertheless makes sense of the entire social interaction. After a surprising digression into a description of a very different "game" – the Japanese feast of Obon– Genet finally reveals, only at the end, the conceit of the scene:

> Le jeu de cartes, qui n'avait existé que par les gestes scandaleusement réalistes des feddayin – ils avaient joué à jouer, sans cartes, sans les as ni les valets, sans les Bâtons ni les Épées, sans dame ni roi, le jeu de cartes me rappelait que toutes les activités des Palestiniens ressemblaient à la fête d'Obon où seul manquait, exigeait cette solennité – fût-elle sans le sourire – celui qui ne doit pas apparaître.[394]

This card game without cards becomes metonymic for the Palestinian struggle, as well as for the politics of resistance, and even for a specific political modality this struggle brings to the fore. In the absence of actual cards, this game played by the *fedayeen* is transformed from the common leisure activity to a series of gestures, however "shockingly realistic": the *fedayeen* only seem to be playing cards, but no real game is at stake. However, what is a real game to begin with? And how is playing a game different from playing at playing a game ("ils avaient joué à jouer")? Games create a space of the imagination whose ontological status differs from that of reality; and the cards themselves – as Genet's description stresses – are only representations of figures from a monarchic-aristocratic world which has little to do with the actual political reality those who are playing the game inhabit. So in turning this imaginative game world upside down – in playing a game of cards with no iconic representations – the game may indeed become, by this dialectical movement, "shockingly realistic." If playing the game consists of establishing a representational imaginative sphere separate from reality, then playing at playing a game never quite constitutes that distinct sphere; and if the former serves as one of the origins of the Kantian realm of "the free play of the imagination" ascribed to art, the latter refuses it, dwelling instead in a certain gestural reality of "gestes scandaleusement réalistes."[395]

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[393] *CA*, p. 21. "for fun as much as anything" *PoL*, p. 13.

[394] *CA*, p. 47. "The game of cards, which only existed because of the shockingly realistic gestures of the fedayeen – they'd played at playing, without any cards, without aces or knaves, clubs or spades, kings or queens – reminded me that all the Palestinians' activities were like the Obon feast, where the only thing that was absent, that could not appear, was what the ceremony, however lacking in solemnity, was in aid of." *PoL*, p. 30.

[395] This scene bears some similarities to Paul Cézanne's painting The Card Players, where the players famously hold blank cards in their hands. This painting is often seen as a visual reflection on "realization" processes in modern art (in Blanchot's terms), where iconic, pictorial representations are emptied out or taken away. See Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard folio, 1959), pp. 265-74.

Genet dedicates much of his book to this theater of gestures played out in revolutionary reality: the ceremonial, ritualistic character of what would have otherwise been "jeux bourgeois et de bourgeois" (as one of the *fedayeen* furiously comments on these games of cards) informs the "reality" of a struggle located, as we have read in the first page of the book, "where the love drama is being played." The Palestinian struggle is made up of numerous gestures from which Genet constructs the great inventory of a revolutionary theater: the different names the *fedayeen* use, their elaborate cleansing and kissing rituals, the fake accents they don, their musical celebrations and dance rituals, the deliberate exaggeration characterizing their entire behavior. This does not mean, however, that the struggle is any less real: "Ils s'imposent! Chaque Palestinien est vrai," he exclaims.[396] Through the Palestinians and the Black Panthers, Genet portrays a political revolutionary modality that questions some of the most basic liberal convictions as to what a true, real revolt should entail: authentic expression of will, spontaneous transgression of limits and new, anti-traditional acts of resistance. He suggests, instead, the realm of gesture – and not of action (most notoriously advocated by Hannah Arendt) – as the locus of revolutionary politics; and in so doing, uproots the theatrical gesture – in Brecht's epic theater, that "quotable gesture" which interrupts the context of the original enunciation[397] – from institutional theater, mobilizing it into the field of resistance.[398] Both the Palestinian *fedayeen* and the Black Panthers indeed "play" – but neither at a game nor in a theater hall: "S'ils jouaient, les Panthères ne le faisaient pas sur la scène."[399] Rather, they play their own actions as gestures: they fashion their rhetoric and tone of speech, invent and enact their songs – songs no longer read in a secluded room in a Tunisian bookstore – even stylize their dialogical interaction.

I am following Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the gesture here, to suggest how in insisting on the gestural "théatricalité" of these struggles in *Un captif amoureux*, Genet is employing a revolutionary politics anchored in linguistic mediation, mediality, or "being-in-the-medium" – or in other words, in what he envisions in the beginning of his book as a mode of writing enacted by the revolutionaries themselves: a poetic act of revolutionary writing.[400] This revolutionary "writing" refuses both the teleological and the

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[396] *ED*, p. 279. "They are imposing! Each Palestinian is real." *DE*, p. 241.

[397] Walter Benjamin, "What Is the Epic Theatre?," *Selected Writings IV,* esp. p. 305.

[398] In a 1975 interview, Genet mocks the students who "occupied" Le Théâtre de l'Odéon in 1968 Paris: instead of taking action against this monument of artistic representation, where theatricality does not hide political power as it is "only theatre," the students should have seized, in Genet's view, Le Palais de Justice! A "poetic revolution," in this sense, is not an uprising exercised in the sites of culture, but an act that recasts the relationship between art and politics, between theatrical representation and political power: "Il me semble que le pouvoir ne peut se passer de théâtricalité. Jamais." *ED*, p. 155; "It seems to me that power can never do without theatricality. Never." *DE*, p. 131 .Genet does not dismiss here theatricality as a secondary, nonessential, or altogether insignificant dimension of what is otherwise an actual revolt in reality; on the contrary, he expands the reach of theatricality and understands it as the sphere within which actual political resistance qua a poetic one should take place.

[399] *CA*, p. 141. "[I]f the Panthers acted they didn't do so on a stage." *PoL*, p. 98.

[400] Agamben develops his theory of the gesture in two places: "Kommerell, or On Gesture," *Potentialities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 77-85; and "Notes on Gesture," *Means without Ends*

spontaneous politics of revolt: the struggle is not aimed at gaining an already intelligible political end, and it does not exercise pure acts of free will; in this vein we might understand, on the one hand, Genet's famous declarations that once the Palestinians have their own state, he will betray them; and, on the other, the lack of psychological narration in his writing from that period.[401] These scripted revolutions inaugurate "politics [as] the sphere of full, absolute gesturality," politics as an ethos embedded in language; neither production (toward an end) nor action (as an end in itself); neither communication nor expression.[402] Indeed, in tracing the history of gesture, Agamben points out that the late 19th century bourgeois class decisively rejected gesture in favor of personal authenticity and psychological interiority; gestures, he suggests, were exiled to the realm of modernist art and became the prominent subject matter of silent cinema or Proustian narrative, to give two central examples.[403] The Palestinians' inscribed revolution seems to work precisely against this liberal division of labor between the political sphere (based on adequate, authentic, truthful actions), and the aesthetic realm, the only, tightly delimited place where social theatricality can still reside; in merging these two realms, those theatrical gestures leave the secluded locus of art and are now positioned within the political struggle – which can no longer claim an authentic, interior, pre-inscribed, representative identity.[404] In another invocation of these games of cards in *Un captif amoureux*, Genet writes:

> Les joueurs de cartes, les doigts pleins de spectres, aussi beaux, aussi sûrs d'eux fussent-ils, savaient que leurs gestes perpétueraient – il faut aussi l'entendre comme condamnation perpétuelle – une partie des cartes sans début ni fin. Ils avaient sous les mains cette absence autant que sous leurs pieds les feddayin. [405]

Without cards, the game of cards becomes boundless, endless, un-circumscribed by any notion of gain or victory that may bring it to a close; perpetual, it is now not only part of the Palestinian struggle but its very form. This may even be read as a condemnation, since what is a struggle that is not based on an imaginable goal, but is instead centered around a non-image-able absence? The absence of cards, this lack of images as

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[401] See, for example, *ED*, p. 282; *DE*, p. 244.

[402] "Notes on Gesture," p. 60. The gesture, Agamben claims, exceeds both the realm of *facere* (*faire*, making; the production of a certain thing, acting for a definite goal) and that of *agere* (*agir*, acting; action without any external goal, as an end in itself). Neither a means toward an end nor an end without any means, the gesture establishes the realm of "means without end" of the "being-in-a-medium of human beings." It thus refuses both the teleological and the spontaneous, both language as communication and language as expression, and inaugurates a realm of linguistic mediation, a movement of figuration already in and as reality.

[403] "Kommerell, or On Gesture," pp.83-84.

[404] This echoes what David Lloyd suggested in "Genet's Genealogy": instead of identities within a liberal economy of political representation, Genet inaugurates hollowed out identities, "terms of non-identity," on the un-natural, non-immanent, axes of power.

[405] *CA*, p. 179 "The card players, their hands full of ghosts, knew that however handsome and sure of themselves they were their actions perpetuated a game with neither beginning nor end. Absence was in their hands just as it was under their feet." *PoL*, p. 125.

(Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 2000), pp. 49-60.

representational objects, stands here for the absence of ground underneath the *fedayeen*'s feet – the absence of "Palestine" itself – which then, as now, has not managed to index a territorially defined homeland, a discrete national identity or an identifiable end for the struggle; the Palestinian revolution as a groundless revolution.[406] Circulating precisely this groundlessness in their revolutionary gestures – i.e., asking repeatedly "where is Palestine?" and "what is Black?"[407] – these struggles launch, in Genet's eyes, "a metaphysical struggle" against the origin, a struggle against the *origin* as the ultimate rule of the political game."[408] The Palestinians' fight against the "original" people – one that, in the name of that origin claims (and also enforces) its right on Palestine; the Black Panthers' revolt against white America as a "blank," "original" page setting the ground for whatever is to be marked on it. Fighting against the origin, these struggles start not from empty grounds but from already-full voids: their games of cards consist of images turned into specters. These groundless, ritualized, scripted revolutions thus invert the "genealogical" course: instead of starting, à la Kandinsky, in white silence and moving from "nothingness before birth... pregnant with possibility" to its eventual fulfillment, the players start when their hands are already "filled with specters" – from the other side, from the saturated black silence of the corpse. In so doing, the Palestinian struggle ceaselessly relates to the feast of Obon – "Partout était Obon, le mort japonais inexistant, et le jeu de cartes sans cartes"[409] – invoking the dead as the inverted point of its departure.

The gestural nature of the *fedayeen*'s actions reveals how deeply saturated with death these actions are. The scripted, written, theatrical struggle is marked from its very inception with a strong sense of death; there exists no theater, as Roland Barthes reminds us, that doesn't entail the cult of the dead.[410] The *after-the-factness* of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle – which Genet constantly writes as he insists on its "poetic acts" – is based on an already-existing void, a primordial absence of the "fact;" such a "fact" was not first experienced and then suddenly interrupted, creating a "hole," as in Godard's project. For Genet, the "hole" was there to begin with: death, therefore, does not signify the shift from a "fact" (revolutionary zeal) to an "after-the-fact" (the afterlife of the already-lost revolutionary moment), but rather belongs, with the revolutionary moment itself, to the realm of *after-the-fact*; it is, for Genet, part and parcel of the scripted revolutionary struggle. The gestural actions of the *fedayeen* are not a substitute for some original mode of spontaneous activity which was abruptly lost, but

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[406] On the question of what "Palestine" actually consists of, or what it *is*, as a prominent feature of Palestinian 20th and 21st century existence, see Camille Mansour, "The Birth and Evolution of Palestinian Statehood Strategy, 1948-1972," *Transformed Landscapes: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East in Honor of Walid Khalidi,* eds. Camille Mansour and Leila Fawaz (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), pp. 197-230; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage.* See also Chapter One of this dissertation.

[407] *CA*, p. 213, pp. 140-41.

[408] *CA*, p. 239; *PoL*, p. 166.

[409] *CA*, p. 159. "Everywhere Obon, the non-existent dead Japanese, and the card-game without cards." *PoL*, p. 111.

[410] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 31-2.

constitute a struggle against the origin itself, as ideology and political currency. Genet and the Palestinians inhabit a space devoid of origin, a modality of action opposing the "fact." So instead of being positioned as a cessation of revolutionary action, death pervades the revolutionary space itself – the space of the gestures- and specters-filled card game signifies the saturated absence of the motherland. Death becomes part of the struggle, even a productive element of the *fedayeen*'s modality of action-in-struggle. It bears not only a loss that cannot be reconciled, but a political potentiality as well.

"Genet's last works," writes Edward Said, "are saturated with images of death, especially *Un Captif.*"[411] Many indicate Genet's own proximity to death – he suffered from tormenting lung cancer in the last years of his life and refused to take pain killers while working on his last book – as the reason for the tenebrous atmosphere pervading his late writing. But indeed, Genet had found these "images of death" already in the very operation of the anti-colonial struggles he had joined, precisely in their combination of "images" and "death" as two instantiations of their *after-the-fact* modality.[412] As far back as in his 1971 essay, Genet writes that "Ce que ne dit pas le feddai – le sacrifié – dont vous voyez l'image, c'est qu'il sait que lui-même ne verra pas cette révolution accomplie, mais que sa propre victoire c'est de l'avoir commencée."[413] The images Genet discusses are not necessarily images of dead *fedayeen* (as they are in *Ici et ailleurs*), but rather images inscribed with death from the start, precisely through the workings of the vivid revolutionary struggle by way of theatrical gestures, dream-like actions and images. Death does not only belong to the fighter's loss of life or to the revolution's end point, successful or otherwise; there exists, in Genet's view, a sense of death which already accompanies the beginning of action, the struggle's coming-into-being, the hope for victory.[414] This kind of death does not signify an end, a terminal point, a limit not to be crossed, but rather a generative mode of transformation and transfiguration. It marks an opening up, not a shutting down, of the space of struggle – a space where games of cards without cards are being played out, and liberation struggles with no promised land or national sovereignty on their horizon are being fought. Genet portrays the images of these struggles – and these struggles-by-image: "Sur cette image, c'est encore la mort."[415] But what kind of death is repeated here again and again?

Genet's engagement with the Palestinian struggle was marked from its inception with a pervasive sense of death. The first time he traveled to the Palestinian camps was in winter 1970, directly after Black September. A decade later, he joined the Palestinian

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[411] Said, "The Last Writings," p. 40.

[412] See, for example, Félix Guattari's account of this "ouverture du grand large, la présence insistante de la mort, de la finitude..." Félix Guattari, "Genet retrouvé," in *Jean Genet et la Palestine: Revue d'études palestiniennes* (Printemps 1997), p. 59.

[413] *ED*, p. 90; "What he doesn't say, the fedayee – the sacrificed – whose image you see, is that he knows that he himself will not see this revolution accomplished, but that his own victory is to have begun it." DE, p. 72.

[414] Genet insists here on the literal sense of the "feday": the feday is the one who is sacrificed from the beginning, and throughout the course of the revolution.

[415] *ED*, p. 91; "This image too is an image of death." *DE*, p. 73.

forces in Lebanon in summer 1982, during the siege of Beirut. "Quatre heures à Chatila," his seminal essay about the Sabra and Shatila massacres in September 1982 – an essay which would eventually give life to the writing of *Un captif amoureux* – is filled with dead bodies. One of the first persons to walk the streets of Shatila a mere 24 hours after the end of the massacre – while the bodies were still piled in every corner and their stench filled the air – Genet descends in that text into a Palestinian Hades, recounting the story of the Palestinian revolution as a struggle of young, courageous, free, beautiful and already-dead *fedayeen*. Their state of death – a saturated, meaningful one – hovers over the entire text: "La solitude des morts, dans le camp de Chatila, était encore plus sensible parce qu'il avaient des gestes et des poses dont ils ne s'étaient pas occupés. Morts n'importe comment. Morts laissés à l'abandon. Cependant, dans le camp, autour de nous, toutes les affections, les tendresses, les amours flottaient, à la recherche des Palestiniens qui n'y repondraient pas."[416] The Palestinian *fedayeen* can no longer respond since they are dead; even those *fedayeen* who managed to escape the Lebanese hell, the ones Genet meets at a Damascus airport upon his return, cannot expect a different fate: "Ils mourront comme eux," Genet writes at the end of his essay.[417] Paradoxically, though, Genet's writing of the *fedayeen*'s revolutionary struggle actually takes off from their death fields: the fighters' gestures and poses, their affectionate state of being, engenders a certain amorous modality with which Genet would keep looking for the Palestinian ("à la recherche des Palestiniens") and call for them in *Un captif amoureux*, even if they can no longer answer. As he goes into Shatila, Genet walks "Au milieu, auprès d'elles, de toutes les victimes torturés:"[418] in between the deteriorated bodies, Genet enters the arena of struggle. His writing of the Palestinian struggle is informed by an immersion in a realm of death.

For Genet, as for Godard before him, the *fedayeen* are those who live "in the danger of death" (from *Ici et ailleurs*): they join a violent struggle knowing they could die at any moment; they assume a position in which they constantly face death. Leila Shahid talked about this state of the Palestinian fighters, happily facing death;[419] and Genet wrote: "Chaque jour et chaque nuit la mort était frôlée."[420] But unlike Godard, Genet engages with the Palestinian struggle not only in relation to the *danger* of death but already within the realm of death itself – imaginary or real. For the Dziga-Vertov group, the *fedayeen*'s death in Black September signified the end of their involvement in the struggle; for Genet, this was only the beginning. Genet's encounter with both the Black Panthers and the Palestinian *fedayeen* is marked by a realization that their struggles take place within the realm of the dead: "Sauf sur les bases jordaniennes des feddayin

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[416] *ED*, p. 256. "The solitude of the dead in Shatila camp was even more palpable since they were frozen in gestures and poses over which they had no control. Dead just any old way. Dead and abandoned where they lay. But around us, in the camp, all the affection, tenderness, and love lingered in search of the Palestinians who would never again answer." *DE*, p. 220

[417] *ED*, p. 264. "they will die like them." *DE*, p. 228.

[418] *ED*, p. 247; "Among them or alongside them – all the tortured victims." *DE*, p. 211.

[419] In a joint interview with Genet a year after the massacres. *ED*, pp. 286-8; *DE*, pp. 247-48.

[420] *CA*, p. 137. "They brushed against death every day, every night," *PoL*, p. 96.

jamais plus qu'ailleurs je n'aurai été chez les morts."[421] And it is precisely these revolutionaries – landless, with their actions-as-gestures and their metaphysical revolt against the origin – who fashion those scripted revolutions, written by those already engaged in a long movement of disappearance, so much so that, like George Jackson, they might already be absent: "le poème est composé par les noirs absents – vous direz les morts: si l'on veut – les noirs absents, anonymes et dont l'agancement constitue le poème et dont le sens m'échappe mais non sa réalité."[422] The revolutionary space is composed of written signs, poetic utterances and the presence of the dead: the very reality of the revolutionary struggle derives from the "poetic act," punctuated with death's loss.[423]

In writing the realm of death as the arena of the armed revolutionary struggle, Genet suggests an alternative modality of political intelligibility. His portrayal of the revolutionary struggle stands in utter opposition to what has become, since the mid-1970s, the main current of the Palestinian struggle: the political plan to establish a national, sovereign, independent Palestinian state. In 1983 he told his Viennese interviewer: "Écoutez: le jour où les Palestiniens seront institutionnalisés, je ne serai plus de leur coté. Le jour où les Palestiniens deviendront une nation comme une autre nation, je ne serai plus là... Je crois que c'est là que je vais les trahir. Ils ne les savent pas."[424] But Genet did not only plan to betray the national realization of the Palestinian struggle when the day comes; he already wrote the *fedayeen*'s revolutionary activity as a death-infused armed struggle forming an antithetical pole to the life-enhancing national political claim for statehood. The *fedayeen*, as Genet describes them, reject some of the most basic ideological presuppositions of this post-revolutionary, nationalistic, institutional politics. The claim for statehood signifies an effort to reach an

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[421] *CA*, p. 353. "Except on the fedayeen bases in Jordan, I'll never have been so much among the dead." *PoL*, pp. 247-8. See also: "si l'on va chez les morts." *CA*, p. 87.

[422] *CA*, p. 358. "But the poem is written by the absent Blacks – the dead, if you like – the nameless absent Blacks who wrote the poem, of which the meaning escapes me but not the reality." *PoL*, p. 251.

[423] My understanding of death here is influenced by Maurice Blanchot's writings, especially in *L'Espace littéraire*. There he attempts to theorize "the space of literature" as radically different from the realized, limited, perceptible, experienced and mortal space of the living: this space is also composed of what Blanchot terms "the other night" ["*l'autre nuit*"], a different death, a second version of the imaginary. Thus, whereas in the "first night" death appears as a limit, an end point, a moment of disappearance, a state of invisibility, a decisive act of liberation from being, "the other night" is on the contrary an opening up of an involuntary space of withdrawal, of apparent disappearance, of desubjective passivity in which one is taken into an imaginary, dream-like realm that unveils itself. "The other night" is not a limit but a space; not an end point but a point of departure; not an abrupt, original act but a carrying-away "en image." See Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard folio, 1955), esp. pp. 201-02, 214, 352. This is my point of departure in thinking about the space of death Genet enters in his encounter with the Palestinians. However, I am trying to mobilize Blanchot's aestheticist thought – in which the "other death" is solely the quality of "the space of literature," made up only of the writings of a few individual Franco-German exceptional authors – into Genet's political thought, in which the other night, the second death, and the second version of the imaginary all operate as a new modality for anti-colonial struggle.

[424] *ED*, p. 282. "Listen: the day the Palestinians become an institution, I will no longer be on their side. The day the Palestinians become a nation like other nations, I won't be there anymore... I think that's where I'm going to betray them. They don't know it." *DE*, p. 244.

internationally-recognized, lasting, sustainable diplomatic solution based on already-recognized patterns of collective grouping – a sovereign state founded on state law. This claim is made for the promise of a better future, "for the sake of our children," set forth *by* the living and *for the sake of* the future living. In contradistinction to this claim to a future, the revolutionary armed struggle – as Genet writes it – is condensed, brief, unrecognized by the international community, and ultimately unsustainable and without a foreseeable future. This struggle is not enacted for the sake of the children; it does not aim at a normalized, familial or state-sanctioned existence but is based rather on a constant refusal to obtain one; it is not executed for the future living, but rather achieved as an eruption of life and death in acute moments of time.[425] At the revolutionary struggle's core lies a certain death, but this is not that final death which would force any political movement to renounce an armed struggle as if it were only a preliminary stage in an overall political plan for statehood; rather, this death establishes a realm in which different forms of life and alternative ways of action are made possible.

For Genet, the *fedayeen* are the bearers of this new political intelligibility – of gestural actions always entangled with a productive concept of death. In his first essay on the Palestinian struggle, Genet declares that "[a]u Moyen Orient un homme nouveau va peut-être naître, et le feddaï, par certains côtés, en serait pour moi la préfiguration et l'equisse."[426] Genet writes the birth of the *fedayeen* as a new political entity, through a detailed description of their revolutionary "poetic acts": their poses and gestures, the self-fashioning of their own image, their songs and music. By their birth, the *fedayeen* give rise to a "new mode of living," an alternative form of sociality; instead of normative familial bonds, they fashion a life of celibacy, constantly moving between discrete forms of singular existence and collective cohesiveness. They replace the realm of consummation and reproduction with that of erotics – multiple erotic interactions, sometimes doomed to failure, sometimes veiled and unrealizable, but always entailing a gestural quality: "Spontanément nous prenions la pose – héroïque, donc séductrice... Vous nous appeliez: terroristes! Nous étions des stars terroristes."[427] But already in this 1971 essay, where Genet details the birth of the *fedayeen* as a new political formation, he also discusses their death at length. He first mentions them as those who would not see the end of the revolution – they would die before the revolution is realized, whether successfully or not. The revolution is thus realized through their premature death; and death is entangled in the very moment of the *fedayeen'*s "birth."[428] It is part of their

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[425] I am following here Lee Edelman's rejection of "the future" – and alongside it, of reproduction, the child, and the family – as the basis of political intelligibility, in his highly influential book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Yet, I suggest here a specific political context in which this anti-futurism – even a queer one – was set in action.

[426] *ED*, p. 92. "In the Middle East a new man will perhaps emerge, and the fedayee, in certain of his aspects, would be for me the prefiguration and outline of the new man." *DE*, p. 74.

[427] *CA*, p. 23; "We automatically adopted a heroic and therefore attractive pose. … You called us terrorists! We were terrorist starts!" *PoL*, pp. 13-4.

[428] Note how close it is to Jean-Paul Sartre's discussion of the anti-colonial freedom fighter, in the preface Sartre wrote to Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*: "This new man knows that his life as a man begins with death; he considers himself a potential candidate for death. He will be killed; it is not just that he accepts the risk of being killed, he is certain of it." Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface" to Frantz Fanon, *The*

political potentiality, of the metaphysical struggle they execute: they inaugurate death into the political realm of struggle not as an end point, but as a starting point. In lieu of a terminal or interruptive limit of the struggle, death becomes an integral part of the violent act of resistance.[429] "Tout aura lieu sur fond de nuit: sur le point de mourir":[430] the *fedayeen* carry death within them wherever they go – the Palestinian revolution happens in this realm of death – but that death is not the end of a movement, the ultimate and final collapse of the struggle, since in the scripted realm of revolutionary gestures and images, the realm of death becomes the locus of individual and collective transformation.[431]

In a surprising move, Genet juxtaposes the *fedayeen* and a different socially-marginalized group that he has repeatedly portrayed in his early writings – transvestites and transsexuals.[432] In *Un captif amoureux*, Genet explores the similarities in death's role and image in the lives of the male *fedayeen* and MTF transsexuals. Genet claims that transsexuals fashion a very peculiar mode of death; "leaving behind" their masculinity as though killing it, they instead engage in fashioning a new gender identity upon its ruins: "Quitter la démarche virile abhorrée mais connue [...] quitter l'univers du pantalon pour celui du soutien-gorge, c'est l'équivalent de la mort attendue mais

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Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp. lvi-lvii. And see Fanon's own assertions right at the beginning of his book: "[Decolonization] infuses a new rhythm specific to a new generation of man, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men." Ibid, p. 2. Fanon's musical and linguistic idioms echo the language Genet uses to portray the fedayeen.

[429] In a 1977 article about the Baader-Meinhof guerilla group, Genet distinguishes between violent acts which form an integral part of anti-colonial revolt and brutal acts which form the core of the political institutional systems – the national state or international economic institutions. Jean Genet, "Violence et brutalité," in *ED*, esp. pp. 199-200.

[430] *CA*, p. 80; "Everything happens in the dark. At the point of death." *PoL*, p. 54.

[431] In his important book on Genet as "a writer of revolt," Hadrien Laroche stresses the role of transformation – of theatricality and gestural actions in the face of death – in the revolts Genet narrates as well as in Genet's own position regarding them: "Entre les révoltes algeriennes et les révolutions noires et palestinnienes, c'est donc la *métamorphose* de Genet qui est en jeu. Commune aux mouvements et à l'écrivain, tout commence par la nécessité de s'inventer une maturité, autrement dit, de regarder ce qui vient... Découvertre, création, invention: voilà la principe révolutionnaire des movements." Hadrien Laroche, *Le Dernier Genet* (Paris: Seuil 1997), p. 64.

[432] I hesitate regarding the nomenclature: in the passage I am about to discuss, Genet refers to his subjects as "transsexules" but adds a disclaimer – "selon le mot assez horrible de transsexuel." Figures of transvestites/transsexuals feature throughout Genet's oeuvre. In *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, Genet narrates the story of the transvestites of Montmartre; in *Journal du voleur* he writes about the "Carolines" in Barcelona; his play *Les Bonnes* was meant to be staged with two men performing the roles of the female maids. Didier Eribon starts his 2001 book on Genet describing Genet's encounter with the "Carolines." He discusses Genet's portrayal of their glorious, heroic existence as based on social shaming, yet – through collective struggle – as transformed into social pride. Indeed, Eribon stresses that in Genet's writing, these transvestites "[c]'est un collectif." Didier Eribon, *Une morale du minoritaire: Variation sur un thème de Jean Genet* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), p. 10. Thus, although only marginally discussing Genet's later writings on the Palestinians, Eribon emphasizes Genet's interest in the constitutive and transformative logic of a collectivity of outcasts based on the spectral and gestural qualities of their struggle for existence. In so doing, Eribon himself gestures towards the resemblance between sexually marginalized collectivities and anti-colonial ones.

redoutée."[433] But that masculinity is never completely lost; rather, through the process of self-transformation it is reserved as the unassailable remains of the act of killing. Here, death is not a limit separating the new mode of existence from the former (allegedly lost) one, but is rather internalized into and incorporated within life and serves as a force of transfiguration: according to Genet, in killing their assigned gender, transsexuals transform their bodies, construct their gendered self, and live. Not the ultimate, final point of life leading to stagnation (or nirvana) – nor even to possible rebirth – death is understood here to be a productive force within life intertwined with *the new*: "la joie dans la mort, ou plutôt dans le nouveau."[434] However, *the new* here is not achieved by way of reproduction – a certain origin giving birth to newly born offspring – but through a constant transfiguration of the self. The thing created is not an entirely new creature, but rather a body formed upon the death of one of its parts, a death carried into a new formation of the body. Genet stresses that the transsexuals he writes about would never disown their former masculine existence and entirely become women; their femininity, to the extent that it is their new form of being, is structured upon the dead-but-not-entirely-gone men they once were.

Accompanied both by the joy of creation and the fear of death, the transformation transsexuals go through becomes, for Genet, the model for the heroic, mythical, death-saturated form of life he associates with the Palestinian *fedayeen*.[435] And if indeed the *feday* is the new "man" born in the Middle-East, as Genet has asserted, his birth is certainly not a result of any reproductive act. The novelty of the *fedayeen* derives from the modality of their revolutionary actions – transformative action inaugurated by a certain productive death. In Genet's view, the *fedayeen* are not threatened by death since death is what constitutes their revolutionary activity as a gestural, image-bound, scripted struggle. Thus, like transsexuals, and in stark opposition to the binary of the masculine and the feminine (fighter/sissy, political/erotic), the *fedayeen* also develop their revolutionary activity as they fashion their own body images, work through their gendered performance and concentrate on corporeal appearance and disappearance. In so doing, they form a politics whose site is the struggling body – where the fantasy of a sovereign body politic gives way to the striving political body. The *fedayeen*'s actions, like those of transsexuals – gestural, theatrical, performative – derive from the killing of the origin, and with it an opposition to claims to an origin – as well as those claims the origin has on us: the assigned/socially-recognized gender, the Israeli claim for Palestine. The remains of the origin are the absent core of the transsexuals' and

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[433] *CA*, p. 91. "To quit the world of trousers for the world of the brassiere is a kind of death, expected but feared." *PoL*, p. 62.

[434] Ibid; "Joy in death or in the new."

[435] Discussing Genet's understanding of fantasy in his earlier writings, Michael Lucey suggests that it may be positioned in between a conservative concept of fantasy, stressing the preestablished, fixed formation of fantasy within an atemporal structure of desire, and a more experimental, constitutive, indeed transformative concept of fantasy – yet a transformative fantasy which eventually collapses in Genet's works. See Michael Lucey, "Genet's *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*: Fantasy and Sexual Identity," *French Yale Studies* 91 (1997): 80-102. In this chapter I am trying to argue that the collapse of the transformative fantasy, both erotic and political, is its very mode of action: Genet keeps staging in *Un captif amoureux* the theatrical, un-real, deadly, and after-the-fact revolutionary fantasy.

fedayeen's heroic, monstrous, angelic, mythical existence – these are all Genet's adjectives[436] – leaning on this productive, transformative power of death. In both cases, "La mort... faisait exactement partie de notre vie."[437]

Later on in *Un captif amoureux*, Genet follows a different mode of "transsexual" acting. He gives his own account of the 1973 Israeli military operation in Lebanon, called "Spring of Youth," in which a special commando force invaded PLO's Lebanon headquarters, killing three of the organization's leading members, presumably as retaliation for the murder of eleven Israeli athletes in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. In the official heroic narrative of this operation, the Israeli soldiers were said to have dressed up as women in order to deceive the Palestinian forces. But in Genet's account in *Un captif amoureux*, the six Israeli soldiers actually appear as "pédés," "pédales," or "travestis" – not men disguised as women, but men performing femininity.[438] It may seem at first that Genet is portraying the Israeli commando soldiers' mode of action using the same logic he used for the *fedayeen*'s revolutionary struggle: the soldiers kiss each other, echoing the *fedayeen*'s kissing rituals Genet discusses at great length; they make extensive use of their gendered, sexualized bodies and their actions are gestural and theatrical, composing in Genet's words a "Beaux-Arts" performance. The soldiers' mythic, heroic actions thus seem to mirror the fedayeen's scripted struggle. But Genet draws an important distinction between the Israeli soldiers and the *fedayeen*; in the moment of action, when the soldiers pull out their guns and kill the Palestinian leaders, they stop playing "pédés," becoming men again: "le commando, divisé en trois avait parfaitement joué les pédales énamourées, repris pied tout à coup dans l'action et non plus le jeu."[439] In Genet's narrative, the Israeli soldiers' act of killing is not part of amorous play but actually a crude reality devoid of any play-like element: the soldiers "switched from acting to action," in the apt English translation. The acting – the transsexuals' performance – reveals itself as only a means towards an end: decisive murderous action. The form of life that the Israeli soldiers are enacting here is thus not that of transsexuals, argues Genet, but of men disguised as transsexuals; not a performance of love and death, but a performance of *performance* – yet one with a firm expiration point. Indeed, death is re-established as a limit, signifying the end of play and a return to "reality" – not a productive mode of endless transformation. The Israeli soldiers remain un-transformed; they never transfigure their original masculinity – kill it while keeping its remains – but rather utilize all the resources at their disposal to keep their gendered – and national – identity intact. Executioners of state brutality – of the Zionist enterprise – the Israeli soldiers cannot, in Genet's view, forget their origin; after all, they are acting in its name. They *play* as transsexuals but *act* as men; the Palestinian *fedayeen*, on the other hand, act and live as transsexuals. Whereas the *fedayeen* play a game of cards without any cards, the Israeli soldiers would never "give

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[436] "A transsexual is thus a sort of monster and hero combined. An angel too, for I don't know if anyone would ever actually use his new sex even once." *PoL*, p. 62.

[437] *CA*, p. 92; Death was just as much part of life".*PoL*, p. 63.

[438] *CA*, pp. 262-267; *PoL*, pp. 182-86.

[439] *CA*, pp. 265-66. "Divided up into three couples they'd given perfect performance as queer in love, then suddenly switched from acting to action." *PoL*, pp. 184-85.

away their cards": the bearers of a historically-established political force, they hold the winning cards in their hands. The *fedayeen*, like Genet's transsexuals, exercise a performance aimed at transforming historical reality, at transgressing the course of historical fulfillment, at including both absence and death in alternative potential politics. The Palestinian revolutionary struggle – with its claim against the origin, the absence of land, the scripted and gestural mode of action, and its the descent into the realm of death – inaugurates not only a new man but a new modality of revolt.

3. Address to a Collectivity

The previous sections of this chapter have dealt with the relationship between writing and struggle. I have followed Genet's engagement with writing throughout the 1970s and -80s – the time when he presumably refrained from writing and committed himself to political struggle. Heavily invested in the question of writing in struggle, Genet formulated a new notion of writing: non-aesthetic, material, violent writing as an integral part of revolutionary action. A writing aligned with the "fact" of political struggle, this "fact" is however revealed in the texts Genet wrote during this period to be already contaminated with writing's *after-the-fact* character. Genet exposes the gestural, theatrical, image-bound and musical qualities of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle; in his writing, the political actions of the Palestinian fighters are revealed as scripted acts in themselves, informed by a deep sense of non-originality and belatedness and saturated from their very inception with the always-tormenting presence of death. Genet thus transforms the common relation between struggle and writing, where revolutionary action enjoys the status of political-historical fact, while writing is left with the tasks of representing, portraying, telling the story of, or bearing witness to these worldly actions, always "after the fact." But to the extent that Genet understands writing as part of the politico-historical factuality of the struggle – as a material object, a murderous act, an inscribed reality – this struggle itself is marked by the non-factuality of the written: composed of dreams within reality, of games with no material objects, of role-playing and potential transfigurations, the Palestinian revolutionary struggle does not adhere to the firm conditions of political reality, but is rather situated in the scripted realm of fantasy, of dream and of specters.

Reformulating the relations between struggle and writing – between the Palestinian revolt and his writing project – Genet constantly thematizes the question of his own positioning vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle. This positioning is not merely a biographical one (as in the historical role Genet the man has played in the Palestinian revolt during his sojourns with the Palestinian forces in Jordan and in Lebanon), but a theoretical one concerning the place Genet's textuality, broadly construed, occupies within the Palestinian struggle, indeed within Israel/Palestine itself. Examining Genet's writing practices throughout these years – and taking the gigantic, posthumous, 500-page-long *Un captif amoureux* as their epitome – we might ask: to whom is this book

addressed? Who are its potential readers, its designated public? And acknowledging Genet's reformulation of the relations between writing and struggle, we may also ask if the act of reading – reading the book as a novel, as historical documentation or as a memoir – is the correct way of receiving U*n captif amoureux*? Is a historically-realized collectivity of readers-as-possible-literary-public what this book aims at? In other words, positioned as the "fact" of writing within an *after-the-fact* struggle, what might be the status of *Un captif amoureux*'s act of enunciation – and how does it relate to the Palestinian struggle and to the politics of Israel/Palestine, then and now?

Like Dziga Vertov's aborted project, *Jusqu'à la victoire*, Genet's book was also originally commissioned by the PLO: at various places in *Un captif amoureux*, Genet returns to his meeting with Yasser Arafat during winter 1970, when the latter asked the renowned French author to write a book about the Palestinians.[440] During those years of anti-colonial struggle, when almost the entire Western political and intellectual world stood against the Palestinians and considered them a rogue nation engaged in a violent, careless,inhumane struggle, the Palestinians had to form an alternative political story of their struggle – both internally and externally. Engaged European supporters were good candidates for constructing an oppositional version of the struggle, and Genet was a natural choice: a renowned French author with an authoritative voice, he could have written a supportive account of the Palestinian struggle for an otherwise hostile European public as well as for the Palestinian fighters themselves. Perhaps that was the role Arafat assigned Genet; but Genet did not quite follow Arafat's request, and for years had refused to write his long-awaited book. On several occasions, when different Palestinians asked Genet when he would publish his book about the Palestinians, he used to answer: "When you finish your revolution."[441] Indeed, the book was finally realized during one of the lowest points in the Palestinian struggle: Genet started writing *Un captif amoureux* in 1983, after the Israeli siege of Beirut, the Sabra and Shatila massacres, and the expulsion of PLO activists to Tunisia; and he finished writing it in 1986, a year before the outbreak of the First *Intifada* in the Occupied Territories. The armed revolutionary struggle at the very center of the book was, during this time, in a state of decline, if not utter collapse. Genet thus rejected the position originally ascribed to his book – either explaining the armed Palestinian struggle to the Europeans, or inversely eulogizing it to its own fighters; and when the book appeared, in 1986, neither of these forms of address was available any longer.

Genet himself is concerned with the question of address throughout *Un captif amoureux*. In the second half of the book, he writes:

> Puisque ce livre ne sera jamais traduit en arabe, jamais lu par les Français
> ni aucun Européen, puisque cependant sachant celà je l'écris, à qui
> s'adresse-t-il?[442]

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[440] See, for example, *CA*, pp. 150-51.

[441] White, *Genet: A Biography*, p. 555.

[442] *CA,* p. 410. "Since this book will never be translated into Arabic, never read by the French or any other European, since while knowing that I am nevertheless writing it, whom is it addressed to?" (*PoL*, p.

Genet asserts the improbability of the book's two anticipated forms of address: either to a Palestinian/Arab audience or to a French/European one. Who then, he asks, will be the readers of this book? However, this lament for the lack of potential readers was perhaps premature. Historically speaking, Genet was wrong on both accounts: the book has eventually gained many French and European readers and was indeed translated into Arabic by Kadhim Jihad, appearing under the title *Asirun a-shik* in 1997.[443] But his assertion should be read beyond its historical factuality as a claim regarding *Un captif amoureux*'s conditions of addressability. In his statement, Genet does not only lament the lack of any possible readers but also redirects the question of readership: by actively denouncing the existence of these preconceived national-linguistic groups of readers, he opens up a space for a different potentiality of address. After all, he repudiates the addressability of his book in the course of the book itself; and he phrases the book's failure of address as a question itself potentially addressed to someone. "À qui s'adresse-t-il?" Genet asks *in* his book, *about* his book: to whom are these words, in their impossibility of address, addressed? Moreover, he insists on his writing the book based on the recognition of the lack of any possible readers: "puisque cependant sachant celà je l'écris." The failure of address does not lead Genet to abandon his writing project, to dismiss or doubt it, nor indeed to significantly change the project's modes and goals (as was the case with Godard); on the contrary, the writing of the book is structured from the outset on this impossibility of address.[444] The very work of address in *Un captif amoureux* is based on a radical transformation of its conditions of addressability: the book rejects the existence of French/European readership, on the one hand, and a Palestinian/Arabic, one on the other, as two preconceived, distinct and discrete groups of readers. Genet is thus renouncing the linguistic-national divide as the organizing principle for writing and reading *Un captif amoureux*: instead of having a book written in the French language either for French readership or, by way of translation, for a Palestinian one, *Un captif amoureux* sets out to constitute a different modality of address. Its *potentiality* of address necessarily goes through a certain *impossibility* of address (the impossibility of an address to national and language

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289; translation modified)

[443] Jean Genet, *Asirun a-shik,* tr. Kadhim-Jihad Hassan (Paris: Edition Unesco,1997).

[444] Georges Bataille's devastating critique of Genet's early novels, written as a response to the publication of Sartre's 1952 *Saint Genet*, concentrates on Genet's failure to address his writing to any possible readership: Genet's writing, in Bataille's view, does not constitute an act of communication, since it fails to assume the "opération souveraine" of literature. "Genet, qui écrit, n'a ni le pouvoir ni l'intention de communiquer avec ses lecteurs [...] La littérature est communication. Elle part d'un auteur souverain, par-delà les servitudes d'un lecteur isolé, elle s'addresse à l'humanité souveraine." Georges Bataille, "Jean-Paul Sartre et l'impossible révolte de Jean Genet," in *La Littérature et le mal* (Paris: Gallimard, [1957] 1994), p. 138. Indeed, Genet rejects the sovereign position as the necessary mark of any mode of activity – be it textual or political. He thus also rejects possible, plausible address, as an act of communication between a sovereign writer and a historically-realized community of readers. Joining the struggles of the Palestinians and the Black Panthers, Genet inquires into different forms of address based on non-sovereign politics: he asks what mode of revolutionary action becomes possible from – but also towards – a non-sovereign political position. And he asks this regarding those anti-colonial struggles whose fighters are non-sovereign subjects fighting the sovereign colonial powers, forming claims and even goals which do not quite adheres to national sovereignty. The "impossible revolt," in Bataille's derogatory language, is therefore *precisely* what Genet is after.

identity-predicated collectivities, to recall Agamben's critique of such a collective formation, discussed in the Introduction) – and is aimed instead at a reconfiguration of the book's political, cultural, and linguistic affinities.[445]

The recognition of the impossibility of nationally- and linguistically-bound communities of readers redirects Genet's own text. Recognizing the absence of a strictly defined French or Palestinian readership for *Un captif amoureux*, and basing its textual project on such a recognition – "puisque cependant sachant celà je l'écris" – makes the writing of this book not merely the composition of a French book. *Un captif amoureux* is not a French text immediately offered – that is, without recourse to mediation – to a French public; or one given – only through an act of political, cultural and linguistic translation – to an Arab public. At one surprising yet instructive moment in the book, Genet declares:

> Peut-être jamais je ne saurai s'il faut écrire Résistance ou Révolution Palestinienne. Y devrais-je mettre des capitales? Mais les capitales n'existent pas dans l'écriture arabe.[446]

Genet engages here with the very question of writing: he ponders the different ways to name the Palestinian struggle (Palestinian resistance? Palestinian revolution?) as well as possible ways of writing these names (in lower case or capital letters?). However, he poses these questions not only in relation to the designated language of *Un captif amoureux*, and the only language in which Genet was ever fluent – French – but also vis-à-vis the Arabic. Arabic is invoked not as a lexicon but as a writing system: Genet is less interested in the term used in Arabic to designate the Palestinian struggle, asking instead whether in light of the lack of capital letters in Arabic he should write the French term with capital letters at all. He is *not* posing the question of translation – from Arabic to French, from the language of the Palestinian fighters to his own language of writing. Rather, he is considering Arabic as a written language, one that bears significance on his own textual project: the question of the writing, of how things ought to be written ("s'il faut écrire"), necessarily passes through Arabic, the writing in Arabic ("écriture arabe"). Arabic functions here – and perhaps in *Un captif amoureux* in general – as a linguistic horizon that runs throughout what otherwise seems an exclusively French text. Arabic exists in this text neither as the spoken language of *the natives* – the language of *origin* that Genet's text would then translate – nor as the ultimate language of address for Genet's text, the language to which this text should be translated and submitted for readership. Arabic appears as a language of writing – both as the language in which the

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[445] And compare this to Agamben's definition of testimony: "Testimony is a potentiality that becomes actual through an impotentiality of speech; it is, moreover, an impossibility that gives itself existence through a possibility of speaking." Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* (New York: Zone, 2002), p. 146. I am trying to think in this section about address as Agamben suggested thinking about speech – potentiality carved in the passage through impotentiality – and to later connect it to the question of testimony.

[446] *CA*, p. 177. "I may never know whether I ought to call it the Palestinian Resistance or the Palestinian Revolution. And should I really use capitals? There aren't any capital letters in written Arabic." *PoL*, p. 124.

Palestinian struggle (being itself a scripted struggle) is composed from the start by those who execute this "revolt" or "revolution;" and as the language embedded in every writing of this struggle, such as Genet's, always punctuated by writing in Arabic.

The linguistic horizon of *Un captif amoureux* is therefore not exclusively French. It is informed by Arabic, but not only Arabic. Significantly enough, the first language mentioned in the book, right in the first paragraph, is neither French nor Arabic:

> Ou bien je le dis autrement: l'espace mesuré entre les mots est plus rempli du réel que ne le sera le temps nécessaire pour les lire. Mais peut-être l'est-il de ce temps compact et réel, serré entre chaque lettre de la langue hébraïque.[447]

Hebrew, like Arabic before, is invoked here not in the mode of translation – rendering words from this presumably *original* language of Genesis into a modern idiom of writing – but as a writing system. It is not Hebrew *words* but rather Hebrew *letters* that are of interest to Genet; not the act of Hebrew signification but rather the very shapes of the Hebrew letters are what supplies Genet with a preliminary model for his own writing motivation. This image of a prolonged, dense time captured within the white spaces between the black squares of the Hebrew letters as being part of the reality that is itself present – and not simply signified – within the linguistic realm; this image probably derives from earlier Kabbalistic images very much concerned with the material reality of the Hebrew letters and their mystic qualities.[448] Genet's quite surprising mention of Hebrew letters within the first few words of his book – probably also one of the last passages written by Genet, only a few weeks before his death[449] – helps him display his theory of writing as negotiating between the reality of struggle and the procedure of textual inscription. Hebrew letters are therefore set at the heart of Genet's own writing, and through them he conveys the dense reality of struggle enclosed within his textuality

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[447] *CA*, p. 12. "Another way of putting it: the space between the words contains more reality than does the time it takes to read them. Perhaps it's the same as the time, dense and real, enclosed between the characters in Hebrew." *PoL*, p. 5.

[448] Kabbalah scholar Gersohm Scholem, writing about the relation of the white space of the page (or Torah scroll) to the black letters of the text in Jewish mystical myths dating back as early as the Middle Ages, adds that "[t]he most radical form that this view took was associated with the talmudic *aggadah* according to which prior to the creation of the world the whole of the Torah was written in black fire on white fire. As early as the beginning of the 13th century the daring notion was expressed that in reality the white fire composed the true text of the Torah, whereas the text that appeared in black fire was merely the mystical Oral Law. Hence it follows that the true Written Law has become entirely invisible to human perception and is presently concealed in the white parchment of the Torah scroll, the black letters of which are nothing more than a commentary on this vanished text. In the time of the Messiah the letters of this 'white Torah' will be revealed." Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), p. 174. Jacques Derrida references the myth in his 1971 essay "Dissemination," where he is fascinated with the concept of the text renewing itself upon a future, Messianic reading. He writes: "it is always possible for a text to become new, since the white spaces open up its structure to an indefinitely disseminated transformation." Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), p. 345.

[449] According to Layla Shahid's testimony in *Genet à Chatila,* ed. Jérôme Hankins (Paris: Solin, 1992).

(or in the terms already established in this chapter, the "fact" of writing this *after-the-fact* struggle). It is as though Genet is hinting that Hebrew letters are at the very fundament of his seemingly French text – whose horizon, we should remember, is an "écriture arabe" with no capital letters. This is already the case before any act of translation – and in an absence of any possibility of address.

In lieu of a French book – written by a French author, in the French language, for a French community of readers thus taking part in the French literary field – *Un captif amoureux* already marks its impossible scope of participation and belonging in its appeal to both Arabic and Hebrew as potential languages within its own writing position in the textual geography of Israel/Palestine.[450] It is hardly surprising, then, that a decisive portion of this text's afterlife is located in the world of textual production in and around Israel/Palestine. To give but two prominent examples: in Elias Khoury's *Bab el-shams* [*Gate of the Sun*], the Lebanese author's 1998 opus magnum concerning the Palestinian Nakba, a French theater troupe arrives in Lebanon to visit Shatila before staging a theatrical version of Genet's "Quatre heure à Chatila;"[451] and in a recently published Hebrew novel, Emmanuel Pinto's 2009 *Tinitus*, Genet's stay in Beirut in 1982 is destined to end in a dramatic fictional encounter with an Israeli soldier.[452] I suggest here that these are not only late permutations of Genet's text, Middle-Eastern variations on a European motif, but rather that these recent texts from Israel/Palestine themselves correspond to a potentiality already inscribed in Genet's text – in its Hebrew undercurrents and Arabic horizons. This potentiality does not only transform the qualification of *Un captif amoureux* as a French text; it does not only situate this text in the geographical – and linguistic – space of Israel/Palestine; in the end, it refuses to stay on the textual level alone, since as I have shown throughout this chapter, the question of writing for Genet is thoroughly entangled with the question of struggle. Thus, the transformation in the linguistic and national affiliations of the book is intertwined with the transformation of Genet's positioning vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle as well as with the previously discussed transformative actions of the Palestinian *fedayeen* themselves. The transformative workings of both the struggle and the text – their negation of preconceived linguistically/nationally-bound writing and revolt – recast the notion of collectivity: in undermining the presumably predicated community, both of struggle (a national Palestinian one) and of writing/reading (a French book), a different notion of political collectivity is being constituted, a collectivity based on the mode of transformation. As early as 1973, Genet stated:

> A revolution which does not aim at changing me by changing the relations between people does not interest me. What is more, I doubt whether a revolution which does not affect me enough to transform me is really a revolution at all. The Palestinian revolution has established new kinds of

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[450] This is true not only in terms of the content of book – a book written in and about Israel/Palestine – but precisely in textual terms, as a text written through the linguistic horizons of Israel/Palestine.

[451] Elias Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* (New York: Picador, [1998] 2006), pp. 245 ff.

[452] Emmanuel Pinto, *Tinitus* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2009), pp. 37-104.

relations which have changed me, and in this sense the Palestinian revolution is my revolution.[453]

Genet's very notion of revolution is based on the work of transformation: in both the heart of the revolutionary act and its ultimate goal, Genet sees a radical change in the web of social relations concerning first the revolutionaries themselves – the Palestinian fighters, the *fedayeen* – who by entering the revolutionary space change their conditions of living, their mode of gathering, their ways of action, and their conception of time (indeed *Un captif amoureux* may be read as a very detailed ethnography of the transformation embedded in the revolutionaries' form of life). Yet this transformation also applies to Genet himself: joining the Palestinian forces, forming affective and erotic relations with a few of them, being "in love" with the fighters, Genet's form of life was also transformed; "On me demande pourquoi j'ai aidé les Palestiniens. Quelle sottise! Ils m'ont aidé à vivre."[454] The mode of sociality which the Palestinians fashion affects Genet himself; their transformation allows him to be transformed to the extent that he can state, at the end of the quoted passage, that "in this sense the Palestinian revolution is my revolution." If their revolution is based on the transformation of the Palestinians' mode of sociality, then anyone in proximity to them, living close enough to this mode of sociality, can be taken into it or be transformed by it. This act of self-transformation, says Genet, resonates with the Palestinian transformative revolution, making him in one way or another part of this revolution. So instead of revolving around a predicated collectivity, the Palestinian revolution actually "establish[es] new kinds of relations" and has the potentiality of recasting its own collectivity.

To be sure, Genet doesn't simply become an Arab-Hebrew author and a Palestinian revolutionary. But his changing, undetermined – transformative and ever-transforming – position vis-à-vis the Palestinian revolution and its formation of a collectivity-in-struggle lies at the core of his conception of the Palestinian struggle. Genet is preoccupied with his positioning throughout his endeavor with the Palestinians. On the first page of *Un captif amoureux* he writes about his involvement in the Palestinian struggle as "la réalité du temps passé auprès – et non avec eux:"[455] not the time he spent *with* the Palestinians, but rather next to, *beside*, or in proximity to them. Genet stresses the fact that his closeness to the Palestinians formed itself on a certain gap between them and himself; their reality was kept separate from his. However earlier, in "Quatre heures à Chatila," while walking in the valley of death "[a]u milieu, auprès d'elles, de toute les victimes torturées," he writes that "pour la première fois de ma vie je me sentis devenir palestinien et haïr Israël."[456] Among, perhaps beside, the Palestinian bodies in Shatila, Genet finds himself in a transformative state, becoming a Palestinian (a Palestinian fighter? Perhaps even a dead Palestinian fighter?). And if it was indeed the wide

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[453] Jean Genet, "The Palestinians," p. 8.

[454] This quotation appears on the cover of the special issue of *Revue d'études palestiniennes: Jean Genet et la Palestine* (Printemps 1997).

[455] *CA*, p. 11; "the time spent among, not with, the Palestinians." *PoL*, p. 5.

[456] *ED*, pp. 247, 251. "Among them or alongside them... all the tortured victims... for the first time in my life I felt myself becoming Palestinian and hating Israel." *PoL*, p. 215.

circulation of this article that got Genet to finally start writing his book about the Palestinians, then it is this transformation – always in proximity to death – that was to lay the foundations for *Un captif amoureux*. Significantly, it is only in the long concluding meditative passage found in the last pages of his gigantic book that Genet finally theorizes his complex position vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle:

> Après son nom, son âge, les premiers mots du témoin sont à peu près ceux-ci: "Je jure de dire toute la vérité..." Avant de l'écrire, je m'étais juré de dire la vérité dans ce livre, ce ne fut pas lors d'une cérémonie mais chaque fois qu'un Palestinien me demandait à lire soit le début, soit d'autres passages, d'en publier dans une ou une autre revue, je fis mon possible pour me préserver. Juridiquement, le témoin n'est ni l'homme qui s'oppose aux magistrats ni celui qui les sert. Selon le droit français il a juré de *dire la vérité,* non de *la dire aux juges*. Le témoin jure à l'audience, devant le tribunal et devant l'assistance. Le témoin est seul. Il parle.[457]

The book that starts as a site of inscription, thematizing its own coming-into-being as a written text, ends with a reflection on the moments before writing ("Avant de l'écrire"). It dramatizes the bearing of witness through a scene staged in a hypothetical courtroom; the act itself, though, is far from hypothetical, since Genet – living beside ("auprès") the Palestinians for quite a while, even as the writing of the book was already under way, around 1984 – had been asked by some Palestinians to bear witness to their struggle. What is Genet asked to bear witness about ? And to whom? He quotes French law, as if he is to testify under it – a French citizen writing in the French language, testifying under the rule of French-written law, perhaps even under the laws of the French language itself. But he stresses that his testimony is not addressed to the (French) judges: even though uttered in a French setting, his truth-saying, his speech, isn't determined by it. This testimony is not born of the encounter between witness and judges – in being positioned in relation to the judges, in their service or in opposition to them; it is not a mutually-constituted speech in the Hegelian sense. Nor is his testimony addressed directly to the specific Palestinians who asked him to write the story of their struggle; Genet tries to avoid even this immediate mode of address, in which he is supposed to uninterruptedly transmit the Palestinian struggle, to give back what he has just got, in a circular movement whose origin and goal are one and the same. At stake here is not the audience's possible conditioning of the witness-bearing act. At the heart of this witness-bearing rite lies an oath to tell the truth – and not necessarily to tell it to anyone in particular; this oath is not a deliverance of truth but rather the coming-into-being of a truthful enunciation. To follow Agamben's formulation that "the oath's primary function, in

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[457] *CA*, p. 610. "After giving his name and age, a witness is supposed to say something like, 'I swear to tell the whole truth...' Before I started to write it I'd sworn to myself to tell the truth in this book, not in any ceremony but every time a Palestinian asked me to read the beginning or other passages from it or wanted me to publish it in some magazine. Legally speaking, a witness neither opposes nor serves the judges. Under French law he has sworn to tell the truth, not to tell it to the judges. He takes an oath while the court is in session, in front of the tribunal and in front of the public. The witness is on his own. He speaks." *PoL*, 429. Translation modified.

its various forms, is that of guaranteeing the truth and efficacy of language",[458] we may suggest that the witness's speech is formed by the oath not as an act of communication – a transmission of some propositional truth-value from one instantiation to another, from Genet to his French audience or Palestinian interlocutors, for example – but rather that the oath instituting the witness's truth-telling is taken in separation from the audience. The witness stands "alone," "speaking" only from within this state of solitude. The audience doesn't condition the act of bearing witness, then; standing in proximity to, yet separate from, the audience, the witness testifies to his truth. The speech of truth arises from the witness's solitude, and it conveys – as Genet would later point out – the convergence of external and internal truth, i.e. the reality of the Palestinian struggle both as a "fact" and as the experiences of a witness positioned on this fact's threshold.[459]

In other words, Genet stages here an imaginary courtroom, in which a witness takes an oath, in solitude, to tell the truth to – in front of – a public. The witness, we gather, is Genet himself; the oath of truth is his account of the Palestinian struggle; and the audience is whoever might be the collective addressee of this truth. But this addressee can neither be the French judges who allegedly sanction the testimony nor the Palestinian national authorities that historically requested it; Genet explicitly rejects this structure of immediate, communicative address. The collective addressee is not there to begin with, enabling the act of bearing witness; on the contrary, the act of bearing witness – taking an oath in solitude so that to guarantee a speech of truth – forms the direction to which this speech is carried on.

In order to further understand the relations between Genet the witness and the collectivity to which he addresses his testimony, I suggest turning to the Arabic translation of this passage in *Un captif amoureux*. There, the witness, *le témoin* – Genet himself – becomes "the *shahid*" (الشاهد).[460] This Islamic term, with its origins in the Qur'an (although significant throughout Muslim tradition), has, over the last two decades, become a highly volatile one, both religiously and politically; and it has been associated – if not exclusively then at least very frequently – with the Palestinian struggle, and came to signify, in mass media discourse, a suicide bomber.[461] The rendering "witness"

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[458] Giorgio Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language: An Archeology of the Oath,* tans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 4.

[459] Steven Miller argues that in his later writing Genet occupies the position of a truthteller; but, unlike Arendt's truthteller (in her essay "Truth and Politics") – a reporter in the strong sense of the word, situated within the public sphere – Genet bears witness to truth through a withdrawal from the public sphere, in a state of solitude: "Genet presents himself telling the truth with his back to the public sphere. Rather than facing those whom he addresses, he faces those who address him." Steven Miller, "Open Letter to the Enemy," *Diacritics* 34:2 (Summer 2004): 104. Miller explores the political significance of Genet's address without communication, with no frontal dialogue, but rather as a truthtelling from behind, beside the stateless peoples, taking part in the political logics of "divine warfare."

[460] Jean Genet, *Asirun a-shik,* tr. Kadhim Jihad (Paris: Edition Unesco, [1997] 2002) pp. 448-49.

[461] Never more so than in 1997 (the translation's publication date), when many Palestinian suicide attacks were launched in Israel and the notion of the Palestinian *shahid* lay at the very center of the political discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

into "shahid" is thus neither an innocent nor only a literal translation: the Arabic translation seems to bring Genet's text back to the religious-political discursive environment in which it operated. I therefore see it as a Benjaminian act of translation – i.e., not a secondary substitution of the text's original language but its continuing growth[462] – and as such, perhaps the translation may reveal the textual and political structure of address in *Un captif amoureux*. The figure of the *shahid*, in its literal definition, is a witness: one who is present as witness and who bears witness to truth; indeed, in Genet's above-quoted passage, the witness is portrayed as standing by himself. But I wish to take this reading further, following Ali Shariati's influential writings on the *shahid*, and suggest a certain relation between the *shahid* and the political collectivity that surrounds him.[463] Shariati explains that, whereas the Christian martyr dies for his or her faith following in the footsteps of Christ, in the Islamic tradition the shahid "is always alive and present."[464] The *shahid* bears witness to truth – the truth of God and the prophet – and he does so through an act of self-negation in which his presence is transformed into a different existential register. According to Shariati, the *shahid* becomes the sacred idea to which he bears witness, the thought of "truth" in the name of which he testifies. Shariati stresses that in this act of self-transformation, the *shahid* is kept "alive" – but in a different realm, in an altered state. The resemblance to the Palestinian *fedayeen*'s transformative acts – and to Genet's descent into the vivid realm of the dead in order to encounter them – is striking.

Shariati furthermore explains that the "idea" into which the *shahid*'s existence is transformed is a *collective* one ("a shahid is a spiritual crystallization of that collective spirit"),[465] connecting in so doing between the *shahid's* transformative act and the coming-into-being of a certain collective formation. Indeed, the *shahid* bears witness *for* a collectivity – not a collectivity already in place to which his testimony is simply directed, but rather a testimony for the sake of *the very existence* of that collectivity. In his bearing witness *to* a collectivity, the *shahid* is transformed into *the idea that enables it*. This act of address, however, is not directed at a future collectivity;[466] the collectivity to which the *shahid* appeals is situated in a vanishing – and perhaps already lost – past. Shariati underlines the restorative nature of the *shahid*'s act of bearing witness:

> When the belief in a sacred school of thought is gradually eroding, is about to vanish or to be forgotten in a new generation due to a conspiracy, suddenly an individual, by negating himself, re-establishes it. In other words, he calls it back to the scene of the world.[467]

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[462] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," esp. pp. 256-57.

[463] I allude here to two of Shariati's texts: "Jihad and Shahadat" (http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/jihad_shahadat.phpand) and "Shahadat" in *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*, eds. Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen (North Jaledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 2005), pp. 153-229.

[464] Shariati, "Jihad and Shahadat."

[465] Ibid.

[466] And so it stands in opposition to many of the theories of collectivity – some discussed in the Introduction – which see the act of address as bearing the potential to constitute a collectivity to come.

[467] Shariati, "Jihad and Shahadat."

The *shahid*'s gesture is that of *calling back*: in the face of a political power that persecutes the "truth" and its bearers, the *shahid* sacrifices himself in order to make the truth reappear. The *shahid* thus re-constitutes (or re-calls) what is in danger of being lost. He is not imagining that which is yet to exist; and he is not establishing something *ex nihilo*. Rather, he turns his face to the past, not unlike Benjamin's "angel of history," striving to reinstate both the "truth" and the community formerly constituted on its basis. Sacrificing himself, negating his individuality, he is transformed into the very collective belief – "thought," "idea" or "truth" in Shariati's terms –which institutional political power had tried to oppress; and in becoming this politically-rejected "truth," the *shahid* re-invokes the collectivity that used to surround it.

This structure of summoning brings to mind the passage with which this chapter began (and the previous ended), wherein Genet formulates his own act of writing through the gesture of "calling back:" the image of the *feday* is vanishing, about to disappear, and Genet's task is to call it back into the textual and political realm, "le rappeler dans tous les sens de ce mot."[468] At the close of the chapter, thinking through Genet's violent, bomb-like "fact" of writing; through the *fedayeen*'s gestural, scripted *after-the-fact* struggle; and finally through the *shahid*'s restorative testimony, we may better grasp this act of "calling back." Bearing witness to the Palestinian struggle, Genet re-invokes a vanishing, marginalized or rejected collectivity persecuted by colonial political forces, its members either symbolically or actually dead by the time he's writing. Genet's text summons a collectivity-in-struggle, the collectivity of the Palestinian anti-colonial revolutionary struggle, the Palestinian *fedayeen*; he bears witness to this lost collectivity, and in so doing addresses his testimony to this collectivity, writing for their sake, for the sake of restoring their collectivity, for the sake of bringing back the form of their collective existence. However, Genet does not try to bring the *fedayeen* back to life – to revive the Palestinian revolutionary struggle – since for him this struggle is itself saturated, from its inception, with death: the Palestinian struggle takes place in the realm of the dead, and Genet – a dreamer, a "spontané simulateur" – has to go "chez les morts" in order to take part in it. Bearing witness to the struggle, Genet is bearing witness to the realm of the dead, in which it occurs (doing so from his own deathbed); as we have seen, the *fedayeen's* collectivity-in-struggle he is invoking is not a collectivity of the living – a struggle for the sake of a personal, familial and national future – but a collectivity of the dead, with its totally different modes of relationality, sociality, and erotics. It is to this collectivity that Genet addresses his book; these are the potential (but also impossible) readers of this text.[469] And as we have already shown, the *fedayeen* are also the authors of

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[468] *CA*, p. 37; "to call the fedayee back in every sense of the word." *PoL*, p. 23.

[469] And compare Genet's 1957 essay on Giacometti's sculptures – a good while before he encountered the Palestinians or the Black Panthers – where he claims that works of art are addressed to "the people of the dead": "Non, non, l'oeuvre d'art n'est pas destiné aux générations enfants. Elle est offerte à l'innombrable peuple des morts. Qui l'agréent. Ou la refusent. Mais ces morts dont je parlais n'ont jamais été vivants. Ou je l'oublie. Ils le furent assez pour qu'on l'oublie, et que leur vie avait pour fonction de les faire passer ce tranquille rivage où ils attendent un signe – venu d'ici – et qu'ils reconnaissent." Jean Genet, "L'atelier d'Alberto Giacometti," *Oeuvres complètes V* (Paris: Gallimard,

their own struggle – they themselves bear witness to its anti-colonial truth; in this sense, if Genet is indeed a *shahid*, then he is a *shahid* of other *shahids*: he bears witness to their act of bearing witness.[470]

In calling back and recalling the vanishing collectivity of the *fedayeen*, *Un captif amoureux* aims to transform the conditions of its addressability: instead of an appeal to an abstract, undetermined audience – a public, in Michael Warner's terms – located in the text's future, Genet addresses his writing to a lost collectivity situated in the past. Furthermore, Genet does not appeal to a public produced by historical reality – either a French readership or a national Palestinian one. In its form of address, *Un captif amoureux* wishes to summon a historically unrealized potentiality: a mode of struggle which was pushed to the margins of the Palestinian cause, a rejected course of action; as well as defeated, absent or dead revolutionaries. Gil Anidjar has suggested that "Genet à Chatila" – the title of a collection of essays concerning Genet's writing about the Palestinians – could be read as "Genet in Shatila" but also as "Genet *to* Shatila":[471] entering enter the Palestinian refugee camp only 24 hours after the massacre, walking among the dead bodies, writing in and about this place of resistance (and the collapse thereof), Genet also addresses his writing *to* Shatila, to the political collectivity which revealed itself as impossible there, the one Genet insists on calling back. Summoning this vanishing collectivity, Genet resituates his writing within the political geography of Israel/Palestine. With the collectivity of the Palestinian *fedayeen*, he re-invokes a political potentiality which was marginalized, abandoned, or completely lost, in the realized history of that place: an anti-colonial, revolutionary, gestural struggle. Thus, although explicitly addressing the disappearing collective of Palestinian *fedayeen*, this potentiality is not limited to them: the text's address, as form, might be extended – since this collectivity, unlike the national one,

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1979), pp. 43-4.

[470] This structure of bearing witness resembles the one Agamben portrays in *Remnants of Auschwitz.* Agamben suggests there that the complete witness is, paradoxically, the Muselmann – the non-human, deprived of speech and so of the ability to testify; s/he is the one bearing witness to the processes of desubjectification of the human. The Muselmann bears witness to humanity in its collapse to inhumanity, and testifies of the camp as the ultimate state of modernity: the exception which became the rule. Agamben thus stresses "the intimate dual structure of testimony as an act of an auctor" – the Muselmann and the survivor. As I suggested in Chapter 2, the Muselmann, in the context of the Palestinian struggle, bears significant resemblances to the feday – dead in Black September or in the camps of Sabra and Shatila; or rather populating the realm of the dead from the start. And so, according to this structure, Genet would occupy the place of the survivor. There is indeed no act of bearing witness which does not bring them together, Genet and the fedayeen – not only as two distinct and separate figures, but as figures collapsing into each other in the scene of bearing witness. Genet bears witness to the fedayeen's own bearing witness, in a co-authored testimony revealing "the inseparable intimacy of the Muselmann and the witness, of an impotentiality and potentiality of speaking." (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 151). And if "speaking" is intertwined with "address," this co-authored act of bearing witness reveals the potentiality – which always passes through impotentiality – of the collectivity to which this testimony is addressed.

[471] Gil Anidjar,"'Once More, Once More': Derrida, the Jew, the Arab," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 24-6. Anidjar discusses Derrida's reference to Genet in the last sentences of his lecture, "Faith and Knowledge" assembled in *Acts of Religion*: "Today I remember what I had just finished reading in *Genet à Chatila*..." Ibid, p. 101.

has no fixed predicates or preconceived ethnically based community. The anti-colonial collectivity is shaped through its struggle; the struggle consists of its own formation. *Un captif amoureux* thus addresses the *fedayeen* as a collective-formation-in-the-making, a collectivity *of* and *in* struggle. Although neither general nor abstract, it is an open-ended collectivity, as the anti-colonial revolutionary struggle in Israel/Palestine can be enacted by many. Genet's writing is a call to open up the present moment in Israel/Palestine to the vanishing (im)potentialities of the past: to call them back, invoke or re-call them – *les rappeler* – as the reading/writing, dead and active, witnessing collectivity of the text.

Chapter Four

Modes of Transmission:

Haviva Pedaya and the Future-Past of Exilic Collectivities

With the closing of the last chapter, this dissertation arrives at our own contemporary moment. But as Giorgio Agamben has asserted,

> Contemporariness is... a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it, and, at the same time, keeps distance from it. More precisely, it is that relationship with time that adheres to it by being out of synch and anachronistic.[472]

In this chapter I explore how the contemporary Hebrew work of Haviva Pedaya adheres to her own time and the time in present day Israel/Palestine, while simultaneously exceeding them in reaching towards a very distant past and an as-yet-to-be-realized future. Pedaya's oeuvre is uniquely contemporary: well-rooted in the present state of Israeli literature and in the politics of Israel/Palestine, it aims to radically transform Israeli literature – not only with an eye to a significantly different future, but also, through the alternative textual genealogy it suggests, toward a no less significant rewriting of its own past. And her work is contemporary precisely because it challenges Israeli literature's current modes of action, its characteristics and borders – indeed its very definition. Most importantly perhaps, it calls into question the collective formation underlying this literature – the collectivity from which it arises and to which it is addressed. Not only does this oeuvre envision, expect, or issue a call for a different collectivity than the one realized in present day Israeli politics; it textually constitutes such a potential collectivity. As readers of this oeuvre, our task is, therefore, to discern the potential collective formation this work brings to the fore, while (in Agamben's terms again) becoming ourselves its "contemporaries."[473]

Haviva Pedaya (b. 1965, Jerusalem) is a prominent figure in the literary and intellectual circles of Israel. An established poet who has published three well-received books of poetry and has won several literary prizes,[474] her first poems were printed in 1994 in the important poetry journal *Hadarim*, where they kept appearing in all subsequent issues until its very last one, in which her poems were accompanied by an extensive interview. A professor of Jewish thought who has written extensively on a broad range of topics surrounding Jewish mysticism, she published, in 2011, a voluminous study titled *Space*

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[472] Giorgio Agamben, "What Is the Contemporary?" in *What Is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, trans, David Kishisk and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 41.

[473] "Of whom and of what are we contemporaries?" Ibid, p. 39.

[474] She has recently won the prestigious Amichai Prize for 2012.

and Place: An Essay on the Theological-Political Unconscious, which has cemented her position as a leading public intellectual.[475] Undeniably one of the central figures in the contemporary Israeli republic of letters, she nevertheless deviates, in many important ways, from the received persona, the cultural upbringing, the inclinations and dispositions – one could say the habitus – of the Israeli man of letters (and I use the gendered expression advisedly). That persona, which continues to define the limits and limitations of Israeli verbal culture as a modern and modernist project, is that of an emphatically secular, almost always Ashkenazi, left-leaning, Europhile Jewish man. Pedaya, a Mizrahi woman of Iraqi descent, comes from a family of renowned Kabbalists: her great-grandfather was Rabbi Yehuda Pattaya, a well-known Kabbalist, first in Baghdad and later in Jerusalem. Both her creative and her scholarly work have strong affinities with this Jewish mystical tradition, a tradition with which she explicitly aligns herself, rather than merely turn it into an object of research. Together with her brother, she has formed a musical ensemble that revives the *piyyutim* – plural of *piyyut*; the Jewish liturgical poem – of the Jewish communities from the mashriq;[476] while together with her sister, she is involved in the online project "Invitation to Piyyut" [*Hazmana le-Piyyut*], which makes many of these *piyyutim* accessible to the public – in both recorded sung and textual form – together with commentary and interpretation. She has founded a voluntary association for "the development of art, culture and education in the periphery" ("periphery" being a Hebrew code word for the ethnically and economically marginalized communities outside the major urban centers), and is also known for group gatherings she organizes in her southern ("peripheral") hometown of Be'er Sheva. In many ways, all of these actions fly in the face of that Israeli "man of letters" persona as elaborated above; thus, although she is most definitely a core member of the Israeli "republic of letters", Pedaya embodies its other, "dark" side. If she is the *contemporary* of modern Israeli letters – at once at its very center and completely outside of its conventions, the most timely because decisively *untimely* – then she can be seen as potentially transforming modern Israeli literature into something fundamentally foreign to the modern, to the Israeli, indeed to literature itself. The contemporary always lies elsewhere.

I will devote this chapter to an exploration of this elsewhere that Pedaya potentially constitutes within the contemporary: the contemporary moment of Israeli literature, but also – through her investment in the pre-national Jewish tradition, specifically in its Eastern, Arab-Jewish trajectory – the potential anti-colonial contemporary moment within Israel/Palestine. It is a potentiality opened in the past, aimed at rethinking the history of Jewish textuality but ultimately addressed to the future; the potentiality of an alternative textual and political modality for present-day Israel/Palestine. My discussion will be anchored in Pedaya's poetry, which will nevertheless not be my only object. Instead of enforcing (questionable) generic and medial distinctions, I will move back and

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[475] Haviva Pedaya, *Merchav u-makom: masa al ha-lo muda ha-te'ologi politi* [*Space and Place: An Essay on the Theological and Political Unconscious*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2011).

[476] *Mashriq* is an Arab term that refers to the Eastern region of the Arab-speaking world – the area between the Mediterranean Sea and Iran, while the *Maghreb* – the Western region – refers to the Arab countries of North Africa.

forth between Pedaya's immense poetic, scholarly, and intellectual output, in the hope of providing an account of the challenge it poses to the most basic predicates of modern Hebrew literature. I begin by showing how Pedaya's postcolonial and post-secular understanding of the Hebrew language underlines her "return" to the poetic form of *piyyut*, conceptually quite distinct from Western lyric poetic formations; I will then on to suggest that a new conceptualization of transmission processes lies at the heart of Pedaya's poetic, scholarly and theoretical work. Informed by theological undercurrents, I argue, it calls for the (re)constitution of exilic collectivities within Israel/Palestine, defying national and modern historical biases.

1. Language and Voice

Since Pedaya's project is first and foremost linguistic, we may start by asking exactly in what language it is carried out. The answer seems clear at first: Hebrew. The polyglot experience of exilic Jewish communities, who lived for centuries in between different languages – their local tongue, their families' original immigrant vernacular, the special Jewish languages of the region (be it Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic or Ladino) and the Holy Tongue (*Leshon kodesh*: Hebrew and Aramaic) – was terminated, quite dramatically and abruptly, by the enforced process of monolingualization associated with the Jewish existence in Israel.[477] A well-orchestrated campaign waged by different ideological state apparatuses resulted in the fact that the last few generations of Jews living in Israel have, by and large, been raised monolingual; their only language is modern Israeli Hebrew.[478] Pedaya, who was born in Israel and educated in the Israeli school system, was no exception. In this sense, she and S. Yizhar (a member of the first generation of writers for whom Hebrew was both mother tongue and the language of daily experience) are located on two ends of the monolingual spectrum of Jewish existence in what was first Palestine and later Israel. But Pedaya refuses to adhere to this historical narrative; although personally not quite a polyglot (and positioned outside polyglot Jewish history), she fashions a linguistic project which is emphatically non-monolingual. Indeed, her project takes aim at the monolingual hegemony of the modern Hebrew language in Israeli letters – of the secularized, modernized, statist Hebrew language which has been for many decades now the heart of Hebrew writing.

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[477] This abrupt end of Jewish polyglot existence in the 20th century was also a result of the Nazi genocide, which almost completely eradicated both Yiddish and Ladino as spoken Jewish languages.

[478] On the "revival" of the Hebrew language see Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). On the ideological process of monolingualization in the pre-state Jewish *Yishuv* in Palestine see Yael Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004). On modern Israeli Hebrew as a new language, different altogether from historical Hebrew, referred to as "Israeli," see Ghil'ad Zukcermann, *Israelit safa yafa* [*Israeli - A Beautiful Language*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2008).Claiming that in the past few decades for many Israelis Hebrew has been the only language does not mean they don't know or even use other languages; rather, these languages are marked as foreign by the native speakers, acquired only in school, and do not take part in the same linguistic system as Hebrew – as was the case with the diglossia between Hebrew and Yiddish for East-European Jews, or Hebrew and Arabic for North-African or Middle-Eastern Jews.

Pedaya undoes the monolingual dictum of modern Hebrew by juxtaposing it with two of its ultimate opposites: Arabic and pre-modern Hebrew. Pedaya explains her use of modern Hebrew's two linguistic "others" in biographical terms. She was first exposed to Arabic in early childhood, when her parents talked to one another in the Iraqi Jewish Arabic dialect. Her father immigrated as a child from Baghdad to Jerusalem; her mother, herself a descendant of a Baghdadi family, was fluent in the dialect as well. Concomitantly, her introduction to pre-modern Hebrew came through the rabbinic side of her family, mainly through her maternal grandfather – the son of renowned Kabbalist Yehuda Pettaya – with whom she was very close during her childhood. The singularity of Pedaya's biography, however, opens up a space for much wider cultural signification: two of modern Hebrew's linguistic "others" are actually revealed to be intrinsic to its very existence. In a formative interview she gave to Nurith Aviv in the 2004 film *From Language to Language*,[479] Pedaya stated that Arabic is the language "in which I stutter since it has been imprinted in me"; it keeps intertwining itself in the Hebrew, even in the mouths of speakers for whom Arabic is no longer a mother tongue, or even a properly spoken language at all. Mizrahi Jews, second and third generation immigrants to Israel from Arabic countries, still inherit the historical affinity – if not a full diglossia – between Hebrew and Arabic, albeit in the form of a lost memory, a longing or an absence.[480] Pedaya comments:

> Two languages – Hebrew facing Arabic – between which I move. I speak of my Hebrewness [*ivriyuti*] and my Arabness [*araviyuti*] as two entities between which there lies a blindness [*ivaron*] connecting them; a kind of forgetfulness, a no man's land."[481]

The phonological proximity between the very words "Hebrew," "Arabic" and "blindness" thematizes the interconnectedness of the two ancient Middle-Eastern languages and cultures, which retain, even after more than a century of national struggles, an undeniable bond, by force of origin as well as history. The history of the Jews and the Arabs, of Jews in Arab lands, of Hebrew in the Arabic Middle-East – and any other permutation – is ineffaceable.[482] This very proximity, however, attests nowadays to the unraveling of that bond, and to the fast disappearance of the human agents who might carry it in their own linguistic practice; the proximity between "Hebrewness" and "Arabness" can only be formed today through the necessary mediation of blindness.

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[479] *From Language to Language*, dir. Nurith Aviv (Israel and France, 2004). 55 min., col.

[480] In the introduction to her forthcoming book on the place of Arabic in modern Hebrew literature, Lital Levy asks: "And what does it mean for second- and third-generation Mizrahi Jews, descendants of Arabic-speaking parents and grandparents, to write in a Hebrew haunted by the repressed Arabic-language past?" Lital Levy, *Language and Its Others* (forthcoming), p. 1.

[481] *From Language to Language,* min. 30.05.

[482] In what has become a canonical study, Ammiel Alcalay traces more than a thousand years of Jewish Arab writing, mobilizing a radical framework in which Jews are considered as natives, not as exiles – natives in the Middle East rather than exiles from *Eretz Yisrael*. Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). See also the introduction to his anthology of Mizrahi writing, *Keys to the Garden*, ed. Ammiel Alcalay (San Francisco: City Lights, 1996).

The national monolingual ideology aimed at dismantling this link between Hebrew and Arabic (alongside the long history of Jews from Arab countries), never fully succeeded, since this bond persists, even under repeated signs of erasure.

Indeed the unassimilable role of Arabic in the Israeli public sphere – the "hook" connecting Palestinian and Mizrahi lived experience in Israel – has become, over the past two decades, one of the main targets of postcolonial critique of Israeli politics and literature. The reemerging category of "the Arab Jew" (i.e., that of Jews from Arab countries and their descendants, in whose cultural identity Arabic plays a decisive role) has been used to critique not only the Eurocentric bias of Zionist historiography, but also the national, quasi-ethnic, distinction between Jew and Arab, itself a distinction so basic in present-day Israel; the Arab Jew became a political category which potentially recasts the very foundations of political affiliation in Israel/Palestine.[483] In habitually juxtaposing her Hebrew and Arabic, Pedaya can undoubtedly be said to be taking part in this postcolonial critical endeavor; but she does not stop there. To further undermine the allegedly monolingual existence in contemporary Israel, she splits the Hebrew language itself into two adversarial modalities: the modern Israeli Hebrew described above (secularized, nationalized, statist), by now synonymous with the term "Hebrew" as such; and pre-modern Hebrew, a tongue formed in exile before the secularization and the national projects – the language of prayer, of *halakhic* law and of mysticism, the not-yet-"actualized" Hebrew in which "He is invoked back a thousandfold into our life," in Gershom Scholem's famous phrasing.[484] Pedaya introduces the language of invocation into contemporary Hebrew life. True, it was her maternal grandfather, the son of a renowned Kabbalist, who transmitted this language to her; but it is nevertheless a language which still lies at the core of what, as Scholem observed almost a century ago, is mistakenly taken to be a wholly modernized, entirely secularized Hebrew. Against the monolingual ideological dictum of modern Hebrew, Pedaya summons, jointly, the erased, repressed Arabic and the foreclosed, intangible pre-modern Hebrew.

Pedaya's linguistic project sets out to explore the full scope of a Hebrew language haunted both by the ghost of Arabic and the spectral persistence of theological Hebrew:

> For me, language is way beyond a certain strict vocabulary: it is music, syntax, the soul of things, the spirit of things. It is the sole thing through which I experience the music of the Orient. What one sees as Oriental

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[483] Ella Shohat was the first to mobilize this category as a historical critique of Zionist historiography in the early 1990s; see her collection of essays, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin uses it as a critical category; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," in Ivan Kalmar and Derek Penslar (eds.), *Orientalism and the Jews (*Brandeis, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005). Yehouda Shenhav sees it as a potential political category. Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). For a historical and critical examination of these approaches, see Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of the Arab Jews in the Mashriq," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98: 4 (2008): 452-69.

[484] Gesrhom Scholem, "A Confession about our Language," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 226-27.

> Music is for me, first of all, a liturgical music, the music in which I've been used to pray since I was a kid; it's the most primal aspect of expression, pain, sorrow, longing.[485]

Pedaya's Hebrew is clearly made up of more than mere "vocabulary," but the shift in the words' signification is of decisive importance for such a de-modernizing linguistic project as hers. Earlier in the interview, Pedaya explains how the verb *le-taher* (to purify, to cleanse) – one of whose main usages in contemporary Hebrew designates operations by the Israeli army to "cleanse" or "sterilize" areas of the Occupied Territories of terrorists – opens up, for her, to an entirely opposing pre-modern Hebrew space of holy purity, tightly linked to the cleansing rituals of the Temple, signifying beauty and wholeness.[486] In stating this, she is in effect rejecting the shift from theological idiom to statist discourse, a shift unacknowledged for ideological reasons, precisely so it could map the sacred predicates onto the militaristic practice; and insists instead on hanging on to the pre-modern theological concept. "Language is Name [*Sprache ist Namen*]," Scholem famously wrote to Rosenzweig,[487] and it is the theological power of the name that the modernization of the Hebrew language had insisted on ignoring, according to Scholem, but later on managed to mobilize into a state-centered experience.[488] Pedaya, conversely, attempts to illuminate a path back from the statist political-theology of modern Israeli Hebrew to pre-modern theological Hebrew.

Pedaya insists furthermore on moving beyond vocabulary and highlights the importance of syntax and indeed music.In the above-quoted passage, she describes language as the site of non-verbal – affective, structural, sonic – expression, a vehicle of sorrow and longing. However, what may seem, at first sight, like a primordial semiotic discourse à-la Julia Kristeva, is actually discussed through its utterly social signification. Far from some pre-verbal, non-signifying phenomenon, music for Pedaya – *oriental* music [*musika mizrachit*] as religious music (liturgy and prayer) – helps to conceptualize, in another context, the difference between West and East, by highlighting those special traits of the music of the east: micro-tones in Arabic music, the upward and downward embellishments or trills [*silsulim*] that structure Jewish prayer in Islamic lands.[489] Pedaya's language incorporates Arabic and pre-modern theological Hebrew not only on the verbal level but also as a modality transforming the entire image of language; rather than delimit language to verbal expression and its manifestation in the written text – to syntax and lexical semantics – Pedaya stresses the pragmatics of linguistic use and of

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[485] Nurith Aviv, *From Language to Language,* min. 32.47.

[486] The most prominent example for the transformation of the theological lexicon into not only a secular but mainly a statist one may be found in the word *bitachon*, or *bitokhn* as the often used Ashkenazi and Yiddish pronunciation has it. In pre-modern Hebrew it used to signify the total belief in God's providence, and was transformed, in modern Israeli Hebrew, to signify the militaristic notion of state security (and therefore the belief, if there is any, in the violent power of the state's armed forces as a substitute for the sacred). Roy Greenwald discusses this notion in Nurith Aviv's film.

[487] Scholem, p. 227.

[488] Significantly, "The name," *Ha-shem*, is also the way of referring to God in post-Biblical Hebrew.

[489] Pedaya, "*Sfat ha-lev*" ["Language of the Heart"], in *Chazut Mizrachit* [*An Oriental Appearance*], ed. Yigal Nizri (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2004), pp. 109-112.

the performative voice as a locus of social signification that challenges the dominant monolingual ideology. The living voice, rising from Jewish prayers and Arabic music, brings to the fore that which had been rejected in standardized modern Hebrew – the Mizrahi accent, for instance. More generally, it inscribes the oral word's different articulation and modes of accentuation within poetic language.

Pedaya's challenge to unified, standardized modern Hebrew is therefore much broader than its juxtaposition with other languages, such as pre-modern Hebrew or Arabic. She fashions an altogether different understanding of poetic language itself – as located in the agency of a "voice," its speech, scream or cry, prayer or lament, a voice that is always socially and culturally signified (through Mizrahi accent, Arabic music, Arab-Jewish prayer). In her article "City as Text, Periphery as Voice," Pedaya claims that this voice hails from the social peripheries that carry their speech – as a voice which is yet to be transformed into the written, codified and canonized text of the social center.[490] However, this voice simultaneously dwells within the written text – as its margins (Hebrew: *shulayim*, another term for "periphery") – threatening to explode and disentangle written language from within, with words' pronunciation, form, intonation, and tune. The voice is a locus of social signification, but not in its process of mediation within the hegemonic sign system – going hand in hand with writing in creating the unified text – but a rejected, repressed and resisting sign unto itself; a differentiating signification based, rather than on the Saussurian difference structuring the written sign, on signs of voice. The voice, in Pedaya's project, forms an overwhelmed, exploding, divergent language, an oral modality that accompanies writing at the same time that it works against the modality of writing. In this sense, the voice is *not* the origin of writing (the material from which writing issues forth, while overcoming, negating, sublating it, keeping the voice as a memory of what had once existed). "Me in my multitude me / from my genesis, poetry without origin [*ani ba-hamonay ani / mi-bereshiti shira le-lo motza*]," Pedaya writes in her first book of poetry. Instead of the *origin* of writing, Pedaya's voice is what writing aims to bring out, carry on, and transmit onward.**[491]**

This voice, I argue, is at the heart of Pedaya's poetic project, but it has a very different role than the one ascribed to it in the post-romantic and later modernist trajectory of modern Hebrew poetry. Whereas the latter posits the voice as the mythic, always-already lost origin of the poem, whose traces can be found in the poem's written words, Pedaya tries to make room, in her poetic practice, for the actual voice and its

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[490] Haviva Pedaya, "*Ha-ir ke-text ve-ha-shulayim ke-kol*" ["City as Text, Periphery as Voice"], in *Ey kan: safa, zehut, makom* [*Where, Here, Language, Identity, Place*], eds. Israel Katz, Zeev Dgani, Tamar Gross (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2008, pp. 127-66.

[491] Haviva Pedaya, *Mi-teyva stuma* [*From a Sealed Ark*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1996), p. 20. "*Le-lo motza*" is highly significant here: literally "without origin," it may also mean "with no ethnic origin", but also "no way out", "without escape". It may also, conversely, allude to Yosef Haim Brenner's seminal short story "*Ha-motza*" ("The Way Out"), in effect alluding to a whole tradition in early 20th Century (Ashkenazi) Hebrew literature depicting young Ashkenazi immigrants to Palestine and their cultural and social rootlessness [*dmut hatalush*]. Indeed, toward the end of "Khirber Khizeh," S. Yizhar himself alludes to Brenner's short story, raising the question of the "*motza*," the possible escape route, or solution, to the political and ethical entanglement portrayed in the story. See Chapter One.

phonological and intentional manifestations: accent, tune, music. Moreover, if when construed as mythic, already-lost origin, the poetic voice indicates the stylized speech of the male Ashkenzai poet working under the monolingual mode of a "revived" modern Hebrew, then Pedaya's actual poetic voice sets out, by contrast, to subvert this structure through myriad vocal modalities positioned outside the monolingual ideology of modern Hebrew, especially the marginalized genre of as women's prayer and lament. In a recent book on modern Hebrew's "national" poet, the post-romantic Chaim Nachman Bialik, Ariel Hirschfeld argues that Bialik revolutionized Hebrew poetry by making it for the first time "a happening, a vocal and a dramatic event," and constructing its reader as "a man who embodies the poem in his voice, body and personality."[492] The gender bias here is no accident, as it forms a mirror-relation between the poet of the Hebrew national revival (whose heyday is 1880s-1920s) and the contemporary monolingual male Israeli reader (in the 21st century): the original voice of the poet, already lost in the written version of the poem, is supposedly recovered by the reader's voice through his performative act of reading. Thus, the poetic voice exists only in the two ends of the poem – as mythical origin and future oral reading – and can supposedly be fully retrieved from its numb, lifeless written words.

Pedaya, by contrast, tries to form a voice within the poetic domain itself, and not at its threshold. This voice is not the poet's voice, negated in the poem as a written text and exposed only in its performance, but a voice aligned with the written signs as integral, albeit subversive, part of the poem. "Voice and writing emerge together out of the ark," Pedaya says to Nurith Aviv in a later film, *Holy Tongue, Secular Language*,[493] referring to her first book, *From a Sealed Ark.* Ark (Hebrew, "*teyva*") is a complex polysemy designating "a word" or "a letter," "a musical bar," "Noah's Ark," the ark in the synagogue, and originally the Holy Ark, the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple. Indeed, when a prayer leader chants, he does so in front of the Ark (literally "passing before the ark"). Hence, the chanting/praying voice is inseparable from the written word; it is part and parcel of the poetic word, of the *teyva,* and not in some metaphorical sense (as in "the poetic voice"), but in a very real and literal one. For that precise reason, the voice does not fully derive from the written text of the poem – either as a recovery of its lost origin, or as a performative reading that revives the "poetic voice" – to create one hermetic, discrete, and unified textual unit. Rather, since it is an integral part of the poem and a culturally signifying expression unto itself (the Mizrahi pronunciation, the Arab-Jewish prayer, the Arabic music), the voice does not accord with writing – indeed, it stands in opposition to "writing." The poetic text here revolves around a voice not recovered from the written word – although written it is not *of* writing – establishing voice as music that comes from the margins to undermine the history of the center. The accented and embellished idiom is called upon to destabilize the standardized language, the sound of the East to upend the Eurocentric writing of the nation. This voice can be channeled orally, as Pedaya does in Nurith Aviv's films, where her

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[492] Ariel Hirschfeld, *Kinor arukh: Leshon ha-regesh be-shirat Ch. N. Bialik* [*The Tuned Harp: The Language of Emotions in Ch. N. Bialik's Poetry*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2011), p. 30.

[493] Originally "*Leshon kodesh, sfat khol*", the film's title's unfortunately unidiomatic, literal, official English translation is *Holy Tongue, Language of Sand*, dir. Nurith Aviv (Israel and France, 2008). 73 min., col.

linguistic discourse becomes literally embodied through her vocal performance with her pronounced Iraqi accent, her use of alliteration, and her frequent recourse to a pre-modern historical layer of Hebrew. The real challenge which her work has faced, however, has been how to channel this voice of the periphery – oppositional as it is to the written hegemonic discourse and its practice of "poetic voice" – into written poetic form. In order to achieve this, Pedaya has had to move away from contemporary poetic forms and their (non-)vocal procedures and appeal to a very different poetic modality.

2. *Piyyut* Poetry

When Pedaya made her debut into Hebrew poetry in the mid-1990s, she introduced a very different poetic idiom than the one prevalent at the time: instead of writing modernist or post-modernist lyric poems, or experimenting with neo-modernist political poetry, Pedaya turned to the liturgical Jewish poem, the *piyyut*, as her model for contemporary poetic writing. Her first book, *From a Sealed Ark*, actually contains 28 *piyyutim* addressing the divine directly as if in "a conversation aimed at God or about Him," to use Peaday's own definition of *piyyut*.[494] The last poem in that book, and one of the first she'd written, is a good starting point for unveiling the potential inscribed in her contemporary *piyyut* poetry.[495]

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אָנָּא בְּרֹךְ

אָנָּא בְּכֹחַ

תַּתִּיר נַפְשִׁי צְרוּרָה

אָנָּא גַעְגּוּעִים וְהֶמְיָה

דְּרוּשִׁים לִי יוֹתֵר מִן הַקַּיָּם

שֶׁאֶכְסֹף

וּכְלוּם לֹא יָבוֹא

אֲבָל שֶׁלֹּא אַפְסִיק לְבַקֵּשׁ

אָנָּא הַחְזֵר בִּי מִלִּים שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי פַּעַם טְהוֹרוֹת

וְאֹמַר

אָנָּא רַחֵם

הַיּוֹם הַיּוֹם וְלֹא מָחָר

אָנָּא בָּשָׂר שֶׁגַּם אִם אֶתְמַמְהֵהַּ

בּוֹא אָבוֹא

וּבַדְּבָרִים עַצְמִי אֶתֵּן אָנָּא

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[494] In her essay about the book, Ida Tzurith stresses how this direct address to God, "so frequent in the ancient sources – in the Bible, the *midrash* and the *piyyut*" had almost completely disappeared from modern Hebrew poetry, and re-appeared only in the context of the holocaust or, in its secularized version, as an address to the beloved. Ida Tzurith, "*Ke-daber im ha-el bi-sfato: be-shuley Mi-teyva Stuma le-Haviva Pedaya*" ["As One Talks to God in His Own Language: In the Margins of Haviva Pedaya's *From a Sealed Ark*"], *Hadarim* 14 (2002): 127-31.

[495] Haviva Pedaya, *Mi-teyva stuma*, pp. 73-4. This poem appeared for the first time as part of her first publication, in *Hadarim* 11 (1994).

please by softness
please by power
release my bound soul
please longing and soul stirrings
are more necessary to me than
that which exists
may I yearn
and nothing come
but may I not stop seeking
please return to me words you once gave me pure
and I will say
please have mercy
today today and not tomorrow
please declare that even though I tarry
I will surely come
and into things I shall insert myself please
…[496]

The poem alludes to the well-known medieval *piyyut* "Please by Power" [*Ana be-kho'ach*], which originated in 12th Century Kabblistic circles, probably in Provence. The medieval *piyyut*, which starts with the line "Please with the power of Your great right hand free the bound" (compare with Pedaya's first lines: "Please by softness / please by power / release my bound soul"), includes 42 words whose first letters compile together the sacred 42-lettered name of God.[497] Containing God's sacred name, the *piyyut* was recited on special occasions in the Jewish calendar such as Friday night or by a deathbed, and was anachronistically ascribed to Rabbi Nehunia ben Ha-kanah, who supposedly wrote it before the destruction of the Second Temple. A prominent figure in the Kabbalitsic tradition, Nehunia is an oft-mentioned figure in the Hekhalot and Merkava literature, and considered the author of *The Book Bahir* [*Sefer Ha-bahir*], one of the most important texts of the Kabbalah (written/found in 12th century Provence). Nachmanides (1197-1270) discusses the book and its pseudo-epigraphic author extensively.[498] It is clear, then, why Pedaya, who embraces the Kabbalistic tradition and wrote an important book on Nachmanides,[499] would be particularly interested in this medieval *piyyut* and the mythical figure who authored it. However, she doesn't stop at merely rewriting the liturgy as if it were just so much raw material for a modern poem; instead, "Please by Softness, Please by Power" echoes the very structure of the *piyyut* and its mystical language, so that in turning to the *piyyut* tradition it aims to reconstruct this tradition as a contemporary one.

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[496] Translated by Harvey Bock. http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poem/item/6356. Translation modified.

[497] According to the Kabbalistic tradition, God's name consists of 14 combinations of three basic letters (hence 42 letters), a late version of the explicit unpronounced tetragrammaton.

[498] On the history of this medieval *piyyut and* of its alleged author, as well as some key points in its interpretations, see: http://www.piyyut.org.il/textual/460.html

[499] Haviva Pedaya, *Ha-ramban* [*Nachmanides*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2003).

Pedaya's "Please by Softness, Please by Power" is itself, I suggest, a *piyyut* addressing the divine. This address is punctuated through the petitive particle "please" [*ana*], whose many repetitions integrate the poem and stress its pressing rhythm. The speaker addresses God with numerous pleas, all concerning the possibility of speech, the attempt to say a word, to break out of the closed circle of muteness, to breach the sealed ark. Pedaya's *piyyut* stages a claim for speech while simultaneously creating the locus for the implementation of that speech: the plea for words ("please give me words you once gave me pure") is made for the sake of the speech act that the poem itself performs: "and I will say / please have mercy." However, the plea for words is not made as a poet's creative, sovereign act; there is no expectation for an auto-derivation of the speaking "I." The words are not created from the poet's deep inner self but are all mediated by God; the speaker in this poem asks God to return to her the words he once gave her ("please give me words you once gave me pure.") This poetic voice is therefore very different from the spontaneous, autonomous emergence of the romantic and post-romantic poetic voice in Hebrew poetry, an emergence whose prototypical structure is revealed in Bialik's poem "I didn't Win Light in a Windfall": "I hewed my light from granite. / I quarried my heart... Neither hired, nor borrowed, nor stolen – my very own."[500] Indeed, it also differs dramatically from Nathan Zach's later modernist trajectory – one of the peaks of which serves in Pedaya's *piyyut* as a negated intertext. Hamutal Tsamir has already shown how in the opening gesture of his poetry, Zach constitutes the individual speaking "I" through the removal of all social tumult: "Quiet for a moment. Please. I'd like to say something [*Rega echad sheket be-vakasha. Ana. Ani rotze lomar dvar ma*]."[501] The demand to mute the surrounding world, to turn off a noisy "outside," enables a constitution of the speaking "I" as an act of alleged self-constitution.[502] The exact poetic locus where the speaking "I" is formed in Zach's poem is the turn from "please" to "I," from "*ana*" to "*ani*"; whereas the petitive "*ana*" ("please") still presupposes the existence of others to whom the appeal is addressed, the "*ani*" ("I") that directly follows it already declares itself the lyric voice of and for the self, a voice linking self-will to an utterance of the self, a voice that "would like to say something." This non-romantic version of the lyrical "I," substituting apostrophe with direct address while deflating the pompous language of symbolist poetry into seemingly mundane speech, was Zach's famous, epoch-making (though in the final account, atypical) version of Hebrew modernist lyric poetry.[503] In Zach's poem, this slight change from "*ana*" to "*ani*" encodes

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[500] Trans. Ruth Nevo, http://israel.poetryinternationalweb.org/piw_cms/cms/cms_module/index.php?obj_id=3347

[501] Translation from Ruth Karthun-Bloom, *Profane Scriptures: Reflections on the Dialogue with the Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Toronto: Scholarly Book Services. 2002). p. 8.

[502] Hamutal Tsamir, *Be-shem ha-nof: le-umiyut, migdar ve-subyektiviyut ba-shira ha-yisre'elit bi-shnot ha-chamishim ve-ha-shishim [In the Name of the Landscape: Nationalism, Gender, and Subjectivity in Israeli Poetry in the 1950s and 60s]* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2006), pp. . Tsamir's reading does not take into account that the poem starts with what was at that time the standard formula for address in public at the beginning of a speech – and so not so much a negation of the social scene of address as a recognition thereof.

[503] And as Chana Kronfeld has shown, very different versions of the lyrical "I" were written the poetry of "The Statehood Generation," the very group of poets for which Zach served as self-declared leader and theorist. See Chana Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion: The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*

the emerging moment of an allegedly autonomous "I" [*ani*] out of the dialectical sublation of the address to others, the *please* [*ana*];[504] in Pedaya's *piyyut*, "*ana*" is neither negated nor sublated, but rather repeated over and over again, never turning it into an "*ani*", a speaking "I." This poem, rather than an "I" constituted on the ruins of an address to others, is actually constructed out of the power of that address: only through a constant address to the divine does the speaking "I" exist at all. Pedaya's voice is made of the plea to God to give her a voice, to put a voice within her. As against the self-constitution of the post-romantic and modernist lyric voice, based on the negation of the genealogical or social platform from which it arises (Bialik: "nor by a did of a father's will"; Zach: "Quiet for a moment"), Pedaya's *piyyut* suggests a voice repeatedly performing an address outside of itself, whose "self" is conferred on it from without, a voice which is always a mediation on an "outside."

Pedaya brings the ecstatic, mystical language she had discussed in length in her book on Jewish mysticism, *Ha-mar'eh ve-ha-dibur* [*Sight and Speech*], into her *piyyut*. In it, she distinguishes between two ecstatic experiences: first, an *introverted* ecstatic experience aiming at the merging of the believer with God, i.e. her incorporation in God's being which results in her loss of all words; and second, an *extroverted* ecstatic experience in which the believer, joining God though always recognizing a gap or a distance from him, is linked to the divine through the creation of various mediating forms – the image held in thought and the voice emerging from it, the picture and the word – "sight and speech." This formulation of mediating forms results in a concept of poetry as "linked to the will to get a hold of God's utterance, to speak on His behalf, for His sake, before Him or by His virtue."[505] Indeed, "Please by Softness, Please by Power" stages ecstatic speech that emerges out of God's words, neither a silence reached through unification with God nor autonomous human speech in His absence; it is, in fact, speech performed in ex-stasis, in the deviation from the stasis of the self. The poet faces God and, in order to capture his image and words, realizes a desire of sight and speech; speech for her is part of the will to obtain the mystical secret – not its representation nor its negation. Speech, Pedaya asserts, is as intrinsic to any experience of revelation as sight is: both become a modality of bodily activation, a visual-vocal performance, *from* God and *to* Him, while always acknowledging an insurmountable gap. In Pedaya's *piyyut*, as in her conception of extroverted mysticism, God is the ultimate addressee – a full, ever-present Being; and the speaking "I" is entangled in His creative power. It is from this power – and *to* this power ("Please by Power") – that she issues her utterance. In her analysis of the letters of Rabbi Ezra and Rabbi Aziel, two of the first Kabbalists, Pedaya writes:

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[504] (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming), esp. chapters 1 and 6.

On the "difference in repetition" in the shift from *ana* to *ani,* in both Natahan Zach and Daliah Fallah, as the birth of meaning, see Shaul Setter, "*Kmo leshonot hafukhot nitvakeakh al politika: radikaliyut leshonit be-shirat Dalia Fallah*" ["Dismantling the Poetic Subject: On Daliah Fallah's Radical Poetry] in *Festschrift for Ziva Ben Porat* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, forthcoming).

[505] Haviva Pedaya, *Ha-mar'eh ve-ha-dibur: Tiv'ah shel chavayat ha-hitgalut ba-mistorin ha-yehudi* [*Sight and Speech: The Experience of Revelation in Jewish Mysticism*] (Los Angeles: Kerub, 2002), p. 32.

> The prophet starts... at a state of devotion, speech issues out of his throat and flows from the abundance of his human thought; but since the latter is devoted to divine thought, the prophet is actually in a state of "as if receiving from above," for this speech is almost unwilled and forced, "as if a person tried to keep the words in his mouth and they were delivered against his will."[506]

The mode of speech that Pedeya researched in *Sight and Speech* and fashions in the poetry of *From a Sealed Ark* is neither autonomous nor inspired but issues forth by God's virtue; it is forced, obligatory discourse. In her essay "The Heart's Language," Pedaya further clarifies the possible meaning of such speech when she unpacks the rabbinic principle of "*anus al pi ha-dibur*" (literally "forced by speech") and suggests replacing one form of forced communication (the normalizing, codifying, unifying, ideological speech of the state and of hegemony in general) with another form of forced communication, the one she advocates in both her scholarly and poetic work, that ecstatic, mystical talking forced by God, emanating from and directed toward His own speech.[507] In so doing, she in effect politically questions ideological, autonomous and resistant speech – unforced speech, discourse opposing enforcement – as the only possible opposition to the forced speech of the state, taking to task the history of modernist Israeli poetry (from Nathan Zach to Yitzhak Laor, for example) which is basically predicated on this dichotomy.[508] Rather than a spontaneous power of resistance, Pedaya posits a speech on behalf of God, through His own power, forced in His power and so always a delegated power.

Furthermore, thinking about the medieval *piyyut* "Please by Power" through the lens of Pedaya's *piyyut* "Please by Softness, Please by Power" allows for a significant transformation in the meaning of the Hebrew word for power ("*ko'ach*"). The coupling of "softness" with "power" achieves a signification of *ko'ach* quite distinct from its modern Israeli one. In its modern sense it stands for an active, realized, fulfilled power, very much like the violent, military-based ruling power of the German *Gewalt*; but in medieval philosophical Hebrew, *ko'ach* meant a potential, an as yet-to-be realized possibility, and thus precisely that which does not exist historically but only as capability or potentiality.[509] Pedaya's *piyyut* indeed prefers willed over actualized reality ("please I need longing and sighing / more than what exists") in a course of desire not aimed at fulfillment ("may I yearn / and nothing come"); it moves in the domain of unlimited plea, as endless demand without realization ("may I not stop asking"). This *piyyut* fashions a language of inexhaustible address whose purview is not the future but the present itself – "today today and not tomorrow" – willing the present to appear, and to appear

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[506] Ibid, pp. 147-48.

[507] Pedaya, "Language of the Heart," p. 111.

[508] See for example Yitzhak Laor's paradigmatic phrasing of this anti-ideological, resistant, un-forceful poetic speech: "The Poet's saying: I have / No choice, even if the authorities create / Everything, even the history / Of poetry, even the limitations / Of speech I have no choice / But to resist." Yitzhak Laor, *Layla be-malon zar* [*Night in a Foreign Hotel*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 1992), p. 41.

[509] This connotation of *ko'ach* as potentiality has, however, persisted in modern Hebrew legalese.

differently. This brings to mind Walter Benjamin's conception of the messianic Judgment Day as indistinguishable from any other day. On this day, according to Benjamin, things will stay exactly as they were, and only the slightest change, a change itself imperceptible (that is, outside of the historical-phenomenological order) will transform it into the end of time.[510] Gershom Scholem refers, at a key moment in his seminal essay "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," to the famous Talmudic *aggadic* tale in which the Messiah walks among us, sitting at the gates of Rome dressed as a beggar or a leper and waiting for the time of his revelation (explicating "the concept of the Messiah who continually waits in hiding.")[511] In this sense, Peadaya's *piyyut* makes use of a messianic idiom – not aimed at historical realization but at a potential transformation of what already exists in the here and now. At one point, it can indeed be seen to be taking upon itself the Messiah's very speech ("that even though I tarry / I will surely come"); it is precisely the language of potentiality that enables the feminine speaker of the *piyyut* to incorporate the image of the Messiah, construed as a figure of potentiality. Even on the linguistic level, Pedaya's mystical-messianic *piyyut* is written in an emphatically non-modern Hebrew – a language of "yearning," of "longing and sighing," of "words... pure," expressing an endless appeal to God. This language is accessible through God, always in potentiality, and not an active, resisting human tongue.

"Please by Softness, Please by Power" thus decisively deviates from the main course of modern Hebrew poetry. Ktzia Alon has recently suggested that against what poet Lea Goldberg (1911-1970) termed "the courage to be secular [*ha-ometz le-chulin*]," signaling the secular-modernist, Europe-influenced and -oriented ethos of modern Hebrew poetry, Mizrahi poetry has been written from "an epistemology of the sacred," often through the poetic form of *piyyut*.[512] In my reading of Pedaya's *piyyut*, I would like to add that this epistemology signifies an important shift in literary historiography, now taking into account both the genealogy and structure of the *piyyut* as a model for poetry. Made of the intertwining of words and melody – as well as the social context in which both are uttered – *piyyut* is poetry chanted in public, whether in the domestic social sphere or in community. It originated in the synagogue's prayer leader composing and chanting hymns additional to the permanent prayers, gauging the congregation's reaction and subsequently adding or subtracting, rehearsing his *piyyut* week after a week or abandoning it to compose different ones. Only later was a distinction between *paytan* (the composer of *piyyutim*) and *chazan* (the cantor chanting them) instituted, and *piyyutim* began to be written down prior to their performance; the earliest date from 3rd or 4th Century Palestine.[513] Some *piyyutim* were introduced into the prayer books (both

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[510] Walter Benjamin, "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings IV*, p. 407.

[511] Gershom Scholem, "Towards an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1995), p. 12. This famous *aggadah* appears in Tractate *Sanhedrin*, 98b.

[512] Ktiza Alon, *Efsharut shlishit le-shirah: iyunim be-poetika mizrachit* [*Third Alternative for Poetry: Studies in the Poetics of Mizrahi Poetry*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2011), p. 63.

[513] Haberman claims that in the beginning it was in fact forbidden to set *piyyutim* to paper and that in the age of the Talmud "'the writers of blessings are like the burners of the Torah,' so that no prayer will

the *machzor* and the *sidur*), becoming an integral part of synagogue services. Since the 16th century, after the Jews' expulsion from Spain, *piyyutim* became part of collective events other than prayer – such as family gatherings, weddings, funerals and Shabbat and holiday communal assemblies – mainly in the Jewish communities expelled from Spain to Arab countries. In an article she wrote about *piyyut*, Pedaya asserts that, whereas in the Ashkenazi *piyyut* tradition, its main locus was the written prayer book and the synagogue, in the Arab-Jewish tradition, the *piyyut* has had numerous loci; according to Pedaya, Mizrahi culture as a whole has indeed "revolved around the *piyyut*."[514]

In turning to *piyyut*, Pedaya thus furthers a different vision and model of poetry (and indeed of *poiesis*, of which the term *piyyut* is derived) than the Romantic-European one. Rather than an original mythic voice turned into a written text and provided for reading, *piyyut* is a fusion of words and melody, an always-chanted text that historically (and quite un-mythically) originated in an oral pronunciation for which writing is only secondary. True, many written *piyyutim* are known to have been composed by exceptional Hebrew grammarians and formed according to rigid linguistic, prosodic, and rhetorical conventions.[515] Yet even in written form they deviate from the poetic model of the Romantic poem – or rather from its canonical, though perhaps distorted, image.[516] And rather than a text to be read individually, privately, and allegedly apart from the social conditions of its formation and perception, *piyyut* consists of a chanted text embodied in a concrete social situation, a communal speech act; it exists solely as a social formation, never as a self-enclosed object or event, always an element within a larger happening.[517] A *piyyut* is, therefore, never a discrete, unified, hermetic object; on

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become a routine: the ancient prayer was in the spreading of hands, definitely not in a writing." A.M Haberman, *Toldot ha-piyyut ve-ha-shira* [*The History of Piyyut and Poetry*] (Ramat Gan: Masada, 1970-2), p. 26.

[514] Haviva Pedaya, "*Mavo le-havant ha-piyyut*" ["Introduction to the *piyyut*"], in http://www.piyut.org.il/articles/134.html.

[515] Interestingly, it was Abraham Shlonsky – a leading modernist Hebrew poets in the 1930s and 40s – who described himself in one of his renowned poems as "a paving *paytan* in Israel" [*paytan solel be-yisrael*] – someone whose poetic labor is part and parcel of the socialist-Zionist effort of the time; but also, significantly, a *piyyut* composer – paytan. The Futurist poet Shlonsky tried to reclaim the poetic value of the p*iyyut*'s linguistic innovations, after many years in which it had been sidetracked by Hebrew Romantic poetry that considered the *piyyut* too rational and formulaic, and not emotive enough. It should be noted, however, that this image of the *piyyut* which Shlonsky aimed to recuperate is very different from the one to which Pedaya refers when she writes her own *piyyutim*: Pedaya is less interested in the *piyyut*'s poetico-linguistic bravura and more in its oral and pious qualities.

[516] The gap between the canonical image of the Romantic poem and its various real manifestations is beyond the scope of this chapter. For an apology for the Romantic poem as possessing leftist, emancipatory qualities – as against its conservative, anti-social image – see Robert Kaufman, *Negative Romanticism: Adornian Aesthetics in Keats, Shelley, and Modern Poetry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

[517] And see Yedidya Peles's sociological analysis for *piyyut*: "We can define the *piyyut* neither according to its content nor its form... but only according to the function it serves. Its historical boundaries, its definition as liturgical poetry, its role within the prayers – these all derive from its use. The *piyyut*, like music or drama, has no life and bears no interest other than when it is 'said' during the prayer." Yedidya Peles, *Ha-piyyut be-Israel: Mekorot la-sotzyologya shel ha-piyyut* [Piyyut *in Israel: The*

the contrary, its fusion of words and melody is elastic and modular: sometimes the same words have different melodies, and at other times a melody is fitted with different words. *Piyyutim* have parallel versions in different communities according to the various oral traditions, oftentimes deviating from the standardized, singular and authorized versions of written poetry. Furthermore, some *piyyutim* were not written by an *auteur* – a renowned writer for whom the poem is a mode of personal expression that bears his/her artistic signature; the first oral *piyyutim* were created by cantors who chanted them, of whom we know hardly anything at all. The earliest extant *piyyutim*, dating from the 3rd and 4th centuries and later transcribed, are therefore called "the anonymous *piyyutim*." And even later *piyyutim*, for instance those written by linguistic masters like Rabbi Eliezer Ha-kalir (8th Century), Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon (10th Century) and the medieval Andalusian poets (Ibn Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, and others), take their place not only in their authors' artistic corpus (their *diwans*), but also in prayer books, without attribution of authorship, alongside *piyyutim* written by others, known or unknown, and prayers of unspecified origin. Finally, unlike the allegedly European tradition of the lyric poem, *piyyut* resides within a mainly Arab-Jewish tradition; indeed it started in Palestine, reaching as far as Italy, Germany, and France, but flourishing mainly in 9th Century Egypt and Babylon and arriving at its peak in 11th and 12th Century Muslim Spain. In the early modern period, after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, *piyyut* was revived mainly in Safed (Palestine), North Africa, Yemen, and Babylon. The renown 19th century German-Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz famously claimed that the revival of poetry in ancient Israel in the form of *piyyut*, centuries after the break with biblical poetry, is due to the major influence of Arabic poetry; and while historically inaccurate, his theory captures the close relationship between *piyyut* and the Jewish experience in the Arab world: as a creative continuum and a wellspring of life experiences, *piyyut* is tightly connected, as Pedaya asserts, to the East.[518]

Thus, in turning to the *piyyut* Pedaya appeals to a different poetic modality than the lyric one in which modern Hebrew literature has allegedly been written (or rather into which it was read). In effect, she also rejects in the process the anachronistic teleological construction of Hebrew poetry's history as leading seamlessly from biblical poetry through *piyyut* to Andalusian medieval poetry, Renaissance poetry in Italy and modern and modernist poetry. This teleological narrative foregrounds exclusively a poetic tradition written according to the patterns and norms of European lyric poetry. Instead, Pedaya asks how it would be possible to think the history of Hebrew poetry if *piyyut* were taken as its paradigm – to think it through the female chanting voice, the address to an ever-present God, expressed in a mystic-messianic, pre-modern, non-nationalist Hebrew. In Virginia Jackson's terms, Pedaya is asking how it would be possible to read Hebrew poetry as against the lyricization of poetry so prominent not only in the Western

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Sociology of Piyyut] (Tel Aviv: Khulta, 1979), p. 10.

[518] Aharon Mirski discusses Graetz's assertion and claims that it is based on erroneous historical information, and shows that the first *piyyutim* were written before any influence of Arabic poetry could have taken place. See Aharon Mirski, *Ha-*piyyut*: hitpatchuto be-eterz Israel u-va-gola* [*Piyyut: Its Development in Eretz Yisrael and in Exile*] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990).

Romantic and modernist poetry, but also in a poetic tradition, such as that of modern Hebrew poetry, that insists on its Western image?[519]

Considering the history of Hebrew poetry from the vantage point of *piyyut*, Pedaya can be seen not only as returning to its ancient tradition but also as aligning herself with a specific trajectory within modern Hebrew poetry (Mizrahi poetry, broadly construed), a trajectory in which *piyyut* plays a major role. As mentioned above, Ktzia Alon has stressed Mizrahi poetry's firm lines of attachment to *piyyut*; but this holds not only for modern/modernist Mizrahi poetry (which emerged in Israel during the 1960s and 70s, as the conventional critical narrative goes),[520] but to pre-Israeli Hebrew poetry, written either in the Jewish communities in Arab countries or in the Jewish Yishuv in early 20th century Palestine. Lev Hakak has studied the Hebrew poetry that was written in Iraq from the 18th Century to the early 20th Century – almost all of it in the form of *piyyut*.[521] And Lital Levy has followed one specific Andalusian-style poem written by an Iraqi Jew – Dahud Semah – and dedicated to Bialik, showing how in its very formal devices (and their constant thematization), Semah's poem questions the European (and, I would add, also lyrical) cultural origins of modern Hebrew literature.[522] It is indeed *piyyut* – not the lyric poem – which appears in different phases and various places in the history of Hebrew poetry: 3rd Century Palestine, 10th Century Andalusia, 18th Century Baghdad leading up to 20th and 21st Century Israel, inter alia. Instead of a poetic history foreshadowing the European lyric form as its ultimate point of reference (together with the modern, secular, and national context in which the lyric poem evolved), the

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[519] Virginia Jackson argues that since beginning of the 19th century, the lyric mode has become the normative definition of poetry – as if the *poem* itself, in its zero-level, is a lyric poem. Jackson shows how this new constitution of poetry in the image of lyric poetry happened not only because of the expansion of poetic writing according to the lyric modality but mainly because of the prevalence of what she calls a "lyric reading" – a specific mode of poetry reading that reconstitutes the poetic text, even if not a lyric one, according to the lyric pattern. Lyric reading defines what is considered to be a poem, thus distinguishing between what is and what isn't a poem, going on to constrain the individual poem as a closed unit, and to signify the possible modes of a poem's reading. There is no lyric poem, Jackson claims, without a close reading of that poem – slowly and meticulously reading the written text in its entirety as a unified unit, out and of itself; she argues that there is no lyric poem without the aesthetic realm in which it resides, and without the aesthetic judgment that constitutes the poem as a single, defined, unified object. See Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[520] Erez Bitton's poetry, published in journals during the 1960s and in two major books in the 1970s, is widely considered the starting point of self-identified Mizrahi poetry in Israel. See Ktzia Alon, *Oriental Israeli Poetics*, pp. 14-20. And Yochai Oppenheimer, *Ma ze li-hyot otenti: shira mizrachit be-Israel* [*What Does It Mean to Be Authentic: Mizrahi Poetry in Israel*] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2012), pp. 42-51. Both scholars, however, do not fail to discuss earlier Mizrahi poets such as Aharon Almog and Avraham Bar-Oz, who wrote ethnically-charged protest poetry as far back as the 1950s.

[521] Lev Hakak, *Nitzaney Ha-yetzira ha-ivrit ha-chadasha be-bavel* [*The Budding of Modern Hebrew Creativity in Babylon*] (Or Yehuda: The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 2003). Hakak bases his research on an earlier anthology of Iraqi *piyyut* poetry: Abraham Ben-Jacob (ed.), *Shira u-fiyyut shel yehudey bavel ba-dorot ha-acharonim: osef u-mivchar* [*Hebrew Poetry of Babylonian Jewry: Collected and Selected Poems*] (Jerusalem: Ben Tzvi Institute, 1970).

[522] Lital Levy, "'From Baghdad to Bialik with Love': A Reappropriation of Modern Hebrew Poetry, 1933," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42:3 (2005): 124-55.

insistence on *piyyut* may potentially lead to an alternative history of Hebrew poetry: not necessarily modern, definitely not secular, communal rather than private, at least partially detached from the stranglehold of nationalism, and located in the broadly-construed geographical space of the East.

However, conceptualizing Hebrew literature through *piyyut* would not simply result in a continuous course of history as uninterruptedly flowing from 3rd Century Palestine to contemporary Israel. In that case, it would merely reproduce Hebrew literature's conventional historiography by substituting the lyric poem with *piyyut* as its ultimate formal paradigm.[523] I should stress here that writing a *piyyut* in the age of lyric poetry necessarily means forming an oppositional stance towards Hebrew literary historiography. Pedaya's turn to *piyyut* constitutes, therefore, a transformative move not only within modern Hebrew poetry but indeed within Mizrahi poetry itself. Israeli Mizrahi poetry emerged in the 1960s and1970s as protest poetry rallying against the "whitening" of Israeli identity, economic discrimination against Mizrahim, and the unacknowledged – even erased – past of Mizrahi Jewish culture in the mainstream Israeli narrative. This vein of Mizrahi protest poetry – from Erez Bitton and Shelly Elkayam to contemporary writers such as Vicky Shiran and even Mati Shemoelof – has posed a great ideological challenge to mainstream Ashkenazi Israeli poetry; yet it has often done so using the conventional, already-canonized poetic idiom of Hebrew poetry of the time, i.e. poems organized around an individual lyrical "I," written in a deflated tone and in a language confined within the boundaries of modern Hebrew.[524] Indeed, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, protest poetry – first introduced en masse into Israeli poetry by Mizrahi poets – became its leading trajectory; even prominent "non-political" poets suddenly found themselves writing protest poetry during these years.[525] The lyricization of poetry underwent, in Hebrew letters of that period, an interesting twist: it became bound to poetry's radical politicization.

Yet, throughout these years Mizrahi poerty has also introduced an altogether different paradigm for Hebrew poetry: behind the idiom of politically-engaged poetry stood poetry written in the form of *piyyut*, which challenged its very poetic language, procedures and

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[523] It would result in retaining the graph and the map as the two leading methodological historiographical metaphors. See Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, ch. 3.

[524] It is highly significant that the harsh criticism sometimes addressed to this poetry by the "gatekeepers" of the Hebrew letters did not usually attack the poems' political content, but rather their deviations from the prevalent poetic idiom of the era: the poems were considered too flowery in their descriptive language, sometimes incomprehensible, others bombastic and old-fashioned. See, for example, Benny Ziffer's infamous review of Erez Bitton's first poetry book, "*Ha-shefa, ha-sasgoniyut ve-hakesem*" ["Abundance, Colorfulness, and Magic"], *Ha'aretz*, 10/26/79.

[525] For the rise of political poetry as the major idiom of Hebrew poetry in the late 1970s, see Yochai Oppenheimer, '*Ha-zkhut ha-gdola lomar lo': shira politit be-yisrael* ['*The Great Right of Saying No': Political Poetry in Israel*] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2004). On the political turn in Israeli poetry as the culmination of political radicalism embedded in the poetic language of several poets of the Statehood Generation, see Chana Kronfeld, "*Shira politit ke-omanut lashon be-shirata shel Daliah Ravikovitch*" ["Political Poetry as Verbal Art in Daliah Ravikovitch's Poetry"], *Kitmey Or,* eds. Tamar S. Hess and Hamutal Tsamir (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2011); and *The Full Severity of Compassion,* Op. Cit.

historiography. And from the vantage point of Pedaya's *piyyut* poetry, we may now recognize – perhaps for the first time, as in a Benjaminian history written from the *Jetztzeit* – the hidden existence of this trajectory throughout the history of Mizrahi poetry. Shva Salhoov's poetry of revelation, Ya'akov Bitton's prophetic protest poetry and Almog Behar's *piyyut* poetry are only a few examples of the explosion of contemporary Mizrahi poetry written in non-secularized Hebrew, with significant (and signifying) undercurrents of Arabic, in pre-modern poetic and textual forms.[526] These contemporary poets relate quite explicitly, in their work, to the works of their predecessors, revealing a hidden trajectory in Mizrahi poetry and exposing its formal-political challenge to the very history of Hebrew literature: Almog Behar, to give one example, rewrites Amira Hass's marginal yet noteworthy Mizrahi poetry, exploring her unstandardized language made of abundant Hebrew with Arabic undertones.[527] Peadya, then, is part of an important trajectory in contemporary Hebrew poetry which ruptures, in its very existence, the modern and modernized historiography of Hebrew letters; yet paradoxically, as we shall see, this rupture challenges the very paradigm of "modern rupture," which has historically organized the (modern) historiography of (modern) Hebrew poetry.

3. Transmission

Pedaya's oeuvre is based on the act of transmission: transmission of the peripheral signifying voice of the East subsumed under the pre-modern and non-secular *piyyut* poetry that merges words and melody into a collective event of utterance. Simply put, transmission is the transference of a thing – be it object or utterance – from one person to another: from hand to hand or by word of mouth. It presupposes proximity, attachment and cooperation. Meir Buzaglo – a Mizrahi philosopher and the son of David Buzaglo, the great Moroccan-Jewish *paytan* of his generation – explains that, unlike a report or a statement, transmission does not take the form of an argument examined according to its truth-value, but is rather based on the intimate relationship between an addresser and an addressee: "the addressee is attached to the addresser; s/he is loyal to him and doesn't just believe him/her."[528] Thus, the meaning of "transmission" [*mesira*] cannot be reduced to the "message" [*meser*] transmitted through it but is rather

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[526] See Shva Salhoov, *Torat Ha-chitukhim* [The Torah of Cutting] (Jerusalem: Karmel, 2011). Ya'akov Bitton, *Ina Dada* [*Great Mother*] (Tel Aviv: Keter, 2007); Almog Behar, *Tzim'on Be'erot* [*Wells' Thirst*] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2008).

[527] Almog Behar in *Ha-kivun Mizrach* 9 (2004): 22.

[528] The thick wordplay between addressee (*nim'an*) and faithful (*ne'eman*) in the original Hebrew ("הנמען מסור למי שמסר לו: הוא נאמן לו ולא רק מאמין לו") is completely lost in the English translation. Meir Buzaglo, *Safa la-ne'emanim: mach'shavot al masoret* [*A Language for the Faithful: Reflections on Tradition*] (Jerusalem: Keren Mandel, 2008), p. 35. Buzaglo thus suggests that it is precisely because transmission *cannot* be reduced to its truth-claim (and thus cannot be easily refuted) that it is simultaneously stronger and more elastic than a mere argument: the addresser is faithful not only to the historical accuracy of her utterance's content but also to the one who transmitted this utterance to her, and even to the chain of transmission itself.

entangled with the very process of transmission – as well as the relationships that structure it and which it keeps formulating in its various enactments. But transmission is simultaneously never only an intersubjective event, composed of individual "I" and "Thou," but an act taking place within chain of transmission – an intra-generational, social, community-based, collective transmission; a transmission [*mesira*] of tradition [*masoret*].[529] Indeed, Pedaya has maintained that the special language of Jewish mysticism, its secret knowledge and interpretative modalities, was handed down to her through a chain of transmission from her great grandfather, Kabbalist Yehuda Pattaya, to her maternal grandfather and then her mother. This course of transmission was not based on written forms – on Rabbi Pattaya's writings, for example, in which the mystical language remains implied and vague – but was rather created through oral learning, first within the significantly female domestic sphere of the household, then in the synagogue and in communal gatherings; it was in these half-private, emphatically intimate realms that this knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the next.[530] In his famous essay "The Storyteller," Benjamin discusses the pre-modern story as an oral form transmitting not only the content of an experience, mediated through signs, to the listeners, but indeed the very worldly, thick experience (*Erfahrung*) encapsulated in it; through transmission, the listeners also come to share this experience, which therefore becomes at their disposal. Benjamin contrasts storytelling to the modern novel – the first literary form already conceived as a written one and structured on the individualistic regime of bourgeois society.[531] The relation between *piyyut* poetry and lyric poetry may be modeled, in many ways, on the one between the pre-modern story and the novel: whereas the modern literary form is based on arbitrary and deferred transmission, mediated by a sign system, the pre-modern form derives from a continuum of live transmission, physical proximity, community circles and social attachment.

Pedaya's insistence on this course of transmission – on the chanting voice, pre-modern Hebrew, *piyyut*, Arab-Jewish history – stands in opposition to the rupture thesis prevalent in Hebrew literature's historiography.[532] A recently published collection of essays concerning the poetry of Avot Yeshurun, for example, revolves around this "rupture," following Yeshurun's own famous statement: "You asked how does one become Avot Yeshurun? The answer is, from the ruptures [*min ha-shvirot*]."[533] Lilach

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[529] In English, too, "tradition" derives from the latin verb *tradere* – "to give over," "to hand down," or "to transmit." Tradition is therefore the transmission of something from generation to generation.

[530] From a private conversation with Haviva Pedaya, 18 January, 2012.

[531] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," *Selected Writings III.*

[532] More precisely, the negotiation between rupture and tradition lies at the heart of many historical accounts of modern Hebrew literature. Baruch Kurzeil's prominent essay has set the terms of the debate: *Sifrutenu ha-chadasha: hemshekh o mahapekha?* [*Our New / Modern Literature– Continuity or Revolution?*] (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1959). Yet this negotiation between rupture and tradition is itself structured on the rupture of modernity – on the new or the modern [*chadash*]; it takes the rupture of modernity as the precondition for either revolution or continuation.

[533] Avot Yeshurun, "*Pticha le-re'ayon*" ["An Opening for an Interview"], in *The Collected Poetry II* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 1997), p. 124. Yeshurun worked through the notion of rupture throughout his poetry. His 1974 groundbreaking book is unmistakably titled *Ha-shever ha-suri afrikani* [*The Syrian-*

Lachman, the volume's editor, underlines the double sense of "rupture" for Yeshurun. On the one hand, this rupture is inscribed into Israeli poetic modernism by Yeshurun's dismantling of the lyrical "I," allowing for numerous personae, through his dissolution of the unified Hebrew language into a linguistic multitude and by his avant-garde break with the closed poetic forms. On the other hand, it signifies the rupture of 20th Century Jewish modernity itself: the violent interruption of the continuum of Jewish existence, the horrific collapse of so many Jewish forms of life, the dissipation of various Jewish languages and literary traditions – in other words, the rupture of all that Yeshurun had coded in his use of the loaded term "Yahandes."[534] Yeshurn is positioned on this double rupture – the modern Jewish one and the modernist Israeli one; and while speaking the language of the Israeli modernist rupture in order to lament the Jewish modern one, his entire poetics evolves around the latter – as a perpetual attempt to cope with it. Yeshurun's modern/modernist lyric poetry speaks the language of ruins and ruptures, infinitely working through them.[535] Although a marginal poet for decades, very radical in his poetic language and politics, Yeshurun came to signify in recent years the prevalence of the rupture thesis in Hebrew literature historiography; precisely as a poetic modality which does not overcome the rupture but is ever positioned within it and unable to move beyond it, Yeshurun's poetry stresses the rupture of modernity as the ultimate point of origin of Hebrew literature. Pedaya, who wrote a long essay in this collection (and is much indebted to his poetics in general), nevertheless suggests an oppositional move – not, as Yeshurun writes, "from the ruptures," but – as I would like to suggest, following Pedaya – through transmission. In her own work, rather than write modern/modernist lyric poetry on the ruins of pre-modern languages and poetic forms while endlessly lamenting their loss, Pedaya recreates the non-modern poetry of *piyyut*; not attesting to the crisis of memory but rather trying to maintain and re-form the transmission of a living one.

Pedaya's oeuvre is entangled with a variety of traditions of transmission: not only *piyyut* poetry but also Kabbalah as a work of transmission. In his classic essay "Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah," Scholem defines the way the Kabbalah sees itself as "the true tradition [*masoret*], transmitted [*nimseret*] in secret, since the first human, from one generation to the other."[536] Kabbalah, according to Scholem, is a continuously

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African Rift*] – juxtaposing the political break created by the 1973 war ("The Yom Kippur War"), the historical rupture of Jewish modernity and the actual geological rift that created the present-day Middle East.

[534] Lilach Lachman, "Preface" to *Eikh nikra, Avot Yeshurun: Kotvim al shirato* [*How Shall We Read – Avot Yeshurun: Collection of Essays on His Poetry*], ed. Lilach Lachman (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2011), p.12.

[535] Lachman urges Yeshurun's readers "to listen [to his poetry] through the liturgical poem, the Hebrew *piyyut*, the Qasida, the midrash, memory rituals and the mixture of mother tongues, from ancient times until our very days." Ibid, p. 12. Yet this listening – as significantly opposed to *reading* – to all these pre-modern poetic forms happens on the basis of their own rupture in modernity, trying to follow their remaining traces.

[536] Gershom Scholem, "*Ha-mistorin Ha-yehudi ve-ha-kabala*" ["Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah"], in *Dvarim be-go* [*Selected Writings I*] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), p. 232. The Kabbalah is understood as the primal wisdom which was transmitted to Adam by the angel Raziel, or alternatively, as the oral law

transmitted tradition, a wisdom which was received (root k.b.l) and is then passed down; its essence lies in this process of transmission, since the Torah as a whole is, for him, "a transmission of words/things/prophetic oration" [*mesirat davar*]." He further states the well-know rabbinic principle that "there is no written Torah without oral Torah," and adds: "if we wanted to distill all Torah to the one transmitted in writing, it wouldn't even be the Pentateuch, only the Ten Commandments.... Torah should be understood as oral Torah.... Only through mediation, the oral Torah, can the Torah become comprehensible."[537] I maintain that this coupling of tradition and the process of transmission is key to Pedaya's work. Pedaya herself indeed emphasizes the processes of transmission within the Kabbalistic tradition: in her book on Nachmanides, she claims that his challenge, and that of 12th Century biblical interpretation in general, was finding ways to proceed with the work of transmission of secret knowledge and of revelation in an age of emergent written forms and of literal, rational, and textual biblical interpretation.[538] What, asks Pedaya in general, can potentially be the status of oral chains of transmission within written culture? She poses this question for the contemporary moment as well: what is the status of orality, of the voice, within literary written culture? What is a *piyyut* in times of lyric poetry? What sort of transmission is possible through the modern and modernist rupture? Pedaya's insistence on transmission doesn't lead her to nostalgia, i.e. the bypassing of past ruptures in the name of the "good old days" of pre-modern communitarian bonds.[539] She does not follow Yeshurun's "work of memories" [*avodat ha-zikhronot*], entirely informed by the modern/modernist rupture; Pedaya's challenge is to constitute modes of transmission in relation to, but also *against*, the rupture of modernity, of written culture, of secularization and nationalism, and finally of Hebrew revival and of "modern Hebrew literature." Her transmission is not blind to these ruptures; but rather than disrupt any possibility of transmission, these ruptures transform the chain of transmission so that it is never secured, uninterrupted, continual and smooth. Modern transmission is thus conditioned by these ruptures, yet rather than determining it in a dichotomous way they exist as multiple ruptures, themselves caught in the movement of transmission – a transformative transmission. Fittingly, Pedaya has named her encyclopedic and fragmented project "A Comprehensive Jewish Time."[540]

("*tora she-be-al p*e"), given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

[537] Gershom Scholem, "*Ma lanu tora*?" ["What Is Torah For?"] in *Od davar* [*Selected Writings II*] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1989), p. 95.

[538] Nachmanides, according to Peadya, is the one confronting most vigorously the rise of written culture and the demand for organized, rational interpretation of the Bible, while still pursuing the symbolic and transmitting labor of mysticism. Yet he does not consider them as two parallel courses – rational interpretation on the one hand and Kabbalistic mysticism on the other – but reveals their points of contact. Following Nachmanides, Pedaya tries "to understand not only how the *pshat* [literal interpretation] draws on the *sod* [mystical interpretation], but also how the *sod* draws on the *pshat*." Haviva Pedaya, *Nachmanides* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), p. 10.

[539] See Ferdinand Tönnies's formative distinction between *Gemeinschaft,* the pre-modern community based on tight bonds and a mutual goal, and *Gesellschaft*, the modern society composed of individualistic subjects and lacking communal cohesion.See his classical *Community and Society* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1975).

[540] "A Comprehensive Jewish Time" [*Zman yehudi male*] is a project developed as a response to the five-volume encyclopedia *A Modern Jewish Time: Jewish Culture in A Secular Age* [*Zman yehudi chadash:*

These modes of transmission also call for a different concept of tradition, where "tradition" isn't simply understood in opposition to modernity – voice versus script, pre-modern community versus modern individuality, *piyyut* poetry versus lyric poetry, transmission versus rupture – or as an oppositional stance within modernity itself.[541] Indeed, David Sorotzkin has recently claimed that in the Jewish world, tradition itself was a category inaugurated in modernity: not only does it *belong* to modernity but in fact it constitutes the different ideological positions in modernity, both orthodox and secular.[542] Sorotzkin suggests a historiography of Hebrew modernity not determined by the rupture of secularism (as a forerunner of the single trajectory of historical ruptures – from the Enlightenment, to national revival, catastrophic extermination and state sovereignty), but rather by different traditions, each coping with the challenges imposed by Christian-European modernity. Similarly, Pedaya calls for a historiography of Hebrew letters not structured on the rupture of modernity, so that even the writing of or about this rupture (such as Avot Yeshurun's) could be introduced into it but read from a different perspective. She suggests a movement of transmission in modernity that does not follow the patterns of the modern rupture. This modern transmission, entangled with tradition, is not positioned on the axis stretching between religious and secular, since the very distinction between the two poles already presupposes the rupture of European secularism.[543] Rather, it relies on the history of the Jewry of Arab countries and Mizrahi Jews in Israel's *traditional* [*mesorati*] – i.e., neither wholly religious nor entirely secular – way of life. Daniel Schroeter suggests that for Jews in the Arab world, "the road to modernity" was very different than the one taken by European Jewry. Whereas for the latter, modernization was marked by the watershed of emancipation, i.e. the polarization of "modernized" (westernized and secularized) and "traditional" (orthodox-religious) groups, for Arab Jewry modernity did not entail the crisis of secularization at all. In the Arab-Jewish world, "there was no Reform movement as in Western Europe and the United States and, therefore, the bitter division between Orthodox and Reform or

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tarbut yehudit be-idan chiloni] (Tel Aviv: Keter, 2007). As against the modern, the novel, the secular, and the cultural – which already presupposes its others and excludes them (the pre-modern, the "prior to the new," the religious, what is not yet a culture but only rites and rituals) – Pedaya launches an attempt to rethink Jewish history in its entirety, as a continuum of different modes of exile. http://www.zmanpedia.com/index.php?title=%D7%A2%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%93_%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%A9%D7%99.

[541] Discussing tradition's role in theories of time in modernity, Peter Osborne writes that "[d]ependent in its origins upon the physical proximity of the members of a community, and kinship as a model of social power, [tradition's] primary medium is not self-consciousness, but what Adorno describes as 'the pregiven, unreflected and binding existence of social form.'" Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 127. It is precisely this pregiven, unreflective, non-symbolic character of tradition – as against the modern rupture – that Pedaya challenges in her work.

[542] David Sorotzkin, *Orthodoxia u-mishtar ha-moderniyut: hafakata shel ha-masoret ha-yehudit be-eropa ba-et ha-chadasha* [*Orthodoxy and Modern Disciplination: The Production of the Jewish Tradition in Europe in Modern Times*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2011).

[543] See Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), and Niklaus Largier, "Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience," *Representation* 105:1 (2009): 37-60.

between religious and secular was entirely absent."[544] Unlike the European model, in which modernity itself created a rift between the traditional Jewish community and those who "heeded its call" and left, in the Arab-Jewish world many of the modern reforms were introduced within the limits of the observant Jewish community, sometimes by the rabbis themselves, and often within the context of the *halakha* itself. According to Schroeter, the shackles of Jewish community were less binding in the Arab-Jewish world from the start, and hence were never so dramatically broken as a result of modernization; modernity, in this Arab-Jewish context, didn't mean an interruption in traditional collective transmission but rather its retooling.[545] Furthermore, If we follow David Sorotzkin, we may indeed read the history of European Jewry through the same concept of tradition. Pedaya's modes of transmission therefore call for a revisionary historiography, whose vantage point would be the East, but which might be relevant for Jewish culture world-wide, as a history written "from the East."

4. **The Outcry of the Orient**

Pedaya's oeuvre poses a great challenge to modern Hebrew literature as a field of knowledge, a research discipline, a mode of writing and reading, as well as an ethos and ideology. Her turn to pre-modern Jewish textuality, her privileging of the signifying voice, her insistence on transmission instead of rupture, her writing from and for the East – all of these subvert the presuppositions of this field of knowledge, and even the very discursive laws governing what is considered its proper objects of study; Pedaya's work destabilizes each of the terms forming the category of "modern Hebrew literature."

"Modern." As a field of knowledge, modern Hebrew literature is delimited by the preliminary distinction between the modern and the non-modern, arguing for the necessary, immanent modernity of the field. Gil Anidjar suggests that this preliminary modernity ultimately equates the modern history of Hebrew literature (as a field of knowledge created in modernity) with the history of "modern Hebrew literature" (as a field of knowledge whose objects belong to modernity).[546] This field is then structured on

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[544] Daniel J. Schroeter, "A Different Road to Modernity: Jewish Identity in the Arab World," in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, ed. Howard Wettstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 156.

[545] The turn from the European modernization model, in which modernity is seen as creating the divide between the strengthening of communal autonomy (in Orthodox Judaism) and the adaptation to the secular and later national contours of the Christian-European world (in the Jewish Enlightenment and then Zionism), enables Schroeter to reveal that in the Arab-Jewish world the question of modernity is always entangled with that of colonialism. So rather than the drama of emancipation, secularization and eventual assimilation into European society, modernization in the Arab-Jewish context spelled intricate relations with the allegedly modern and secular forces of colonialism. In Arab-Jewish modernity, Schroeter writes, "we see the paradox of acculturation without assimilation, modernity without erosion of religious faith, and the nation state without the undermining of religious community." Ibid, p. 160.

[546] Gil Anidjar, "Literary History and Hebrew Modernity," in *Semites* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

the rupture of modernity, later reproduced in the research conducted within it: the identification of the (modern) field with its (modern) objects of study creates a closed circuit of modernity excluding anything considered "non-modern." This is not only an arbitrary historical framing – delimiting the field to textual production from the 18th century to present – but is in itself already a mode of writing history from the rupture of modernity, that is from modernity as a decisive rupture. Pedaya, by contrast, insists on modes of transmission: on textual creative activity in modern times closely linked to pre-modern textuality as it rejects the rift between the modern and the non-modern as the organizing principle of the field. She introduces, for example, *piyyut* poet Israel Najara (1555-1628), rabbi and mystic Abraham Aboulafia (1240-1291) and the ancient mystical writing of the *Hekhalot* and *Merkava* Literature of the 2nd to 5th centuries, into a field which was originally constituted on their preliminary exclusion.

"Hebrew." Pedaya challenges the monolingual regime organizing the field of "modern Hebrew Literature" as one encompassing literary works written in Hebrew alone, or more precisely in one specific Hebrew modality, the modernized Hebrew of "the Hebrew language revival" – the allegedly-secular language of the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskala*), of Jewish nationalism (Zionism and literary "revival" – *Tchiya*) and finally of the Jewish state (Israel and the modernism of Statehood Generation poetry). Modern Hebrew literature is therefore also the literature of modern Hebrew. Yet Pedaya's Hebrew is far from being (only) modern. Let us recall her portrayal of the "other" Hebrew inside her – that of the ancient Hebrew *piyyut* and of Jewish mysticism – as well as the way the Arabic keeps punctuating her Hebrew. Indeed, Pedaya's Hebrew – the language of her poetry, her research, her speech – is an ecstatic, mystical, messianic Hebrew, a Hebrew addressing the divine as a tactile presence, the medium through which His words can be uttered. In other words, Pedaya's turn to non-modern textuality is accompanied by an appeal to a non-modern Hebrew, to a linguistic layer not yet formalized and standardized as a monolingual, modern, secular and ultimately national "Hebrew."

And finally, "Literature." Modern Hebrew Literature has mobilized a category of literature which is less universal and abstract and more historically- and culturally-specific than is usually understood. According to Raymond Williams, literature is a modern and European category created during the 18th and fully consolidated only in the 19th Century. The rise of literature is linked to bourgeois notions of taste and sensitivity, to the inauguration of "free time" and "leisure" as part of capitalist economy and the constitution of national linguistic traditions in post-Westphalia Europe.[547] The constitution of "literature" in the 18th Century was also bound to the standardization of the aesthetic realm (the authoritative formalization of which is found in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*) as a space organizing the reading procedures of what becomes, within it, objects for

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2008), pp. 68-71. Anidjar goes on to claim that the singularity of Hebrew literature lies precisely in its claim for modernity formed on a necessary break – whether interruptive or continuous – with its pre-modern past. In this essay, Anidjar challenges this break of modernity, asking what the field of Hebrew literature would look like without its presupposed modernity.

[547] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 45-54.

reflective judgment and aesthetic pleasure. From its inception, modern Hebrew literature has taken on the modern European notion of "literature" as its aspired horizon. Its insistence on belletristic writing, on the division into discrete genres (lyric poetry, the short story, the novel) and on the artistic value and aesthetic evaluation[548] stands in contrast to the myriad Jewish-Hebrew (but not exclusively Hebrew) textualities that failed to follow these dicta at that time.[549] In her work, Pedaya follows this Jewish-Hebrew pre-modern tradition: her textual corpus constantly disrupts the boundaries of modern literary genres. Furthermore, her turn to mystical writings or to the liturgical voice questions the very realm of "literature," to which her textual and non-textual events allegedly belong. When she considers her great-grandfather as the source of her own oeuvre and draws a creative lineage from him, Pedaya portrays a pseudo-public, very much familial and intimate, mode of transmission; her not-always-communicable line of transmission, furthermore, disturbs some of the basic patterns of the aesthetic realm in which literature – including modern Hebrew literature – is supposed to reside.[550]

Pedaya's long poem "Man Walking" [*Ish holekh*] expresses and performs her critical stance vis-à-vis modern Hebrew literature while simultaneously gesturing towards a potential alternative to it. Written in 1992 and first published in a poetic journal in 1994, the poem was, however, included in Pedaya's third book of poetry only in 2009, and may be argued to bridge over the different periods of her writing;[551] her 2011 scholarly work *Walking Through Trauma* originated as a response to this poem and may be seen as its expansion, destabilizing again the distinctions between different genres of writing.[552] A poem of wandering, vagrancy, walking in and toward exile, "Man Walking"

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[548] See Michael Gluzman's discussion of the dispute between Ahad Ha-am and Berdichevsky on the national value of Hebrew belletristic literature at the end of the 19th Century. Gluzman argues that although Bedichevsky's aestheticist, individualistic approach opposed to Ahad Ha-am's nationalistic dictum, it nevertheless sought to develop the belletristic writing of the self in the service of nation-building. Michael Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 12-35.

[549] See Gil Anidjar's first book, in which he discusses Arab-Jewish textuality in medieval Andalus while not following the later generic and disciplinary divisions – such as the Hebrew poetry in medieval Spain, medieval Jewish philosophy and Jewish mysticism. Instead of different fields of knowledge, studied according to different methods within different academic disciplines, these allegedly separate "genres" were practiced by the same authors and even co-exist in the same text. Gil Anidjar, *'Our Place in al-Andalus': Kabbalah, Philosophy, Literature in Arab-Jewish Letters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[550] I am alluding here to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, in which disinterestedness and public communicability are some of the basic requirements for reflective judgments. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), eps. pp. 89-97.

[551] It was first published in *Hadarim* 11 (Summer 1994) and reprinted in Haviva Pedaya, *Dyo adam* [*Man's Ink*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2009), pp. 54-56. I believe that it is significant that Pedaya decided not to include this poem in either one of her first two poetry books (for both formal and thematic reasons), yet reprinted this poem in 2009, thus reintroducing it into a very different historical and poetic arena.

[552] Haviva Pedaya, *Halikha she-me'ever la-trauma: mistika, historiah, ritual* [*Walking Through Trauma: Rituals of Movement in Jewish Myth, Mysticism, and History*] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2011). At the very end of the book Pedaya writes: "This research developed in an unusual way. A poem I wrote in 1992, 'Man Walking,' made me start researching exile as a walking praxis. In the beginning it was simultaneously

starts with the statement, "A man walking / from Damascus to Paris" (perhaps depicting Subhi Hadidi, the Paris-based Syrian literary critic to whom the poem is dedicated). It immediately turns, however, to what might seem at first as the speaker's dramatic monologue describing her own act of walking, a simple meandering turned into a Rilke-like address to the reader to change his or her own life: "You who wanted to be free in your home / Prepare the vessels of exile." "Man Walking" can also be read as a poem itself transformed into a vessel of exile for the wanderer to carry: with this poem one walks, or rather this poem one utters while walking. Not a fully modernist poem positioned within the aesthetic and reflective realm, it contains a voice that is in motion together with the person creating it; the poem becomes itself a ritual of exile – a way of going into or bringing on exile [*la-asot galut*], in Peadya's terms. Indeed "Man Walking" expresses one of the fundamentals of Pedaya's entire corpus, namely the indistinguishability between codex and myth, law and ritual, literal (*pshat*) and figural or even mystical interpretation (*drash* and *sod*), written text and vocal performance; and in this instance, also the indistinguishability of *halakha* (the Jewish codex) and *halikha* (walking, wandering).[553] "Man Walking" does not only represent the law of wandering, it also performs it as ritual; its poetic language becomes the mode of its happening. The exilic existence for which the poem calls is meant to be carried through the poem's very words as they are being pronounced in wandering.[554]

The allusion to the biblical prophet Ezekiel running throughout the poem it is indicative; unlike Cain, whose wandering reflect the punishment for the sin he committed, Ezekiel stages his wandering as a modality of coping with a collective catastrophe – Israel's exile – and in themselves bear the potential for redemption.[555] Rather than only a response to expulsion and the punishment of exile, walking itself creates an alternative space for the potential appearance of redemption; this "space" is the non-space of wandering, of a movement starting with an expulsion from a "real" place (Jerusalem) to no distinct place whatever. In this sense, redemption is not located "someplace" at movement's end; the movement is *away* from that "place," not towards it – not only a specific direction but the very linear directionality is reversed here. The poem contrasts "Abraham went from Be'er Sheva to Moriah" with "I went for years from Jerusalem to

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a theme-examination and a self-examination." Ibid, p. 238.

[553] See Haviva Pedaya, *Walking Through Trauma*, esp. p. 42. Pedaya suggests there that the rejection of the distinction between law and ritual has been one of the main principles of Jewish mysticism. In the Zohar, suggests Pedaya, the Talmudic text is not negated as disembodied textuality standing in opposition to the ritual but rather posited as part of the mystical text as ritualized law.

[554] Indeed, many people returned to the words of this poem – kept pronouncing them or repeating on them – in their way, to fashion their own version of a politics of exile. See, for example, Udi Aloni, *Local Angel* (London: ICA, 2004); Zvi Ben-Dor, "'Eyb, Heshumah, Infajrat Qunbula: Towards a History of Mizrahim and Arabic," English by oznik.com (http://oznik.com/toward-a-history-of-mizrahim-and-arabic.html).

[555] Pedaya maintains this distinction between Cain's wandering of atonement and Ezekiel's prophetic walk as the two Biblical archetypes of exilic meanderings. She asserts that, whereas the first was discussed at length in rabbinic literature, the second was echoed more in mystical literature. Indeed it is this second model of wanderings – ritualistic, prophetic walking towards exile as a locus of potential redemption – that Pedaya wishes to put forth in her work, including "Man Walking." See also Pedaya, *Walking Through Trauma,* pp. 59-66.

Be'er Sheva." As opposed to the patriarch's journey to sacrifice his own son (in a scene destined to become a Christian prefiguration of the passion and one of Zionism's constitutive topoi, am image of the nation scarifying its sons on the altar of national redemption), Pedaya walks in the other direction – not to Jerusalem but away from it, and indeed away from teleological movement toward any specific place. She does not substitute a different place for Jerusalem; the speaker is rather looking, in Pedaya's own terms, for a movement within space not destined for any place. Pedaya replaces place with space: "I've walked in many deserts / Yet have not arrived at Moriah / Now I feel within homeland / Since I've suddenly understood how this land moves and moves / and how uncomfortable its trembling is." Walking away from Mount Moriah creates a reversed homeland where specific place becomes an entire space, the land unlocking its very self, trembling. No more terminal goal and ultimate object of intentionality and desire – whether for "secular" Zionism ("gaining yet another goat and another acre") or for "religious Judaism" (messianic redemption of the land itself), the land is a space for – and the not object of – messianic potentiality.[556] Walking *on* the land, rather than *towards* it, Pedaya reverses the directional movement of actualization: the horizon of the final place becomes a shaken, explosive space.

וּבֵין אַחַי אֲנִי תּוֹעֶה
וְיֵשׁ הַהוֹלְכִים מֵעִירָק לְאָמֶרִיקָה
וְיֵשׁ מִלְּבָנוֹן לְנִיקוֹסִיָה
וְיֵשׁ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל לְפָלַשְׂתִּין
וְיֵשׁ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא מוֹצְאִים כְּלוּם כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל נֶעֱדֶרֶת

And amongst my brothers I wander
And some walk from Iraq to America
And some from Lebanon to Nicosia
And some from Israel to Palestine
And some from Israel to Israel to Israel to Israel
And finding naught, for Israel from Israel is absent[557]

Although multidirectional, all of these ambulations depict the trembling space of the East: "[s]uddenly I saw that the Orient itself wanders." With an obstinate repetition of the

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[556] Pedaya begins her theological-political essay with a distinction between space and place: whereas "place" is a locatable territory, "space" is the medium through which place and the desire to seize it become intelligible. Her entire essay can be read as an attempt to challenge the priority given to "place" in the prevalent political discourse in Israel/Palestine and to suggest a shift from to "space": instead of politics understood only through the vector of intentionality – aimed at a place either already-attained or longed for – Pedaya calls for a politics of movement in a space devoid of locatable places. Within this politics of space, rather than being the desired object, the land (in its formulation within secular-national modernity) becomes the medium in which different movements, whether horizontal – between various collective formations – or vertical – between man and God – take place. Pedaya, *Place and Space*, esp. pp. 21, 39-40.

[557] Pedaya, "*Ish holekh*" ["Man Walking"], in *Dyo adam*, p. 55. Translated by Zvi Ben-Dor, in http://oznik.com/toward-a-history-of-mizrahim-and-arabic.html

conjunction "*ve*" ("and") – insinuating a biblical urgency in medieval anaphoric form – Pedaya portrays the different historical movements of exile within the space of the Orient: first the Iraqi Jews who skipped Israel or stayed there only momentarily, immigrating from there to America; then the Palestinian refugees who were exiled from Lebanon to Nicosia; simultaneously there are those walking "from Israel to Palestine" – perhaps those Palestinian Hamas activists who were deported from the Occupied Territories to Lebanon (in ideological state-discourse, they moved from "Israel" to "Palestine") in 1992, exactly when the poem was being written.[558] This "walking" is therefore not only a movement between two distinct places but between two different definitions of a place, or two forms of government and rule in allegedly one single place. Finally, there are those who walk "from Israel to Israel to Israel" – neither between two places nor two definitions of a place but within the very same place, repeating the place's name until it disentangles as either origin or destiny and is turned from a place to a space, a space of absent place – the shaken, non-place-space of exile.[559]

The space that "Man Walking" portrays is therefore very different from the one propagated by the geography of modern Hebrew literature: rather than aspirational destiny (even if yet unrealized), Jerusalem is a place one must leave never to return ("Never shall I return to my Jerusalem that I left," Pedaya writes in a different poem).[560] Simultaneously, the city of Tel Aviv – Israel's "cultural center," the heart of revived Hebrew, the modern, secular, Western place – doesn't even exist on Pedaya's map.[561] As against the dyadic structure of these two cities – old-religious Jerusalem versus modern-secular Tel Aviv – Pedaya sets Be'er Sheva, the peripheral city in the Negev desert where she lives and writes, linking it with Baghdad, Damascus, Paris, Nicosia, and Delphi (where the poem was written). She sketches an entirely different map of Israel, or rather of Israel/Palestine, than the common one: not a Western/European Israel spread between the mythological origin of Judeo-Christian culture (Jerusalem) and its contemporary culmination in modern, liberal, urban centers (Tel Aviv) – but an Oriental Israel, linked to other Mediterranean cities and located within the Middle East. Such an Israel – devoid of historical and contemporary centers, perceived from, while also advancing the vantage point of the East – is revealed here as an Israel absent from

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[558] In December 1992, the Israeli government deported 415 leading figures of Hamas and Islamic Jihad to Lebanon as a response to the killing of an Israeli border policeman. This decision, debated in the Israeli supreme court in real time and later provoking international condemnation and a unanimous UN Security Council condemnation, was one of the most controversial decisions made by the left-center Israeli government of the time – and severely criticized in leftist circles in Israel.

[559] Interestingly, instead of the "present absentees" – the Palestinians who were expelled from their homes in the 1948 war but remained within what became to be Israel, unable to return to their original homes and own their property – in this poem it is Israel itself which "from Israel is absent."

[560] Haviva Pedaya, "*Ha-shiva li-yerushalayim*" ["The Return to Jerusalem"], *Dyo Adam*, p. 99.

[561] Compare with Dan Miron's famous assertion that "all of Israeli literature still 'belongs' to Tel Aviv." Dan Miron, "*Im lo tihye yerushalayim*" ("If there is no Jerusalem"), in *Im lo tihye yerushalayim: masot al ha-sifrut ha-ivrit be-heksher tarbuti-politi* [*If There Is No Jerusalem: Essays on Hebrew Literature in Cultural-Political Context*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 1987), p. 234. And see Hannan Hever's critique of Miron's position in his "*Sifrut isre'elit megiva le-milchemet 1967*" ["Israeli Literature Responds to 1967 War"], *Te'oria u-vikoret* 12-13 (1998): 179-87.

"Israel," a space without a place, a space of exile.[562] From this geography of Oriental exile, exile within the land (or even within the homeland itself), Pedaya carves, in the last lines of the poem, a call for a potential exilic historiography of (Hebrew) writing:

בְּתוֹךְ עִבְרִיּוּתִי עִוְרוּתִי עַרְבִיּוּתִי
שֶׁכֵּן זוֹ מוּסִיקָה שֶׁרַק מִתְנַגֶּנֶת
שְׂפָתַי נָעוֹת
אַךְ קוֹלִי אֵינוֹ נִשְׁמַע
שֶׁכֵּן זוֹ הַשָּׂפָה שֶׁבָּהּ קִלְּלוּ וְאָהֲבוּ הַגְּדוֹלִים
מִמֶּנָּה סֻלַּקְתִּי כְּדֵי לְהִפָּדוֹת עִבְרִי דַּבֵּר עִבְרִית
עַכְשָׁו בְּכָל זֹאת צוֹעֵק הַמִּזְרָח

Within my Hebrewness my blindness my Arabness
For it is music played itself only in the mind
My lips are moving
But my voice is not heard
For it's the language in which the great did curse and love
From which I was expelled to be redeemed Hebrew-speak-Hebrew
In spite of all this the Orient now cries out[563]

These reverberating final words of "Man Walking" directly undermine the presuppositions of modern Hebrew literature. In lieu of Hebrew as a modern national language, Pedaya insists on the linkage – both historical and etymological – between Hebrew and Arabic; this linkage, underpinning medieval Jewish textuality, for example, is now embodied in Pedaya's poetic language. And instead of an exclusively written text, Pedaya stages a verbal "music" in its very scene of utterance; the allusion to biblical Hannah's prayer – "only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (1 Samuel 1: 13) – concentrates on the structure, not the content, of a female prayer addressed to the divine and pleading for God's help. In this way, Pedaya distances herself from the figural voice of the lyric poem. The turn to the great poets from the past [*ha-gdolim*] – those from medieval Andalus, the *paytanim* – or to the language the adults [*ha-gdolim*] spoke around her (Arabic) and "did curse and love," maintains a pre-modern idiom (for example that of the curse, a poetic sub-genre or formalized speech) as against the deflated language of much of modernist Hebrew poetry. The speaker rises against her "expulsion" from this pre-modern, prayer-infused idiom for the promise of false redemption entailed in modern monolingual Hebrew. She thus reverses the course of redemption: lamenting her expulsion *from* exile – from its music, language, idiom, and poetry – she quotes a Zionist adage calling for comprehensive use of the Hebrew language, common in pre-state Palestine – "Hebrew [man or woman], Speak Hebrew!"

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[562] Pedaya's stance, however, is distinct from such models of "internal exile" as under the Stalinist regime. Although oppositional, her text are indeed not outlawed outright and censored; quite on the contrary, her texts may be seen as signifying a new direction in contemporary Israeli/Palestinian cultural geography which, going back to Agamben's discussion of this term, both adhere to their time and exceed it.

[563] Pedaya, "*Ish holekh*," p. 56. Translated by Zvi Ben-Dov; translation slightly modified.

Pedaya is mocking the linguistic narrowness inscribed into the very words of this dictum, as compared with the playful resonant richness linking, in the first line of the above-quoted passage from the poem, Hebrew, Arabic and blindness (*ivriuti, ivruti, arviyuti*). The modern call for monolingualism – *ivri, daber ivrit!* – sounds dull, repetitive, uninteresting in comparison. Pedaya seeks refuge from the realized, modern return to the promised land and tongue. She asserts that this modern moment, the moment of modern Hebrew and of modern Hebrew literature, is not the final one; the "now" of the poem – the "now" which Pedaya's oeuvre aims to constitute since 1992 – explodes, not unlike Benjamin's *Jetztzeit*, a modern moment as the entire past flashes through it.[564] In this "time of the now" a voice cries out, and this voice – of played music, of prayer, of curse and love, of past poets (an inappropriate voice sometimes unheard while at other times yelling) – is the Orient: "the Orient now cries out."

Interestingly, this outcry of the Orient at the end of Pedaya's poem echoes the outcry of collectivity in Yizhar's works with which I began this dissertation: an ethical outcry disseminated between various instantiations, both Palestinian and Jewish, and so circulated throughout the space of Israel/Palestine. This outcry disrupts the post-1948 divide into two discrete national collectivities, instead envisioning Israel/Palestine as a space bearing both Palestinian and Jewish exilic – and not national – histories. Yet Pedaya's outcry further signifies what this potential exilic collective formation entails: mobilizing a peripheral voice against the written text of the center; an ecstatic-messianic, non-modernized Hebrew language, often within the *piyyut* poetic form; and a transmission of Jewish traditions overcoming the decisive rupture of modernity. Pedaya calls on us to rethink Jewish existence, both historical and contemporary, from the East: for her, the East does not mark only the last locus of Jewish history – its modern, secular, and national moment realized in the Middle East, as against its long exilic European history; rather, writing Jewish history from the vantage point of the Jewish exilic experience in the East, Pedaya shows how this experience can be potentially constituted also within contemporary Jewish existence in Israel/Palestine. Instead of marking a rupture between the Jewish exile in Europe and Jewish nationalism in the Middle East, Pedaya suggests a transmission of exilic experience within the geography of the East: Hannah's biblical prayer, the ancient *piyyut* in Palestine, medieval Oriental Kabbalah and Pedaya's own poetry – all these textual voices are encapsulated in the outcry of the Orient, an outcry which explodes national history as it seizes an image of an exilic Oriental past within Israel/Palestine itself. Insisting on the Orient as an exilic space – a non-place of wanderings – Pedaya brings this going into exile [*la-asot galut*] into the otherwise territorialized space of Israel/Palestine.

Pedaya's focus on Jewish discourse thus works precisely against the rhetoric of exceptionalism, the numerous exclusionary political practices and state ethnocratic regime, in the service of which Jewish discourse is often used in Israel/Palestine. Her

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[564] "The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, and is never seen again." Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," *Selected Writings IV*, p. 390.

project's great challenge is to mobilize Jewish discourse against its function as the ultimate guarantor of the Israeli state. Thinking from the exilic Jewish experience in the East, she objects to the recruitment of Jewish discourse for nationalistic ideology – aligning, in the name of Jewish history, with the institutional power of "the Jewish state." Simultaneously, she also rejects Eurocentric historiography, in which Europe is portrayed as the privileged exilic Jewish space, the ultimate counterpoint to Jewish nationalism bound to be located, as it were, in the Middle East.[565] Pedaya's Jewish political theology aims at reinstating an Oriental exilic Jewish experience within Israel/Palestine, and is therefore tightly linked to the Palestinian experience, itself heavily marked by exile. She does not only invoke historical Arab-Jewish alliances – as in medieval Andalus, for example – later collapsed as a result of both Jewish and Arabic nationalism; challenging this narrative of rupture, she inquires into what can be transmitted onward in order to potentially reconstitute the contemporary collectivity in Israel/Palestine as an emphatically Oriental exilic one, both Jewish and Palestinian. Rewriting Jewish history from and for the East, Pedaya suggests how Jews can join Palestinians in carrying the outcry of the Orient throughout the space of Israel/Palestine.[566]

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[565] I therefore suggest a different approach to the potentiality inscribed in Jewish exile for literary historiography than the one Allison Schachter explores in her recent book on diasporic Jewish literature. Reading Hebrew and Yiddish literature from the first half of the 20th Century, Schachter teases out the option of diasporic identities developed in diasporic literary communities as against the national paradigm to which Hebrew literature – as a writing practice, a social institution, and a mode of historiography – would soon surrender, and due to which Yiddish literature would sink into oblivion. Yet focusing on European Jewish writings, Schachter seems to locate the diasporic option in Europe and to oppose it to the national paradigm realized in the Orient. Moreover, privileging the "modernist aesthetics" of these diasporic Jewish literatures in the era of European modernism, Scahchter links the Jewish-diasopric to the historical and the timely, indeed the hegemonic (in literature, *European* literature, though not in Middle-Eastern politics). See Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Reading the work of Pedaya, however, I am suggesting a different approach to exilic Jewish textuality: inaugurated in the Orient and potentially transmitted to present-day Israel/Palestine, this textuality is anchored in the historically-untimely and politically-unrealizable. Rather than being based on the historical reality in Europe, it seeks to potentially constitute the contemporary moment in Israel/Palestine.

[566] In this respect, it should be mentioned that Mizrahi Jews are not the only ones "from the East," but also –literally as well as politically –*Ostjuden*, i.e. East-European Jews who form the majority of Ashkenazi Jews. A Jewish history written about, from and for the East is not only that of Mizrahi Jews, but has the potential of re-signifying many identities which were ideologically constructed as "Western."

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