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Choreographing Livability:

Dance Epistemes in the Kibbutz and in the Israel Defense Forces

A dissertation completed in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

By

Melissa Melpignano

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Choreographing Livability:

Dance Epistemes in the Kibbutz and in the Israel Defense Forces

by

Melissa Melpignano

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Susan Leigh Foster, Chair

Choreographing Livability: Dance Epistemes in the Kibbutz and in the Israel Defense Forces traces the historical articulation of dance as a source of knowledge-formation in Israeli culture through two emblematic sites of performance, between the 1940s and the 2000s. It also proposes a theoretical intervention through the elaboration of the framework of livability, through which I explore the life-stakes and the political investment entailed in dancing within the specific context of Israel, in relation to its larger ideological tensions and political shifts.

My investigation across sites of performance and time-periods ultimately reassesses existing narratives that have framed “Israeli dance” primarily as a joyful, nation-building, recreational, entertaining, and energetic endeavor. In order to do so, I set out the mechanisms through which different dance experiences, even those apparently disengaged from political preoccupations, have contributed to the enhancement of governmental policies and ideological goals, in

particular when such political maneuvers reiterated ethnonational divides or mechanisms of settler colonial hegemony. More specifically, through my scrutiny, supported by archival research, ethnography, and choreographic analysis, I unpack how dancers and choreographers in Israel have often articulated dance as a multicultural, universalistic, and humanizing practice. By doing so, I maintain, dance in Israel has generally worked as a strategy for the mitigation and concealment of larger governmental and ideological apparatuses of marginalization, commodification, or oppression.

The Introduction offers an interpretation of Zionism and Israel from a biopolitical perspective, an overview of my livability framework, and a reading of my project in terms of *killjoy scholarship*. Chapter 1 delineates how dance in kibbutz culture has been able to support shifts in the national strategy, evolving from engine for the international affirmation of Zionism, to agent for a rearticulation of the Socialist Labor Zionist agenda, to neoliberal enterprise. Chapter 2 charts the evolution of dance in the Israel Defense Forces from bureaucratic tool for the administration of military life, to spectacular device for the recalibration of the Israeli soldier's masculinity, to globalized digital practice that reinforces military authority from the lower levels of the military hierarchy. The Epilogue, in addition, includes four choreographic analyses that, engaging with the kibbutz, the IDF, and the issue of choreographing in Israel, show how dance can invest in a critique of systems of oppression, and expand the possibility of living more livable lives.

The dissertation of Melissa Melpignano is approved.

Anurima Banerji

Janet M. O'Shea

Sarah Abrevaya Stein

Susan Leigh Foster, Committee Chair

*If I've written it's for thought
because my thoughts are worried about life
it's for those happy beings
close in the evening shadow
for the evening which at a stroke collapsed on the napes of necks.
I was writing out of compassion for darkness
for every creature that backs away
pressing their spine against the railings
for the marine wait – without a cry – endless.*

*Write, I say to myself
and I write to press onwards more solitary into the enigma
because eyes alarm me
and the silence of footsteps is my own, mine the light
desert
– like the moors –
on the soil of the boulevard.*

*Write because nothing is protected and the word wood
shakes more frailly than the wood itself, without branches or
birds
because only courage can excavate
high the patience
until it takes the weight away
from the black weight of the meadow.*

Antonella Anedda

From *Nights of Western Peace* (1999)

(Translated by Jamie McKendrick, revised by Melissa Melpignano)*

* “Se ho scritto è per pensiero / perché ero in pensiero per la vita / per gli esseri felici / stretti nell’ombra della sera / per la sera che di colpo crollava sulle nuche. / Scrivevo per la pietà del buio / per ogni creatura che indietreggia / con la schiena premuta a una ringhiera / per l’attesa marina – senza grido – infinita. / Scrivi, dico a me stessa / e scrivo io per avanzare più sola nell’enigma / perché gli occhi mi allarmano / e mio è il silenzio dei passi, mia la luce / deserta / – da brughiera – / sulla terra del viale. / Scrivi perché nulla è difeso e la parola bosco / trema più fragile del bosco, senza rami né / uccelli / perché solo il coraggio può scavare / in alto la pazienza / fino a togliere peso / al peso nero del prato.” Antonella Anedda, *Notti di Pace Occidentale* (Rome: Donzelli, 1999).

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I am in debt to my colleague friends who helped me edit, make sense of, and clarify different parts of this dissertation. Archer L. Porter is a marathon editor that, with her pragmatic wit, has resisted until the very last page of this manuscript (I do not believe in heroic narratives but this might be an exception). Christina Novakov-Ritchey, the coolest of comrades, is an honest intellectual and friend that helps me further unfold and pursue my intuitions and ideas. Shir Alon, a companion in our common journey against the flow, always offers the most brilliant insights and questions, with affectionate care.

I have been lucky and privileged enough to spend some years in the Department of World Arts & Cultures/Dance, where its faculty members Dan Froot, David Gere, Lionel Popkin, Vic Marks, Aparna Sharma, David Shorter, and Ros Warby have made my journey in graduate school a profoundly exciting, warm, and human experience. They all have shaped my thinking and understanding of how dance can make lives more livable.

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Several faculty members at UCLA have also contributed to shaping my thinking, and making my years on campus an extraordinarily vibrant experience. Kenneth Reinhart, director of the program in Experimental Critical Theory, with his enthusiasm and openness, has helped me

dance with philosophy and choreography. Meryl Friedman has shared her activist passion and artistic delicacy. The faculty of the Italian department (with its wonderful graduate students!) has welcomed me, my work, and my jokes making me feel at home. At the Nazarian Center, Yoram Cohen and Daniel Stein-Kokin have supported and enriched my knowledge of Israeli culture. At the Nazarian Center, Maura Resnick has been a restless and energetic supporter of my research, my teaching, and the study of dance, and I thank her for all her generosity, hard work, and commitment. Outside the UCLA campus, other professors have kindly and warmly supported my research. Freddie Rokem has expanded my relationship with Israeli academics, and generated wonderful collaborations. Yonat Rothman has very generously shared her unpublished manuscript, and directed me through the realities of kibbutz culture. Moshe Naor has showed me how to elegantly keep historical focus when looking through ideological and political uproar. I am also extremely grateful for the invaluable support and feedback of Hannah Kosstrin, whose research, enthusiasm, sharp rigor, and trust in my work are an absolute source of inspiration.

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EDUCATION

- 2019 Ph. D. (expected) in Culture and Performance, University of California Los Angeles
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2005 B. A. in Contemporary Dance, London Contemporary Dance School/University of Canterbury (UK)

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- “Gradations of Presence: The Figure of Armida in 19th c. Dance Librettos,” in *The Body, the Dance, and the Text: Essays on Performance and the Margins of History*, ed. by Brynn W. Shiovitz. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019.
- Book Review of Einav Katan, *Embodied Philosophy in Dance: Gaga and Ohan Naharin’s Movement Research*, in *Dance Research Journal*, 49/2, August 2017, 112-114.
- “Uprising by Hofesh Shechter,” in *MilanOltre – 1986-2016*, edited by Rino de Pace and Stefano Tomassini. Milan: Scalpendi, 2017.

SELECTED ACADEMIC TALKS

- 2019 “Let the Sunshine in? Dancing Sabra in the IDF Pahad Dance Troupe,” Association for Israel Studies (AIS), Kinneret College, Israel, June 24-26.
2019 “Israel’s Corporeal Power and Palestinian Choreographies of Resistance,” World Dance Alliance, “Moviendo la Frontera: Dancing through / In-Between Borders,” University of Texas, El Paso, Feb 13-17.
2018 “Choreographing Livability on the Israeli Independent Stage (1990s-present),” Jews and Jewishness in the Dance World, Arizona State University, Tempe, Oct 13-15.
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2018 “Ideologies Contended: Dancing Israel in the Cold War,” Dance Studies Association (DSA), University of Malta, Valletta, Jul 5-8.
2017 “When Soldiers Go Viral: Digital Circulation of Dances in the IDF,” Dance Studies Association, Ohio State University, October 19-22.
2017 “Folk Dance Texts as Hebrew Literature: a Different Look at the Israeli National and Global Project,” National Association of Professors of Hebrew (NAPH), NYU, June 27-29.

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- 2018 “Choreographing Contention, Dancing Cold War (1940s-1960s)”
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SELECTED TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2016-2017 *Theories of Dance* (Upper Division); *Arts Encounters* (GE); *Choreography and
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SERVICE TO PROFESSION

- 2018-2020 Dance Studies Association (DSA), Board of Directors, Graduate Student
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- 2018 -2019 Dance Studies Association (DSA), member of the Standing Committees on
Professional Development
- 2014-2018 Editor, *Carte Italiane*, UCLA Journal of Italian Studies

Introduction

But the social significance of this goes beyond what is formally recognized as dance to apply to life itself and therefore to politics – the uncertainties and motions of life in the contemporary world.
Randy Martin, *Critical Moves* (1998, 2)

*What's going on just now? What's happening to us?
What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living?*
Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" (1982, 216)

This dissertation is about governmental power, about dancing subjects, and about the stakes of their dancing; it is about the implications and reverberations of dance. My research is invested in a double historical and theoretical project. First, the scrutiny of the development of dance as a form of knowledge in the State of Israel—what I identify as "dance episteme"; second, the study of the stakes of dancing in an environment where dance practice is informed by political ends, large historical events, and ideological drives, and whose effects impact dancing and non-dancing bodies alike—what I frame as "livability."

I undertake such a project through the analysis of key dance experiences in two emblematic sites of performance in Israel: the kibbutz and the army. The former indicates a structure of communal living that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century and that served as an organized form of Jewish settlement in Palestine informed by Labor Zionism.¹ The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is the official army of the State of Israel, which, with the establishment of the state in 1948, replaced the self-organized Jewish militias in Palestine. While the IDF responds directly to the government, its social prestige as "the people's army" makes it a highly influential institution beyond its military scope. Like all social structures and institutions, both

¹ Labor Zionism is a political articulation of the larger Zionist ideology, based on Socialist principles and promoting the figure of the *halutz* (f. *halutza*), the Jewish pioneer in Palestine. I will extensively engage with Labor Zionism in Chapter 1. As of 2018, there are 265 kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz) in Israel. (Source: Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics).

the kibbutz and the army have undergone organizational and ideological shifts over time. Dance will help us pinpoint such changes, clarifying the crucial importance of corporeal culture in the historical and political development of Israel.

I chose these two sites of performance, which are not the normative theatrical settings where dance is commonly consumed, to show how dance practice permeated the most profound political and social structures of the state, and how it actively took part in the realization and reinforcement of statehood. Through a deep historical and political contextualization of the dances I analyze within each site of performance, I demonstrate how dance and dancing bodies in Israel invested in the installment and articulation of institutional practices that disseminate and strengthen the Zionist agenda, while negotiating the very possibility and legitimacy of dancing in relation to domestic and international political goals, party strategies, and larger historical events.

Dance is highly regarded and present in Israeli culture and public discourses. For instance, “Israeli folk dances” are still practiced in primary schools, professional groups such as the Batsheva Dance Company and the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company are internationally praised and considered national treasures,² and dance historically contributed to the foundation of a “national ethos” (Spiegel 2013) and of institutions (Roginsky 2004) in the formation and consolidation of the State of Israel.³ Despite the social and historical awareness of the relevance of dance in Israel, its political resonance not only on Israeli culture in general but in the organization of the larger Israeli state apparatus has been underestimated.

² <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/aboutisrael/culture/pages/culture-%20dance.aspx>

³ As I will explain in the following pages, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is the result of a highly contested and complex process that involved international state powers, different ideological mindsets, and historical urgencies.

Critical dance studies have extensively showed how dance is political and that it can be political in different ways (see Kowal, Siegmund, and Martin 2017).⁴ This dissertation does not explicitly ask *how* dance in Israel is political but the question lies implicit and accompanies my analysis throughout. This dissertation is more preoccupied with showing how dance moves (with) state institutions and filters political ideas to and through certain bodies. More specifically, it displays the dancing bodies' investment in the realization and strengthening of a collective task, the Zionist ideas of statehood and territoriality, and how such a task claims different choreographic and energetic articulations according to historical contingencies and governmental exigencies.

Reasoning on the political in dance, Randy Martin affirms that "dance uses movement at all costs" (in Kowal, Siegmund, and Martin 2017, 1).⁵ A dancing body invests in dance at all costs and according to one's own possibilities. Dance lies in the dancing subject's possibility of investing in dancing. A subject's dancing impacts other bodies, impacts the site where that performance happens, impacts people and structures even beyond one's own conscious sphere of action. Such reverberations can generate ambiguities, contradictions that can actually illuminate the never simple, never too obvious political implications of a dancing body. Thus, this dissertation also seeks to highlight the ambiguities of dance and dancing in Israel, which can manifest in apparently competing functions assigned to dance. Ambiguities manifest as such precisely because of the difficulty of grasping a sense of continuity, a clear connection in their

⁴ In their "Introduction," Morris and Giersdorf (2016) offer a formidable synthesis of different articulations of political and choreographic power at the intersection of dance studies and critical theory. See also Siegmund and Hölscher (2013).

⁵ Dancing is not necessarily the manifestation of the dancing subject's will to dance. Extreme cases of this are slaves or prisoners obliged to dance by masters or guards in order to survive. Also, even though a dance refuses movement, intended as the exercise of kinetic activity, it still assumes movement as the absent that defines the dance.

relation. And the very dismissal of such ambiguities has often contributed to the flattening, diminishing, or dismissal of the political articulations of dance in Israel, as I will soon clarify. In order to give a sense of the ambiguity and malleability of the notion of "political" when associated to dance in Israel, I briefly introduce the emblematic case of the Batsheva Dance Company, one of the most renowned Israeli dance companies at the global level.

Every year, near the day in which Israel celebrates its *'Atzmaut* (עצמאות), "Independence," and the Palestinians commemorate their *Nakba* (النكبة), "Catastrophe," the Israeli-Palestinian activist, anti-Occupation organization Combatants for Peace organizes an Israeli-Palestinian gathering as an alternative to the State-led Memorial Day.⁶ While, on *Yom Hazikaron*, the State commemorates the Israeli fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism, in their counter-ceremony Combatants for Peace remembers both the Palestinian and the Israeli victims of the conflict.⁷ In 2016, a prominent dancer of the Batsheva Dance Company, Nitzan Resler, performed a solo during the Combatants for Peace event in Tel Aviv. Wearing a simple black dress, her left leg extends forward while her right arm lengthens backward; her body folds inwards, then releases the tension, letting the head gently fall back; a sequence livened up by a quick footwork and changes of direction exhausts itself with a subtle unfolding of an elbow. The artistic director of the company, Ohad Naharin, was among the artists-speakers: "I wish to share a clear sense that dance and grief and sorrow and joy and passion and anger live together."⁸ In a conversation I had with Nitzan three months after that brief yet significant performance, she explained that it was

⁶ On the Israeli Memorial Day for the Fallen (*Yom Hazikaron*) and on how national commemorations reiterate an idea of national body based on ethnic disparities in Israeli society, see Weiss 2002, 65-93.

⁷ Combatants for Peace is an Israeli-Palestinian NGO established in 2005 by former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian fighters. Rejecting any manifestation of violence, the organization promotes to the Israeli and Palestinian public and governments bi-nationalism, peace, and the idea that the land can be home for both peoples. [Http://cfpeace.org](http://cfpeace.org)

⁸ Excerpts of the 2016 ceremony are available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPB-zotnLds>

not easy to accept Naharin's invitation to perform at the Combatants for Peace memorial. She grew up in the Jerusalem area dancing "Israeli folk dances," in an environment that always manifested support and praised the work of the Israel Defense Forces. Nitzan told me her family did not go to see her performing for Combatants for Peace and their anti-governmental agenda.⁹

A few months later, in September 2016, the Batsheva Dance Company, designated by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an ambassador of Israeli culture in the world, hit the international headlines when composer Brian Eno, supporter of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement for the cultural boycott of Israel, denied Naharin the permission to utilize his music for a choreography to be performed in Italy and sponsored by the Israeli government.¹⁰ "I feel that your government exploits artists like you," Eno wrote the company, "playing on your natural desire to keep working – even if it does mean becoming part of a propaganda strategy. Your dance company might not be able to formally distance itself from the Israeli government but I can and will: I don't want my music to be licensed for any event sponsored by the Israeli embassy." In response, the Batsheva Dance Company's press office released a statement declaring that "Ohad Naharin has been a political activist for years within Israel, and never hesitated to be very vocal about the situation in the West Bank and the consequences of the occupation. His deep commitment to the freedom of the human spirit is reflected in his actions as well as artistic creations" (in Beaumont 2016).

This double anecdote exemplifies some features of dance in Israel that constitute a point of departure for the work of this dissertation. On the one hand, the globally renowned Israeli dance company participates in an event aimed at disrupting a mainstream, national narrative; on the

⁹ On the denial of the Nakba in Israel, see Shenhav (2019). See also Lentin (2010).

¹⁰ The case is summarized, for example, in Beaumont (2016), Momigliano and Izikovich (2016). For a discussion about the cultural boycott of Batsheva, see Quinlan (2016), in particular chapter 2.

other hand, it becomes the international symbol of that same narrative that domestically it publicly defies. Each dance experience is unique for the bodies and the corporeal histories that make it, the circumstances in which it happens, the field of (social, political, economic) tensions that informs it, etc. Despite the peculiarity of Batsheva as a highly funded and globally popular company, the questions this anecdote raises are similar to the inquiries that other dance experiences in Israel suggest: How can dance represent an agenda and also its opposite? How are these opposite positionalities actually related? How do state policies and ideological schemes inform dance practice (from the organization of a dance group and dance infrastructures, to choreography and dance performance)? What space do dancers and choreographers have or grant to themselves within those schemes? How do they collectively respond or adapt or question state-informed values or policies? These are urgent questions in the past and present context of Israel, where dance and dancers, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, are often considered, if not extensions or expression of the State, inextricably connected to it.

Israel's Biopolitics and the Zionist 'Return to the Body'

Ideas of and about Israel are under constant production and circulation. This is symptomatic of the global interests connected to the “Middle East.”¹¹ It is due to the media exposure of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and other Arab countries, to discourses around the tensions between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora, and the growing Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Lastly, Israeli products found a prominent place in the globalized market of popular culture (from apps to TV shows). Academia is another field of historical, political, and theoretical

¹¹ The notion of “Middle East” is a Eurocentric construct, and, as an expression, it entered in use in the nineteenth century. See Bonine, Amanat, and Gasper (2011).

research and contention about ideas of Israel, Israel/Palestine, and Zionism.¹² As it happens for other contested histories and sites, discourses about Israel often appear as a maelstrom of opinions, and historical events as a matter of dispute. In the attempt to offer a concise yet reliable conceptualization of how I contextualize Israel in this research in relation to my framework of livability, I look at Zionism, the ideological movement invested in the realization of a sovereign state able to grant full citizenship rights to the Jews, and at the State of Israel itself from a biopolitical perspective. I consider biopolitics as a productive framework to illustrate the structural organization of Israel as well as its *doings* as a State apparatus.

The idea of biopolitics to which I refer stems from Michel Foucault's theorization of biopower and biopolitics, and also draws on its successive reworkings and specifications. In order to tackle the shifts in the organization and manifestation of power in European modernity, Foucault theorizes biopower, in synthesis, as institutionalized powers that affirm themselves by exercising power over life. More specifically, biopower classifies human beings on the basis of their biological features and manages them through structures of scientific knowledge. Differently from the disciplinary paradigm of power he identified in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, which targeted individual bodies, and from the sovereign-monarchic power of assigning the right to death or life to subjects, Foucault notices a shift in the nineteenth century, when the state exercises the power of deciding who to make live and who to let die. Importantly, Foucault specifies that this new governmental model does not exclude the sovereign-legal model and the disciplinary-surveillance model described in *Discipline and*

¹² Neil Caplan, author of a documental historical account of the "Israel-Palestine conflict" upon which I extensively rely in my research (2010), addresses a series of scholarly basic conundrums when writing about Israel and Israel/Palestine (Also: slash, dash, or hyphen? Typographical dilemmas that denote theoretical and historical ones).

Punish (1995); on the contrary, these models and the new techniques of regularization of life and death combine.¹³

I consider the Foucaultian theorization appropriate to develop a discourse on Israel, statehood, life, and power in relation to the bodies, for Israel emerges as a political project in Western modernity. Studies about Israel through the lens of biopolitics are recent (Parson and Salter 2008; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2016; Boas, Hashiloni-Dolev, Davidovitch, Filc, Lavi 2018). While Boas, Hashiloni-Dolev, Davidovitch, Filc, and Lavi are mostly concerned with Israel's policies in terms of bioethics (in particular end-of-life debates) and access to medical care in relation to inequalities among ethnic groups, Parson and Salter, and Shalhoub-Kevorkian tackle issues similar to those in which I am invested here, namely governmentality, territorialization, and bodily control. However, such studies focus on the current Israeli government's strategies of control in the Palestinian Occupied Territories through settlements and other *dispositifs* of control, management, and surveillance, while I am interested in the genealogical formation of Israel's biopolitical apparatus.¹⁴ Thus, in this section, I provide an overview of the conceptual and historiographical debates that inform my research and my discursive frame in relation to Israel and to Zionism as an ideological movement from a biopolitical perspective.

Zionism emerges in the 1890s, in Imperial Germany, as a collective intellectual, political, and predominantly secular movement that aspired to and promoted the Jews' "return to Zion" (one of the Biblical names for Jerusalem). It emerges in a peculiar moment of Jewish history, the end of the nineteenth century, in which discourses about Jewish emancipation antagonized those

¹³ This is a synthesis of a genealogy of power traced in Foucault (1995), (2003), (2004), and (2008).

¹⁴ See also Zureik (2001), and Winter (2016).

concerning Jewish assimilation.¹⁵ Both discourses interrogate the stakes of Jewish bodies in relation to state powers in a European modernity characterized by systemic anti-Semitism (Gilman 1991, Gilman and Katz 1991, Myers 2017). In particular, Zionism emerges in emancipatory discourses, promoting the notions of regeneration and revival (*teḥiya*) of Jewish body and Jewish life, while framing the Jewish people as a nation (see Presner 2007).¹⁶

Despite its different strands and internal ideological divergences (Hertzberg 1997, Troy 2018), Zionism emerged as a coherent project among other Jewish national movements (see Zipperstein 1985) when it formulated a political agenda supported by institutional bodies, diplomatic connections, and strategies proper of grassroots movements (from posters to local committees, from fundraisings to larger congresses, etc.). More specifically, in 1896, one of the most influential ideologues of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, publishes *The Jewish State* (1988) (also translatable as *The State of the Jews*, see Myers 2017, 85), a pamphlet that immediately became the manifesto of Political Zionism, meaning the articulation of Zionism that defines its political goals.¹⁷ "The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet," Herzl proclaimed, "is an ancient one: It is the restoration of the Jewish State." "I think the Jewish Question," he continues, "(...) is

¹⁵ Emancipation is a key-concept in Jewish history, and also in European modernity. In synthesis, it indicates the process and "paths" through which Jews emerge as political actors struggling for citizenship rights in Europe; see the foundational Birnbaum and Katznelson (1995, in particular pp. 4-6 for a concise framing of the term and the questions at stake). Assimilation, instead, refers to the program of social and cultural absorption of the Jews in the context they inhabit; see Frankel and Zipperstein (1992). For a synthesis of these debates, see also Myers (2017).

¹⁶ *Teḥiya* is often conceptualized in parallel to *haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment movement, initially more prone to assimilate Jews into European liberal life. Nevertheless, both trends were invested in reframing the status of the Jews in modern Europe in accordance to the liberal citizenship model. See Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995, ch. 1.

¹⁷ Historian of Zionism Arthur Hertzberg (1997) identifies a series of "precursors" of Political Zionism in the eighteenth-century rabbinical tradition, and in the early nineteenth-century Central and Eastern European Jewish intellectuals, such as Moses Hess and Leo Pinsker. Hertzberg indicates Herzl as the one that, with the charismatic Max Nordau, gave international resonance to the Zionist project. Other cultural, philosophical, and political articulations of Zionism are relevant before and after the establishment of the State of Israel, as I will discuss in detail in the chapters.

a national question which can only be resolved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council" (in Troy 2018, 14).¹⁸ This text not only is foundational for understanding the Zionist project but it articulates the biopolitical premises of the state it aims to realize. Herzl declares how social and political exclusion is what makes the Jews "one people": "Our enemies have made us one without our consent, as repeatedly happens in history. Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we suddenly discover our strength. Yes, we are strong enough to form a state, and, indeed, a model state" (15). His priority is Jewish territorial sovereignty: "Let sovereignty be granted to us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation; the rest we shall manage for ourselves" (ibid.). At this point, he mentions Palestine as the "historic home" of the Jews, where "the Maccabeans will rise again" (16).¹⁹

With the First Zionist Congress in Basel, in 1897, the World Zionist Organization is established, and immediately after, its North American branch (Federation of American Zionists).²⁰ Zionism forged its own population program for the statehood project through the operative strategy of regulated migration, in Hebrew *aliyah*.²¹ As in the Herzlian program, supported in the various Zionist congresses, migratory waves of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe to Palestine happened mostly in concert with European sovereign authorities and the

¹⁸ "Jewish Question" refers to the anti-Semitic notion of the Jews as a problem, exemplified by various nineteenth-century pamphlets, such as Eugen Dühring's *The Jewish Question* ([1881] 2017), which much shocked Herzl. See also Katz (1980).

¹⁹ The Maccabees are Jewish warriors mentioned in the Bible and models for a revivalist theorization of the Zionist "New Jew," as I will later clarify.

²⁰ The Zionist Israeli-American relation will clearly emerge in Chapter 1.

²¹ The most significant *aliyot* in political terms and for the scope of this research are the fourth (1924-1929) and the fifth (1929-1939), when several of the dancers mentioned in this dissertation moved to Palestine. On the First Aliyah (1881-1904), see Ettinger and Bartal (1996). As I will later articulate, Zionism's organization of *aliyot* lays the foundations for the conceptualization of Zionism as a settler colonial project.

British ones, which administered Palestine between 1918 and 1948. In accordance with the model of Western capitalist modernity (see Jameson 2002), in order to establish a sovereign nation-state *ex novo*, Zionism created a series of apparatuses aimed at the management of elements such as political relations, population, and the transfers of funds, as the dislocated parts of a proto-state government.

As Herzl programmatically stated in his pamphlet, Zionism needed a global network of power relations to lead to statehood, which is obvious considering the geopolitical complexity of both Europe and the Middle East between the end of the nineteenth century and 1948, when, with the support of the Western powers, Israel declared its independence and the British governorate, which controlled Palestine after the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire, left.²² As extensively demonstrated in critical and postcolonial theories, Western capitalist modernity is inherently global (Appadurai 1996, Bharucha 1993 and 2000, Sassen 2014). I define globalization as the process of global dissemination of Western capitalist models—political and economic—generated in the context and structures of the nation-state. In this way, the global is inherently connected to the national as well as to smaller territorial formations for the exercise of governmental power. Here, I am trying to frame a biopolitical genealogy of Israel in the light of its Zionist ideological engine and in relation to the different tensions of power in which such genealogy has developed and continues to develop.

Zionism also emerges in colonial Europe. In Zionism, Western colonialism manifests primarily in its orientalist mindset and practice (Said 1978, said Kalmar and Penslar 2005). On

²² For a detailed account of the development of the Zionist political movement until 1948, see Laqueur (1972). Arthur Hertzberg (1997) provides selected discourses and writings of the most influential Zionist leaders, with introductory profiles and contextualizations. Troy (2018) has updated Hertzberg's anthological work, originally published in 1959, to include new leaders and debates. Shlomo Avineri ([1981] 2017) provides a classic intellectual history of Zionism. On the first four decades of the intellectual and political development of the Zionist ideology, see Vital (1975), (1982), and (1987). On Zionist activities in Palestine in the Ottoman era, see Gilbar (1990) and Mandel (1976).

the one hand, European Jewry suffered orientalist stigmatization and anti-Semitic oppression, against which Zionism reacted proposing the "regenerated" idea of the "New Jew" (on which I will soon elaborate). On the other hand, Zionism reiterated and reactivated what Aziza Khazzoom (2003) calls "the great chain of Orientalism" to establish its sovereignty and an Ashkenazi (European Jewish) hegemony in Palestine (see Shohat [1988] 2017).²³

Instead of limiting the assessment of the orientalizing process to self-descriptive dichotomies such as East vs. West, which often served the promotion of cosmopolitan views of Israel and dance in Israel, I instead underline how, within the long Zionist project, orientalism operates as a device for the management of the population in Palestine before and after statehood in different ways and with different goals (see Bhabha 1994). In particular, in the pre-State decades, the orientalized view of the indigenous Palestinian population served to strengthen the idea of Zionism as a modernist project by depicting Palestine as a sterile land without a culture and "without a people," and, consequently, the Zionist "pioneers" as heroic civilizers—an oppressive, romanticized view still present in mainstream dance scholarship (Eshel 2017, Ingber 2011). At the same time, Zionist self-orientalization and self-exoticization operated as a device for the indigenization of the Zionist settlers in order to naturalize their territorial presence (as I will show in Chapter 1), and promote what Zionist ideologue Vladimir Jabotinsky named the Zionist "Palestinian personality" (cf. Shapira 1992: 47). The cultivation of the implicitly male (Fuchs 2014) New Jew—the strong, muscular Jew able to subvert the anti-Semitic stereotypes of the

²³ The literature on the marginalization of Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews in Israel is extensive. See, for example, Campos (2005), Khazzoom (2003), Sasson-Levy (2013), Shohat (2006) and (2017).

weak, pale Jew (Herzl [1901] 2011; Nordau [1903] 2011)—with a Zionist settler personality (land builder, water carrier, and fighter) will later produce the Sabra, the native Jewish Israeli.²⁴

Zionism utilized the European anti-Semitic stigmatization of the Diaspora Jew to forge a new, exceptional idea of the Jewish body rooted in the coeval international movements of corporeal regeneration. I agree with Todd Presner when, applying the Foucaultian biopolitical framework, he claims that “Zionist thinkers in the first part of the twentieth century were not only interested in physical fitness and the re-creation of the muscle Jew but were also interested in studying, exhibiting, monitoring, and, ultimately, correcting and disciplining the Jewish population as a whole” (2007, 112). Even though Presner circumscribes his research scope to German Jewry, he acknowledges the Zionist deployment of “sex and techniques of bio-power in order to legitimize the founding of the Jewish state” (ibid.). Techniques of corporeal education (such as dance and gymnastics) were regularly practiced within Zionist youth movements (Nur 2014). While disseminating prescriptive ideas of health and masculinity, youth movements also served as privileged channels for the promotion of *aliyah*. Palestine was advertised as an exotic, desert land in which the New Jew, through the physical labor necessary for the construction of a new Jewish civilization, could rehabilitate the devalued Jewish libido through a return to nature and physicality—what David Biale has defined as the Zionist “erotic revolution” (1997, 176-203). Connecting Biale’s and Presner’s theorizations, and underlining the emphasis on women’s reproductive function in the Yishuv, Ofer Nordheimer Nur concludes that the ultimate goal of the Zionist “New male Jew” was to reproduce Ashkenazi (white, European) male supremacy in Palestine. This is what he calls the “tragedy” on Zionist masculinity (2014).

²⁴ The centrality of the body in Zionism was first theorized by Walter Laqueur (1973), who claimed that the Zionist construction of a regenerated body was the direct consequence of anti-Semitism, thus framing Zionism as movement for the establishment of a safe body for the Jews.

In Palestine, the construction of an Ashkenazi hegemony in conjunction with the orientalizing of the non-Ashkenazi Jewish and Palestinian population served the creation of different categories of labor force.²⁵ In 1925, David Ben-Gurion, then a charismatic leader of the Yishuv and later Israel's first Prime Minister, wrote that the Zionist national liberation of the Jews in Palestine corresponded to "making labor the dominant principle in the life of the people" (Ben-Gurion 1974, 231), in line with the Zionist principle of "productivization" (Engel 2009, 97). By creating a labor system and welfare structures such as the Histadrut (the Jewish Federation of Labor, established in 1920, of which Ben-Gurion served as general secretary between 1921 and 1935), Labor Zionism, the Zionist left-wing party, ensured itself the political leadership before and after the establishment of the State that would last, without interruptions, until 1977.²⁶

Economic expansion and economic control were basic principles of colonial control, especially in Zionist settler colonial Palestine, in which the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire, first, and then the generally accommodating British governorate favored a reconfiguration of political, social, and economic structures in the region. During World War I, the British and French governments organized several documents for the partition of the Middle East after the war. The Balfour Declaration, issued in 1917 by the British Foreign Minister after consultations with Zionist leaders, states the British government's support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done

²⁵ Yehuda Sharim (2013) has illustrated how Sephardi and Mizrahi leaderships in Mandate Palestine resisted different modes of Ashkenazi exploitation and exercised agency to claim political rights, while simultaneously furthering the marginalization of Palestinian-Arabs.

²⁶ In the chapters, I will expand on the domestic political vicissitudes of various Israeli parties.

which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" (in Laqueur and Rubin 2008, 16). As it will be clear in Chapter 2, this important declaration is indeed a statement of intent and not a strategic plan (for instance, there were military clashes between the British army and Zionist militias, and the British government will take control over the migratory flows to Palestine managed by the Zionist Organization).

Indeed, the British Empire was not interested in reconfiguring life in Palestine through infrastructures and policy. This is the main factor in discerning between colonial control (that the British Empire exercised in Palestine between 1918 and 1948) and Zionist settler colonialism.²⁷ Settler colonialism emphasizes territorialization as an organized practice of replacement of an indigenous population with an exogenous one. Lorenzo Veracini (2010) distinguishes settler colonialism from colonialism arguing that the latter focuses on the controlling application of an exogenous polity over an indigenous population. Such distinction does not prevent the two phenomena from coexisting, informing, and supporting one another (Degani 2015).²⁸ Throughout the history of the Zionist-Israeli rule in the region, policies towards the Arab populations varied without changing the hegemonic citizenship status of the Jewish majority.

²⁷ Scholar Gur Alroey qualifies Zionism as an inherently "territorial ideology" (2011). He employs "ideology" in reference to Zionism drawing from historian Gideon Shimoni, "who has used "Zionist ideology" to denote a system of action-demanding ideas while distinguishing between fundamental and operative ideology. Fundamental ideology, Shimoni claims, is the essential determination implicit in a system of action-demanding ideas that shape the ideology and its ultimate objectives. Operative ideology is the strategy that serves the fundamental ideas." (2011, 2). See Shimoni (1995, xiv). Also note that the reading of Zionism and the State of Israel as a settler colonial project is now widely accepted in the field of Israel Studies and by Zionist scholars. On this, see also Greilsammer (2019).

²⁸ Historian Arnon Degani argues that, after 1948, a domestic colonial polity targeting in particular the Arab population, served to consolidate the Zionist settler colonial project. On Israel's colonialism, its connection to capitalism, and on Palestinian indigenous rights, see also the numerous, yet overlooked, articles published by Gilles Deleuze, carefully reviewed by Kathryn Medien (2019). Differently from Veracini, Deleuze argues that Israel's model is that of a new colonialism, which, differently from settler colonialism, does not want to exterminate the indigenous population. Deleuze argues that maneuvers of evacuation prevail over genocidal ones—where genocide primarily refers to the cultural, historical, and territorial erasure of the Palestinians. Such definition of genocide is similar to the notion of "social death" as elaborated by Claudia Card (2003). It also relates to Ilan Pappé's (2007) definition of "ethnic cleansing."

This has been recently exacerbated with the approval of the so-called Nation-State Law (2018), which clearly asserts that "The Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, in which the State of Israel was established (1. a). The State of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish People, in which it realizes its natural, cultural, religious and historical right to self-determination (1. b); Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel (3)." It also declares that "The State views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value, and shall act to encourage and promote its establishment and strengthening" (7)."

Differently from migrants, settlers "are *founders* of political orders and carry their sovereignty with them" (Veracini 2010, 3). Pre-State Zionist settlers are a unique form of "migrants." In accordance with the Zionist vocabulary, the notion of *olim* ("immigrants") defines Zionist Jews moving from the Diaspora to Palestine, and then the State of Israel, through *aliyah* ("ascent"), the organized Zionist settlement of Diaspora Jews in Palestine. This dissertation conceptualizes Zionism as a settler colonial project and the State of Israel as a settler colonial state. Nevertheless, throughout the dissertation I refer to the Zionist dancers moving to Palestine as "migrants" as well as "settlers," for a number of reasons: first, because the two words capture two different emphases in the Zionist movement to Palestine, and second, for clarity's sake, as nowadays the word settlers most immediately refers to Zionist Jews that settle in occupied Palestinian territories.

The "Proclamation of Independence" of the State of Israel (Medinat Yisrael) was published by a proto-Israeli Parliament, the Provisional State Council, on May 14, 1948. This document opens by stating that "the Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to

the world" (Laqueur and Rubin 2008, 81). These very first lines contain at least two fundamental knots: the narrative of origins that informs Israel's ethnonationalism, and Israel's self-pronouncement as the universal home of the Jewish people. Narratives of origin and universalism go hand in hand. The following day, May 15, 1948, the British governorate and troops officially dismissed their sovereign control in Palestine, granting it to the new Israeli government.

From Zionist Aesthetics to Dance Epistemes

The Israelis danced with a powerful thrust, extremities loose, with total commitment and daring, their movements leaving in space traces of explosions too fast to recollect rather than spirals of continuity (Aldor 2003, 81).

In a renowned article about contemporary dance in Israel, Gaby Aldor (2003) wonders how a movement quality generally identified as "Israeli" became as such ("What is 'Israeli' about Israeli dance?"). As I show at the beginning of Chapter 1, several dancers of the Yishuv (the Zionist-Jewish community in Palestine before statehood) were concerned with a similar question: What should a Zionist dance look like? What makes "our" dancing as Zionists a Zionist dance? Or, in other words, how can dancing bodies claim territorial belonging, forge a political-cultural identity, and allege their historical continuity from Biblical time to the present? With the establishment of the State, these questions practically substitute "Zionist" with "Israeli."

Aldor claims that some features of "Israeli dancers and dance" are "unstable form, constantly negotiated space, people made vulnerable in their attempts to fix space, bodies that constantly undermine themselves" (82). Unproblematically, she states that "Israeli dance started at the beginning of the century right at the moment when dance in the Western world made its huge

step toward modernity" (ibid.). "The revolutionary ideas of new dance [German *Ausdruckstanz*]," Aldor continues, "(...) coincided in fascinating ways with some of the ideas and ideals of Zionism: a split with the past, the building of a new society and a new attitude toward the body, the emancipation of women, a new approach to movement and space, and, in the case of Zionism, the creation of a 'new Jew', spiritually and physically connected to the land" (ibid.). The idea of modernity in which Aldor inscribes the "beginning" of dance in Israel, where the dyad dance and Zionism parallels novelty and revolution, has been largely problematized in scholarship about Israel and Zionism.²⁹ It is a matter of fact that committed Zionists "aimed to reappropriate the human capacity for a novel beginning" going against a Jewish history of displacement and diaspora (Chowers 1998, 653). Indeed, in Chapter 1, I show how the Zionist rhetorical insistence on the research for novelty materializes in the Yishuv dancers' corporeal and choreographic labor, articulating primarily as revival and 'patchwork' of existing forms rather as *ex novo* creation. The Zionist insistence on the "new"—a novelty of which the State is the epitome—parallels the Zionist return to the Jewish "historical past" (see Myers 1995, 178)—of which the State is the realization.

What I would underline instead about the attitude that committed Zionist dancers (and scholars) displayed is a trust in the teleological directionality of Zionism (towards the Land of Israel, *Eretz Yisrael*; towards a New Jewish era), a sense of acceleration that the moving bodies could offer to the teleological tension of Zionism, an idea of progress as regeneration incorporated in the New Jewish body, and a belief in Zionism as emancipation from anti-Semitic

²⁹ Furthermore, the idea of emancipation of women in Zionist Labor culture, and in the kibbutz in particular, has been largely criticized and dismantled by Israeli feminist scholars. See Fuchs (2014).

oppression. In this way, Zionism is an expression of the canonical idea of Western modernity in which it developed.³⁰

Aldor concludes that "not all contemporary Israeli dance is political. Instead, political commentary is read through bodies that register the realities of daily life in Israel, that have become sites of resistance. (...) The ongoing threat to the lives of all, Palestinians and Israelis alike, influences the way people behave, move, and think" (84). I question Aldor's assessment because, as suggested at the beginning of this Introduction, the political in dance lies in the network of relationalities that invests it and that dance itself produces.³¹ As I stated at the beginning of this Introduction, the way I frame "political" in dance radically differs from Aldor's vague notion of bodies as sites of resistance (against or in relation to what is unspecified). Aldor roots her discourse (and so do Ruth Eshel, Judith Brin Ingber, and Nina Spiegel) in the contemplation of the construction of an aesthetic recognizable as Zionist (Spiegel, Ingber) and, later on, as Israeli (Aldor, Ingber, Eshel). My research integrates this discourse by investigating the strategies utilized for the formation of such aesthetic, and the institutional, political, and human stakes at play in this process, which is under ongoing evolution and constant adjustment.

³⁰ In his analysis of modernity and modernism, David Harvey almost sarcastically refers to the project of modernity as "incredibly optimistic" and then reminds us of Horkenheim and Adorno's thesis about the Enlightenment, which "transformed the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression in the name of human liberation" (2005, 13).

Note also how historian Nina Spiegel, in her important *Embodying Hebrew Culture* (2013), on the development of Zionist corporeal practices in Mandate Palestine, ultimately does not challenge the modernist discourse, stating that "the cultural aesthetics consolidated during the Mandate era," which she identifies in the aesthetics of togetherness, of muscular toughness, of Eastern/Western, of public defiance, of a secular vs. religious dialectic, "are still present in contemporary dance in Israel" (176).

³¹ Moreover, a dance produced in Israel and performed by bodies that are not accustomed to everyday life in Israel (the presence of non-Israeli dancers in Israel is growing) does not have less political significance. Also, the political significance of a dance does not necessarily articulate in terms of resistance but, sometimes, in the opposite terms of conformity to norms, power structures, aesthetic codes, etc.

It is in the light of this theoretical, historical, and methodological insufficiency that I propose instead to look at the mechanisms of formation of dance epistemes in Israel. To define what I mean by dance episteme, I draw from the theorizations of Michel Foucault (1994) and Randy Martin (2015). With the term episteme Foucault indicates a structure or a system that in a certain epoch created the foundation for a specific order of knowledge, and produced specific discursive practices. In other words, an episteme indicates the system of practices and discourses that produces a particular way of establishing what has to be considered “truth” in a certain time period. Epistemic shifts are neither frequent nor quick, in fact, Foucault identifies only four epistemic shifts in Western history.³² Epistemes demonstrate that humanity does not develop in a progressive continuum—there is continuity only within an episteme.³³ Re-elaborating Foucault’s conceptualization for his research on dance and the social formations of kinesthetic knowledge, Randy Martin coined the term “kinestheme.”³⁴ “Whereas an episteme is an array of rules by which knowledge is validated, or of regularities within which it is produced,” Martin explains, “a kinestheme is the regularization of bodily practices, the moment of power by and through which bodies are called—and devise responses—to move in particular ways” (2015, 158). Martin’s

³² Gaston Bachelard ([1938] 2002) first introduced the concept of “epistemic breaks,” which indicated a radical rupture. Georges Canguilhem ([1943] 1991) later re-elaborated it to explain the scientific break represented by Galileo. Louis Althusser ([1965] 2005) also adopted the concept to explain the Marxist break from Hegelism.

³³ Along similar lines and around the same time, Hayden White (1966) demonstrated that it is the historian that constructs “a specious continuity” between epochs, and advocated for “a history that will educate us to (...) discontinuity, disruption and chaos.” White expanded his theorization in *Metahistory* ([1973a] 2014), where he scrutinized the literary techniques historians employ to fabricate their specific narrative—what he called “emplotment.” See also Hayden (1973b) for his take on Foucault.

³⁴ Randy Martin connects his notion of “social kinesthetic” with Raymond Williams’s “structure of feeling” (1977): “Like the idea of a structure of feeling, a prepolitical disposition, tacit or virtual socialities, it is possible to imagine the material surround of corporeal activity before it crystallizes as a specific practice expression. A social kinesthetic can be understood as the orientation, sensibility, or predisposition that informs approaches to movement, the historically specific microphysics that generates and governs motional force fields. From within mobilization all is networked and from the perspective of a social kinesthetic an organizational rule or logic is discernible” (Martin 2012, 68).

kinestheme allows us to pinpoint epochal changes in the corporeal order through dance practices that “share certain principles out of which a common orientation within the world takes shape” (Foster 2016, 22).³⁵

In the light of Foucault’s and Martin’s theorizations, I look at shifts occurring in the way dance operates in the kibbutz system and in the Israeli army, articulating how it moves socially and politically, and how it becomes part of the life of a community and a State. Differently from Foucault and Martin, however, I will not try to identify an epochal macro-shift. Some could propose to locate such an epochal rupture in the very theorization of the New Jewish body as the Zionist paradigm for a regenerated Jewish corporeality. However, the epistemic work is about identifying the systems of rules, the corporeal practices, and discourses that took place in Mandate Palestine/Israel from the 1940s to the 2010s not exclusively in relation to Zionism but to a multiplicity of factors, influences, events that took place. This allows me to divorce my work from an approach that assumes Zionism as the teleological drive of Jewish history towards its culmination in the establishment of the State of Israel—what Yehouda Shenhav named “methodological Zionism” (2006). My research does not lose sight of Zionism, not at all. In fact, I look at it as a driving ideological force that governs, consciously *and* unconsciously, discourses that ultimately determine who and what matters (and to what extent they matter) in Israeli society, and more specifically for this study, in the kibbutz and in the army.

A Dancer’s Stakes: Theorizing Livability

³⁵ According to dance scholar Mark Franko (2016), Martin’s kinestheme in synthesis indicates shifts in the corporeal “apparatus of representation” (35). Martin outlines three main kinesthemes: a classicist sovereign verticality, a modernist introspective depth, and a postmodern return to horizontality and the surface.

The term livability appears in two different disciplinary realms: in Judith Butler's intervention in discourses of moral philosophy around the question *what makes a life livable* (Butler 2004a, 2004b, 2009; 2015b), and in discourses produced in the fields of urban planning and human geography. In the latter realm, livability is conceived as the set of strategies for the territorial management of the population in relation to local governance, in order to avoid overcrowding, regulate flows of migration, and develop policies of economic affordability and sustainability (Evans 2002; Hamilton and Atkins 2008; Sanyal, Rosan, and Vale 2012; Ellis and Roberts 2015). Conversely, in Judith Butler's theorization, livability takes into account but does not correspond to those ideas of governmentality, intended as the set of procedures, techniques, maneuvers, policies that allow the State and its governing bodies to consciously manage the population at the collective and individual level, exercising what Foucault named biopower (Foucault 2004 and 2008).³⁶

In the second half of the twentieth century, theorizing power as a relational, multi-dimensional, omnipresent intensity that operates over life, Michel Foucault carefully exposed the doing of the modern State and its social structures, showing how power regenerates and reproduces itself through different agents and forms (and, thus, offering also a method to undo the oppressive work of power). In her response to the post-9/11 manifestation of State violence, Butler deeply engages with Foucault's idea of governmentality (Butler 2004a, 92-99) in order to assess the alliance between governmentality (which utilizes law-making as a tactic for managing the conduct of the population) and sovereignty (a fundamentally lawless power, because the "king" is the only law to obey, concerned with the management of life and death). As Foucault already posited, the State finds many ways to perpetuate itself, finding strategies to legitimize its

³⁶ See, in particular, Foucault (2004, 108-109 and 115-116). For Butler's consideration of the work of State apparatuses in relation to a conceptualization of live, see Butler and Spivak (2007).

own power and make it legitimate in the eyes of the population.³⁷ Butler detects the governmental adoption of sovereignty as a tactic to manage a population by suspending laws and rights.³⁸ Butler argues that such a power classifies part of the population as “less than human,” as non-subject (2004a, 98). Instead of producing different kinds of subjects, the State can also undo a subject, de-subjectivize, and negate the formation of subjectivity within its parameters of humanness. Hence, livability, in Butler’s formulation is primarily concerned with what makes a life recognized as such, and what happens to a de-subjectivized life, when a life becomes disposable (see also Mbembe 2003). Her discourse is rooted in questions such as what is recognized as a life (2004a), when a life is grievable and worth mourning (2009), what makes a life livable even when it is afflicted by violence, injustice, and precarity (2015b)³⁹.

In formulating my conceptualization of livability from a dance perspective, I consider the specifics of researching dance in the context of Israel/Palestine and in the context of Israel’s larger domestic, regional, and international (armed and non-armed) conflicts in which dance has been produced, performed and disseminated. Thus, I constantly reflect on the very matter of living and conceiving life in such a contested and precarious scenario for the lives that inhabit it and are affected by it. In particular, considering my position as a scholar that did not grow up in that scenario and with the discourses it has produced, and researching the life stakes of being a

³⁷ In *Precarious Life* (2004a), Butler refers to Foucault’s essay “Governmentality” (1991). I primarily refer to Foucault’s concepts of sovereignty and governmentality as developed in Foucault (1995), (2003), (2004), and (2008).

³⁸ Specifically, Butler reflects upon the US government initiation of “the war on terror” and the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo.

³⁹ Butler clearly distinguishes “precariousness” from “precarity.” According to Butler, all lives are precarious and exposed to vulnerability but to different degrees: “their persistence is in no sense guaranteed.” Differently, “precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (2009, 25). In relation to precarity, see also Mbembe (2003). In a certain way, Foucault unpacked the mechanisms and identified the agents that produce or cooperate in the production of precarity.

dancer and making dancing in that context, I take extremely seriously the issues and sentiments of life-threat, survival, humanity/inhumanity, exclusion, oppression, life-affirmation, etc. that inhabitants and scholars of the region have expressed.

It is not for a lack of accuracy that, so far, I have not offered a definition of life or human life, or framed how I conceive life within this discourse. “Life” is at the core of discourses of ethics, moral philosophy, biopolitics, bioethics, posthumanities, etc. Definitions proliferate, and are always qualified through encompassing frameworks of reference (e. g. “neoliberal life,” “animal life,” “modern life,” “dance life”), or adjectives that underline a life concern (e. g. “precarious life,” “healthy life,” “spiritual life,” “full life”). Definitions of life are necessarily partial and constructed. What matters in moving towards my theorization of livability within a dance studies discourse is the idea of life practice and practices of life through dance. At large, I am interested in the modes and ideas of life conceptualized or offered through the labor of the dancing bodies and informed by a variety of matters, such as, for example, conditions of training and context of production, a dancer’s performance of gender and a dancer’s ethnic background, the performance setting and the political climate in which the performance takes place, the politics of circulation and the audience selection, etc. While not all this information is retrievable or graspable especially in historical research, the effort of looking through the lens of livability implies the awareness of such ungraspability. The livability framework as such generalizes about a dancer’s or a dance’s life stakes, but in its application it seeks to confront the political, social, economic, cultural circumstances and tensions in which dancing bodies move and live. Dancing bodies persevere in dancing in the light of and despite their networks of conditions and circumstances (Martin 2012, Foster 2016). Such perseverance of the dancing body informs a dancer’s conceptualization of life. Dance, in fact, is not a metaphor of or for life; quite the opposite, it is a

mode of articulation of life for a dancer, as well as for a viewer. It is indeed in the perseverance in dance as a mode of articulation and perspective on life that dancing bodies exclude ephemerality and affirm their presence. The work consists in recognizing that perseverance.

Perseverance in life lies at the core of Judith Butler's questions around livable life. She roots her discourse in the Spinozian proposition according to which one's own desire to live and to live a good life needs to be modulated in relation to other lives in the world, so that one's life "not only reflects but furthers the value of others' lives as well as one's own" (Butler 2015a, 65). With these words, Butler synthesizes the ethical foundations of discourses that rely on the idea of relationality: "It is not possible to refer to one's own singularity without understanding the way in which that singularity becomes implicated in the singularities of the others, where [...] this being implicated produces a mode of being beyond singularity itself" (Butler 2015a, 65). We continuously depend on anonymous others, but "what this means, concretely, will vary across the globe" (2004, xii) because of the different conditions of possibility through which living articulates. Butler draws on Spinoza's theory of desire to live and desire to persist in one's own life in its relationality to other lives, as enunciated in his *Ethics* (2000, 171, Part III). In this context and in my livability framework, relationality is not an inherently positive or collaborative concept. It is about the reciprocal implications of living a life in the inevitable or voluntary relation to other lives as well as to different structures (from the State to dance technique, for instance). In my conceptualization of livability, it is important to look at how dancing subjects and dances choreograph and perform such interdependency. For instance, specific dancing subjects can persevere in their desire to live and dance while simultaneously diminishing the conditions of livability of other subjects or dancing subjects. In fact, livability looks at the

conditions but also at the effects that a dance propagates, and at how these inform, affect, or frame a dancer's (and a dance's) life stakes.

The Stakes of a Dancing Life and the Question of Responsibility

Livability wants to reflect upon the stakes of dancing in a specific context, look at how a dance and dancing bodies negotiate their conditions of possibility, and consider the possible repercussions of a dance performance. By proposing this, I do not aim to assess or evaluate the life of a dancer or draw conclusions about their ethical conduct overall.⁴⁰ This would be a scrutinizing and universalizing manner of utilizing dance and research. Livability is rather about the stakes of participating in a dance and responding to what the dance entails by participating in it, primarily, as a choreographer and as a dancer. As Randy Martin extensively showed (1990, 1998, 2012), the conditions of possibility of a dance are bonded with interconnected political procedures and processes (from policy-making to sociability in rehearsal) that determine the production, performance, and circulation of a dance. Along similar lines, other dance scholars (such as Savigliano 1996, O'Shea 2007, Foster 1998, Gierdsorf 2013) have expanded the notion of choreography to encompass what I call the conditions of possibility of a dance (the possibility of circulating as cultural capital to disseminate a political agenda, of happening on the basis of economic circumstances and mechanisms of power, of creating embodied national narratives, etc.). Differently from existing discourses, however, my livability framework calls into question (surely not into trial) the question of responsibility in dance. Perhaps, it is the notion of

⁴⁰ Moreover, since the livability framework wants to generate a historically and culturally contextualized analysis, it also necessitates other frameworks to layer the livability discourse. For instance, as suggested in the previous sections of this Introduction and in my unfolding of livability, in my analysis of livability in Israel I engage with a large array of theories, from theories of globalization and (post)colonialism, to theories of militarism, ethnonationalism and gender, among many others. On the interdisciplinarity of dance studies as a mode to tackle endeavors in the field to analyze complex contexts and address arduous questions, see Manning (1993) and (2004), Burt (2009), Morris (2009), Gierdsorf (2009).

responsibility that better allows a discourse around the ethics of being in, not only of making, a dance.

In dance studies, scholars have often problematized the etymological kinship between responsibility and response. Through the analysis of an excerpt of Steve Paxton's contact improvisation event *Magnesium 72*, with Curt Siddall and Nancy Stark Smith, dance scholar Ramsay Burt (2011) reflects on the III part of Spinoza's *Ethics* and on Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza (1980). In those lectures, the French philosopher distinguishes between ethics and morality, with the latter framed as "the system of judgement" based on the reiteration of hegemonic relations. In his theorization of ethics, Deleuze implies the active participation of the subject: "The point of view of an ethics is: Of what are you capable? What can you do?" and restates Spinoza's notorious question: "What can a body do?" According to Deleuze, ethics invite the subject to activate the body in order to fulfill the life's potential (probably referring to Spinoza's concept of "good life"). Burt continues exploring the Deleuzian notion of the encounter with the (unfamiliar, unknown) other—the body of the other—as a potential for one's enhancement of life. He then adds Emmanuel Lévinas's idea that to approach another body—"the Other's face"—is already a mode of responsibility that exposes the other's precariousness.

In the light of these conceptualizations of ethical relationality, Burt analyzes a moment of *Magnesium 72* arguing that in contact improvisation Paxton was looking for the very Spinozian question of what a body can do without predetermined goals or expectations. During a lift, Siddall perilously drops Stark Smith. Noticing Stark Smith's survival reaction to protect her body, in his documentary, Paxton (1972) notes that "what the body can do to survive is much faster than thought." Burt notices that Paxton praises Stark Smith's ability to creatively protect her body (thus, taking responsibility for herself) but does not blame Siddall for not being

responsible enough toward his partner; on the contrary, Siddall's intervention might have worsened the fall. In the light of this, interrogating what occurs in the passage between response and responsibility, Burt argues that "there is a kind of responsibility that is not about obligation but that comes from an open, creative, ethical way of thinking."

In her study of the relationship between the practice and the social organization of contact improvisation, Cynthia Novack (1990) showed how the founding principle of mutual responsibility often collided with Paxton's ambivalent or mobile notions of responsibility both in leadership and in his theorization of the practice (as emerged in Burt's discourse). In Paxton, the notion of responsibility is attached to that of necessity (Siddall could have even worsened the situation). Novack, acknowledging that what is considered as necessary varies, then asks a key-question: "If everything just happens, who can be held responsible?" (195). She acutely shows how the privileging of necessity has the power to mask the presence of ideological implications embedded in the notion of necessity. Differently from Paxton's notion of responsibility as bonded to necessity, Foster (2002) shows how the improvised choreography of Richard Bull *The Dance That Describes Itself* (in three reiterations: 1973, 1974, 1977) requires a necessary responsibility in order to "help [...] The Dance to create itself" (13).⁴¹ The premise of this evening-length structured improvisation is that the performers collectively make spontaneous decisions about how to represent a dance that talks about itself. What I aim to underline here is that, while Paxton's contact improvisation relies on a notion of responsibility that is first and foremost self-reflective and about minimizing damage and repercussions, in Bull's work

⁴¹ *The Dance That Describes Itself* (first performed in 1973) is a choreographed improvisation organized by Richard Bull in collaboration with the performers. Dramaturgically personifying The Dance through written notes signed by The Dance, in which It makes statements about dance (Itself), dancing, and dance history, the performers convey, and also challenge, The Dance's claims through their bodies and voices. *The Dance That Describes Itself* works also as a theoretical and historical inquiry into the collective practice of making dances, making history through dancing, writing history through dancing.

responsibility is at once individual and shared. The hierarchy in authorship, with Bull recognized as the main choreographer or initiator, does not lessen the performers' responsibility in actualizing The Dance. Further thickening this idea of ethics as fully-assumed and shared responsibility, Cynthia Novack, specifically recounting about her work in improvisation, reminds us that any idea of self-activity "also involves people doing this in relation to others" (in Foster 2002, 250).

The notion of responsibility implied in Bull's work simultaneously articulates as responsibility for the realization of possibility of The Dance and as reciprocal accountability among the performers. Moreover, to me, the assumption seems to be that, among the various stakes of the performance, there was at stake the very presence of The Dance as realized through the lives of the performers. This consideration of responsibility is more than the Levinasian responsibility as response. The dancers respond to one another and to The Dance in the very presence and possibilities of their bodies and life. This idea seems close to Butler's notion of responsibility, in contrast with Lévinas. In sum, in Lévinas (1969), responsibility activates in the subject through the encounter with "the face of Other," in its "absolute alterity." Such alterity is revealed to me through my assumption of responsibility toward the absolute Other. For Levinas, to be responsible is to construct oneself as a subject: responsibility grants subjectivity. And, in substance, the Other matters to me as long as it grants me subjectivity. Butler complicates Levinas's account, first, by contextualizing the encounter. As she exposed since *Gender Trouble* (1990), encounters and acts of recognition take place in environments also regulated by hierarchizing, exclusionary, violent social norms. Thus, while for Levinas the (generalized) Other is the source of one's becoming subject, Butler warns about the encounter's possibility of

producing abjection, furthering marginalization and exclusion.⁴² Her further reflections in her post 9/11 works consider the additional ethical demands of establishing relationalities in war contexts, in which the precariousness and vulnerability of lives are radical, and in which relationalities are impossible because "there are 'lives' that are not quite — or, indeed, are never — recognized as lives" (2009: 4).

My formulation of responsibility in the framework of livability takes into account Judith Butler's recommendations as well as the ethical work of the dancing bodies exemplified in Richard Bull's piece. The latter, in particular, resonates with my discourse for its reflections around the ethical work within an ensemble, for the performers' commitment to the enhancement of the possibility of existence of *The Dance That Describes Itself*—the responsibility of recognizing and performing it. *The Dance herself* declares this: she is present, as she can write in the program notes, "because I have gained the confidence and commitment of the dancers who will dance me" (Foster 2002, 3). Through the livability discourse, questions that I ask the dancers and the dance can be: For whom or what do you dance? To whom or what do you commit through your dancing? What is at stake in your dancing?⁴³ These questions need to be addressed in relation to the context in which the bodies move. In my research, I formulate these questions connecting the dancers' agenda to the political stakes of the specific site of performance, and the historical circumstances that inform dance practice.

Another specificity of the livability framework is that it is concerned with the reverberations of one's or a group's dancing on those that are not within reach; not only the audience that witnesses the performance, or even reads about it, or watches it recorded. I refer to those subjects

⁴² On this matter, see also Kristeva (1982), from where Butler borrows the concept of abjection. See also Butler (1993).

⁴³ These questions mirror back to the dance scholar: For whom or what do you write for? To whom or what do you commit through your writing? What's at stake in your writing?

that without witnessing the performance, without even being interested in it or aware of it indirectly experience its repercussions (which, at the theoretical level, can either be positive or negative). One might claim that these repercussions are undetectable and that reverberations are short-lived, maybe assuming that dancing bodies are ephemeral and vanishing.⁴⁴ The work of livability, indeed, calls for the dancers' as well as the researcher's responsibility in acknowledging repercussions and reverberations of a dance. To look for one's responsibility when choreographing and dancing (and researching) means to study how we move, how we move politically (see Lepecki 2013), for what and for whom we move for. Again, this (framework, dissertation, discourse) is not a court; livability does not demand anyone to claim for responsibility. It rather looks at what a dancer does with her life in the commitment to her dancing. In this way, livability operates in the realm of ethics as framed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). In fact, to sum up, what interests me in the livability frame is an exploration of the dancer's stakes in a dance that, yet, is produced and circulates through a variety of structures of which the dancer can or cannot be aware, and reaches, directly or indirectly, a variety of subjects—a process in which the dancer can or cannot participate.

Nevertheless, I recognize I have just presented an *excusatio non petita*. In this dissertation, the Israeli dancers I follow—some celebrated like Gurit Kadman, others unrecorded in archival documents, or absorbed in the virtual mass of YouTube,—sometimes are highly aware of the mechanisms of production of a dance and attentively participate in strategizing its political agenda; other times, they seem unaware of the larger discourses surrounding their dances, and

⁴⁴ I criticize the idea of corporeal ephemerality as connected to irremediable loss and forgetfulness, and production of nostalgia (in particular with reference to Phelan 2004). Such a thinking risks to promote a certain 'ungraspability' of the bodies, especially of the past, and determine their exclusion. On the contrary, to advocate for and research for the presence of the bodies allows for their recognition as subjects and political agents bearing responsibility. It also allows for a dismantlement of the hegemony of the "original" as the authority in performance. On this point, see Sacchi (2013).

claim dancing as a practice of joy to share with their close community. Sometimes, they proactively mobilize the institutions to have their dances circulate beyond Israel, with a vague sense of how they circulate domestically; other times, they seem clueless of the repercussions a dance can have on their life, even in legal terms. In the context of Israel, with its ongoing succession of armed conflicts, exacerbation of ethnonational disparities, ideological fights among Zionist trends, changes in governmental policies, etc., cultural practices and dance in particular are never innocent, nor neutral (as we know, they never are), not even when framed as such by their own practitioners. For this reason, I insist on the need to interrogate the underlying stakes of a dancer and a dance by looking at different and multiple structures, subjects, historical contingencies. Because the stakes of the State are very high (from national survival to territorialization enterprise), the stakes of those that move in relation to the State (a soldier as well as a folk dancer) are not less high. Thus, livability also observes how the individual dancer or a dance community modulates their own stakes in relation to those of the State or even larger political structures. Initially different stakes might end up coinciding. At times, a dancer consciously invests in the stakes of the State; other times, she can tactically deceive them. What does it mean to live as a dancer in the context of Israel? How does the work of a dancer—whether professional or amateur, in a State-sponsored festival or on an unpaved road of the Occupied Territories—affect her/his own and other’s possibility to live a livable life?

A Dancer’s Stakes

In my dissertation, I am proposing what I call the livability framework in order to intervene in discourses that have neglected or underestimated the presence of bodies and in particular of dancing bodies, or have imposed a conceptualization of “the body” that limits the possibilities of

other corporealities. Through livability, I consider dancing bodies as generators and receptors of multiple and simultaneous tensions that, even when in reciprocal contradiction, still coexist. The livability framework looks at dance as a mode of articulating the stakes of one's or a community's life, despite and in light of one's own inscription in an ideological project or political structure. How do people choreograph their own lives while dancing? How does their dancing choreograph the life of a community? How does dancing set the stakes of one's or a community's life? What's at stake in a dancing/dancer's/dance's life?

These questions become more pressing when dance is practiced in a context in which ideology dictates so much of each individual's conduct at both the individual and communal level.⁴⁵ At the same time, reflecting upon how ideology (in particular State ideology) becomes "felt as a mediation" between institutions and civil society rather than as dominance, Randy Martin reminds us that "political articulations are by no means unidirectional," so that "any mobilization ... will, necessarily assume some resonance within the very organizational form of the state" (Martin 2002, 189). In a context such as that of the establishment of the State of Israel, the very idea of State was the pillar of the Zionist ideology through which the state came into being. In the previous pages, I posited that dance in Israel is part of what Althusser ([1970] 2014) named Ideological State Apparatuses ("a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions"), meaning 'softer' (non-blatantly repressive) modes that the State supports in order to perpetuate itself. The livability framework allows for an exploration of the stakes of a dancing body in such a project.

⁴⁵ Following Althusser's renowned essay on ideology and the State apparatus, Göran Theborn claims that "The operation of ideology in human life basically involves the constitution and patterning of how human beings live their lives as conscious, reflecting initiators of acts in a structured, meaningful world. Ideology operates as discourse, addressing or, as Althusser puts it, interpellating human beings as subjects" (cited in Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1994, 153).

For this dissertation, I have tried to develop a theoretical framework that could allow me to analyze and explicate the complex entanglements of dances, dancing bodies, political stakes, ideological superpositions, intertwined histories of violence and reclamation, narratives of trauma, survival, nationalism, in the specific context of Israel.⁴⁶ In particular, I have struggled with the mainstream, romanticized, and depoliticized (or politically ambiguous) narratives about dance in Israel, from the establishment of dance communities and institutions under the aegis of the cultural and political Zionist leaderships up until the present days. I needed a framework able to help me look through the existing narratives and, at the same time, detect their formation as well as the formation of ideas of “Israeli dance” at the national and international level. The livability framework confronts the epistemic regimes that have generated and reinforced hegemonic narratives about dance in Israel. As outlined in the previous pages, dance in Israel has been historically associated to the possibility of life of the Jewish community in Palestine, and then to the persistence of the Israeli population as well as of the State. More specifically, my concern was to reconstruct the complex dynamics and conditions that have informed the production of an Israeli dance knowledge (in its multiple articulations).⁴⁷ To look through these narratives and, possibly reassess them, I have worked to recognize the presence of the dancing bodies, and confront the interweaving elements—from power structures to the dancers’ desires—that impacted their dancing, their dance making, their performances, the circulation of their dances, and the formation of their legacies, in relation to the stakes of their lives. Livability allows me to reintroduce the political aspect of being a dancer in Israeli history.

⁴⁶ Several dance scholars, whose work has informed mine, have tackled similar concerns in other geographic, cultural, and historical contexts (Manning 1993; Gottschild 1996; Foster 1996; Savigliano 1995; O’Shea 2007; Giersdorf 2013).

⁴⁷ This epistemic inquiry reflects the method introduced by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1994).

Livability reflects upon the stakes of the dancing subject. The notion of “subject” is fundamental and highly debated across the humanities and social sciences. Here, I rely on Michel Foucault’s conceptualization. After his groundbreaking analysis of knowledge (the archeological shift) and power (the genealogical shift), Foucault initiated an investigation of the formation of subjectivity, asking how subjects recognize themselves as such in relation to existing forms of knowledge and power, and to the formation of truths (the epistemological shift).⁴⁸ An implicit question in his work is: how do subjects *experience* themselves, what roles do they consciously and unconsciously play in the ideological “games of truth” (Foucault 1992)—which are the sets of rules through which subjectivity forms, in relation with one’s own desires, needs, gestures, etc.?⁴⁹ Livability asks how dancing subjects experience their life and choreograph their life in relation to the different “games of truth” they consciously and unconsciously play.

But primarily, livability explores how dancing bodies choreograph their presence in the practice of and in discourses about ideology and truth-making. Livability tests (and yearns for) the instability of systems of truth, within their ongoing historical transformations and relational intricacies, through the work of dancing bodies that move and live (consciously and unconsciously, and with different intensities) within those same systems. In the livability framework, such systems can include a political ideology like Zionism as well as dance technique, a peace treaty and, equally, the routine of a dance company, etc. Livability seeks to recognize how dancing subjects move and are moved by those systems of truth and, hence, reassess their relationship to them, posing new stakes for the dancers and, possibly, reconfiguring

⁴⁸ Foucault exposed this new stage of research in Foucault 2014, and expanded the discourse—in chronological order,—in Foucault (2017), (2005), (2010), (2011).

⁴⁹ Foucault defines a game of truth as “a set of rules by which truth is produced,” or, more articulately, “a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedures, may be considered valid or invalid” (1997, 297).

the apparatuses in which they live and dance. This process can expand in space and time, or be more contained. Through the livability lens, one can look at the multi-year effort to establish a dance group while negotiating with the obstacles imposed by multiple institutions, or at a fifteen-minute long solo. What the livability frame foregrounds is a dancer's life stakes in the complex interconnectedness of her dance making and performing.

In sum, my fundamental questions are: What is at stake for a dancer choreographing or performing in a specific space, time, context, for a specific audience, with certain dance genres, with a specific group, a specific network of support? What kind of experience is that dancer living and projecting? What kind of life does dancing grant to specific dancing subjects committed to certain agendas or projects? How does the dancer choreograph her presence as a living subject in relation to those agendas or her communities? The livability framework poses further questions, which, besides re-affirming or re-including the political of the dancing body in narratives that neglected it, interrogate the dancers' and choreographers' assessment of the conditions of possibility of their dancing and the outcomes of their dancing—what their dancing enables. What makes a dancing/dancer's/dance's life as such in relation to the conditions of possibility of dancing? In what ways does the life of a dancing body affect and how is it affected by such conditions?⁵⁰ What kind of responsibility and role do dancers or choreographers exercise as political subjects within the various systems (of power, truth and knowledge-making, sociability, etc.) they inhabit? How do they relate to the generative force of their dancing? How do they relate to the past and future legacy of their dancing? The livability framework attends to the possibility that dancing and choreographing have of producing or enhancing others' livability

⁵⁰ All these questions similarly concern the dance writer and dance scholar, but this is not the place to deepen this offshoot of the discourse. For a choreographic analysis of the dance scholar's body at work, see Susan Foster's "Introduction: Choreographing History," in Foster (1995, 3-21).

by, for example, manifesting mechanisms of oppression. At the same time, the livability frame allows us to concede how dancing and choreographing perpetuate or produce unlivability, for instance, by fostering exclusionary politics that can generate a range of negative effects on one's life possibility—from economic precarity to social death (Patterson 1982; Cacho 2012; Short 2016).

While existing works in dance scholarship, in various contexts and time-periods, have investigated the mechanisms through which dance can generate livability or unlivability (e.g. Chatterjea 2004, Foster 2002, Gottschild 2003, Kraut 2015, Martin 1998, Martin 2012, Novack 1990, Shea Murphy 2007, Srinivasan 2011), I restate that the livability framework aims at problematizing what is at stake in a dance practitioner's life when making or performing dances in relation to the systems of truth that her body inhabits and her dancing reaches. It is also about the dancers' and choreographers' responsiveness to the urgencies of their time and what they consider as such. How do their dancing and dances reflect upon their own conditions of possibility, and how do they claim responsibility for the intersubjective repercussions of their work? In other words, the livability framework probably aspires to contribute to a specific conversation about dance ethics or ethics in dance.⁵¹

Because of the questions it generates and the ethical issues it raises, I claim that the livability framework, generated within a field that considers dance as a practice of culture-formation and

⁵¹ While questions around ethics are solidly present and often implied in dance scholarship—for instance Cynthia Novack widely engages with the notion of “formation of an ethical community” in *Sharing the Dance* (1990, 190), systematic interrogations about ethics *in* dance, and dance *and* ethics are recent. Fiona Bannon's book (2018) centers around the ethics of creating collaboratively in the performing arts, and relies on the Deleuzian articulation of immanent ethics for the production of a (in Spinozian terms) good life and a life-affirming life. Dance case-studies include Judson Dance Theater, The Forsythe Company, the work of Meg Stuart—experiences that start with collaboration and democracy as guiding principles. My intervention wants to investigate ethical implications in dance practices that do not seem ethically-charged or are not framed as ethically-invested. Similarly, the issue “What the body can do. Dance and Ethics” of the online journal *Dancehouse Diary* (n. 8, 2015), as the title suggests, relies on the Deleuzian reading of Spinoza. See also Macneill (2014).

political intervention, imbricated in social, economic, political discourses, can further existing debates in Dance Studies. Livability produces an intense field of tensions generated by multiple life stakes at play in relation to dancers and dance communities, potentially across a large time span (as in this dissertation) and geographical areas (as in part here). It shows how dance as a complex and relational practice has the force to calibrate and orientate the priorities in a person's life or in the life of institutions, and has the power to reassess or popularize the corporeal agenda for an entire nation. Livability can illuminate not only the mechanisms of power but also how, at the individual level, those mechanisms irradiate and become part of the individual's life structure. At the same time, it can show how an individual perseveres in dance, while never reconciling with, neither submitting to nor revolting against, Power. Livability can show the instabilities in a dancer's effort to disrupt a relationship of subjugation to power, and manifest the fact that one's own irreducibility, sometimes, necessitates a complex struggle. It can display that anti-oppressive life economies do not need to invest in the ephemerality of other lives to emerge. In fact, if an individual or a group, in order to make their life livable, necessitate or force the becoming ephemeral of other bodies (in other words, if one's livability limits or negates the affirmation of other corporealities), one's own livability just affirms itself as the repository of exclusionary and oppressive practices that, rather than enhancing others' livability, rely on their unlivability. Livability as a framework and practice that interrogates the shared stakes in a dance experience summons dancers, choreographers, audiences, and institutional figures in order to reflect on the possibility of dance to orientate life, as the (precarious) event in which we all, with different intensities, corporeal articulations, and energetic investments, persevere.

Killjoy Scholarship? Looking for Livability, Or Why This Research

The documentary on dance in Israel *Let's Dance! (Tzeadim, 2016)* opens with a rapid black-and-white sequence of footages of *halutzim* and *halutzot* (Zionist “pioneers”) dancing the *hora* (a circle folk dance); a quick frame of a Yemenite woman; Bedouins celebrating with dance and music; and young people dancing rock 'n' roll, on the strains of the song *Ani Rotze Lazuz (I Want to Move)* by Boom Pam (2008).⁵² What follows are testimonies of prominent Israeli choreographers and dancers sharing their need to dance and ideas of dancing—for example: "I go crazy, I have to move, I have to work out some energy, stress, anger, joy, emotions"; "I think dancing is the most healthy, fun, freeing thing, it's so connected to everyone, to all of us"; "Dance appears in the Bible as a principle"; "Rabbi Nachman said 'It's a great deed to be happy', he said it starts to happen when you dance." Then the song's lyrics continue the discourse: "I don't want the army, I don't want to go to war, I'm no soldier, So don't cry for me girl, I don't want a sad life, I'd rather move my ass and live in rhythm." On the DVD blurb, we can read that the film "examines how Israel, despite its reputation as a militaristic and 'macho' society, became a recognized world leader in Modern Dance, and formed part of its historical development. (...) It also examines the interrelation between two phenomena of the 20th century – Modern Dance (especially *German Modern Dance*) and Zionism (the evolution of the Israeli society)."

In Zionist/Israeli culture, dance, indeed, has worked as a means to mobilize a collectivity toward statehood and its strengthening.⁵³ Differently from the specific concept of "mobilization" theorized by Randy Martin (1998) in the field of dance studies, where it indicates the capacity of a group to share an experience and "make history" together "without the recourse to offices of

⁵² Documentary directed by Gabriel Bibliowicz, written by Efrat Amit, and produced by Assaf Amir and Tammy Cohen. 2012, 72 min, Hebrew (the version with English subtitles lasts 52 min.). The documentary features among others, internationally renowned Israeli choreographers and dancers Rami Be'er, Yonatan Carmon, Sharon Eyal, Yasmeen Godder, Dani Karavan, Barak Marshall, Ohad Naharin, Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak, Renana Raz, Rina Schenfeld, Ido Tadmor, Yair Vardi.

⁵³ Here, I employ the verb to mobilize in one of its generic meanings of causing or urging someone to move in order to accomplish a particular (political) project.

power" (7), the dance experiences that informed an Israeli "structure of feeling" (Williams 1977) about dance have been strictly oriented by Zionist ideas and Zionist/Israeli institutions.⁵⁴ As I will show in Chapter 1, the performance of joy is part of the prescribed Zionist ethos that dance helped to forge in kibbutz culture, while, in Chapter 2, I will illustrate how dance is proposed as a recreational and parodic device within the army. As a matter of fact, romanticized feelings of joy sublimated through embodiment and visual culture are typical of modern nationalisms. That is how a nation celebrates its own "exceptionalism" (see Alam 2009; Unger and Godfrey 2004).⁵⁵

Let's Dance! has circulated globally in festivals, movie theaters, and campuses. When it was screened at UCLA in Fall 2014, I co-lead a Q&A with the audience.⁵⁶ Questions from a majority of Israeli and Jewish participants concerned the excess of space given to theatrical dance and the lack of attention to dance in kibbutz culture, to the Yemenite tradition, or to Hassidic dances, but nobody questioned the rhetoric of joy and healing attributed to dance as a fundamental mode for processing emotions, even contrasting emotions, in a healthy way in Israel. How did this "structure of feeling" about dance in Israel, throughout time and across forms and sites of

⁵⁴ Martin exhaustively synthesizes the notion of "structure of feeling," explaining that Raymond Williams developed it "to discuss the historically emergent of 'pre-emergent', 'inalienably physical' 'changes of presence' in a given social formation" (Martin 1998, 234n2, referring to Williams 1977, 128-35).

⁵⁵ Gil Merom (1999) traces the continuity of the question of Israeli exceptionalism as expanded to the realm of Israel's national security. Merom locates the idea of Israeli exceptionalism in a notion of Jewish exceptionalism, then assumed and radicalized in anti-Diasporic terms by Zionism, and reinforced in the State-era through the production of a "perception" of relentless hostility in the region. For a defense, instead, of the idea of "Zionist exceptionalism" as seen in terms of confluences of opposites (such as East/West, religious/secular), see Shenhav (2007).

⁵⁶ At UCLA, *Let's Dance!* was screened on October 20, 2014 at the James Bridge Theater, with the sponsorship of the UCLA Y&S Nazarian Center for Israel Studies. As a specialist on dance in Israel, I was invited to co-lead a Q&A with visiting professor in Israeli visual culture Anat Gilboa. The screening happened in conjunction with the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Batsheva Dance Company at Royce Hall, organized by the UCLA Center for the Art of Performance (CAP). Adherents to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement mobilized that week, and protested outside and inside the theater on the night of the performance.

performance generated, endured, and expanded from kibbutz settlements to global audiences? Is it really accurate to say that dance in Israel generates joy and is generally loved? What do generalizations such as Aldor's aesthetic identifiers of what makes a dance "Israeli" and dance in Israel as a practice of joy say about the use of dance in Israel? How did these generalizations form?

This dissertation is precisely interested in how these "structures of feeling" became, indeed, structural, generalized, part of a national rhetoric and exportable. In this regard, I conceive this dissertation as an archeological inquiry for the unpacking of dominant narratives about the development of dance in Israel as a cultural, political, social, and ideological marker, and their reassessment through the lens of livability.⁵⁷ In this way, this dissertation dismantles the pacified idea of "Israeli dance" as celebratory of communal life (the generalized idea of dance in the kibbutz) and as a healing and recreational activity (dance in the army). For those that believe in dance in Israel in those terms or have interest in perpetuating that idea, this dissertation is a killjoy.

In her feminist scholarship, Sara Ahmed writes about the feminist killjoy as a person that is willing to step away from a normative idea of happiness produced through social rules and behaviors that indicate what is understood as good (2010a and 2017). "To be unseated by the table of happiness," Ahmed explains, "might be to threaten not simply that table, but what gathers around it, what gathers on it. When you are unseated, you can even get in the way of those who are seated, those who want more than anything to keep their seats. To threaten the loss

⁵⁷ According to Foucault, an archeological approach to research serves to deconstruct and unpack a generalized and accepted knowledge, in my case a system of thinking about Israeli dance, that usually hides more complicated or even problematic histories. According to art historian Georges Didi-Huberman, Foucault's archeological method corresponds to "tracking the most urgent problems of today's world. It means working on that sort of archeology. When you do a dig, you are upsetting the ground of the present. You're upsetting the present, period" (2015, 85).

of the seat can be to kill the joy of the seated" (Ahmed 2010b, 2). The killjoy invites us to disinhabit a feeling that we were told to inhabit, and that disappoints her. When a dance finds its conditions of possibility in the delegitimization, appropriation, or dismissal of other dances and dancing bodies, or in structures that deactivate other bodies in order to affirm the existence and perpetuation of those structures, that disappoints me, at the very least. To acknowledge one's own disappointment, as Ahmed elaborates, can spread a sense of disappointment, and this is what makes some people thumb their noses at the killjoy. A killjoy finds herself going against an order—a social order, a scholarly given, a generalized mindset. The killjoy points out forms of oppression, locates systems of marginalization, "gets in the way" of those that affirm what is good without considering the conditions for experiencing that "good." The killjoy takes into consideration possible reverberations and repercussions of one's or a group's joyous or healing dancing. The killjoy claims that it is important to acknowledge how bodies are affected by constructions of what is to be felt as joyful and good. And "she refuses to convene, to assemble, or to meet up over happiness" (2010a: 65), and persists in it. In fact, the killjoy does not reject joy as a desirable feeling, neither affirms a decontextualized, unrelational idea(l) of joy. "Life matters;" Ahmed states. "We are killjoys because life matters; and life can be what killjoys are fighting for" (Ahmed 2017, 243). A killjoy scholarship is one that does not settle for the partiality of a narrative constructed on the assumption that some lives and some bodies matter less or not-as-much-as or very-differently-from other bodies and lives.

Dissertation Overview

In this introduction, I have outlined the conceptual, theoretical, and historical premises and preoccupations that inform the way I conduct my analysis of the development of dance as a form

of knowledge in the kibbutz and in the Israel Defense Forces. The two main chapters correspond to two emblematic sites of production and performance of ideas of Israeli corporeality. The kibbutz and the IDF allow us to follow how bodies move, are choreographed, and choreograph themselves in strict connection with national, international, and local political agendas. At the same time, each chapter unfolds chronologically from the 1940s to the 2000s. Each dance experience I map out clarifies how livability—a frame that considers the stakes of investing one's life in dancing within a complex constellation of political influences and agendas—articulates within each site and through time.

Chapter 1 charts how dance in the kibbutz system started as a practice of national and international articulation and affirmation of a Zionist body and of Zionist values; how dance became a means for the decisive Westernization of Israel in the larger geopolitical landscape; and how dance worked as an effective economic machine for the institutional reaffirmation of the kibbutz as a peculiar site during its cultural, economic, and political crisis. Throughout the decades, dance contributes to the cultural and political securing of the kibbutz as a symbolic and corporeal site of the Zionist politics of settlement in Palestine.

Part I contends with the Zionist mechanism of fabrication of a proto-Israeli cultural identity recognizable, at once, as "new" and "authentic" through folk dance or, better, through the re-choreographing of existing folk dance traditions. Even though such process began at least in the 1920s, my inquiry starts in the early 1940s, when this process accelerated in parallel with the urgency of finalizing the establishment of the State. In order to analyze this phenomenon, I have contrived the notion of "folk dance assemblage," which allows me to depart from the heroic rhetoric of the Zionist "dance pioneers" that "invented" a new tradition, and consider the socio-political system in which what is now known as "Israeli folk dance" developed. Here I show how

the folk dance assemblage choreographs an idea of Zionist dancing body able to transmit an 'undaunted zest for life'. In order to forge a dance recognizable and brandable as "Israeli folk dance," dancers utilized the settler colonial method of deactivating the cultural and historical force of indigenous dance forms and Jewish dances from the Diaspora. Hence, the folk dance assemblage organizes its dancing' stakes around the deactivation of the livability of antagonistic practices and practitioners.

Part II expands my inquiry from the construction of a corporeality identifiable with the Zionist State project to its international dissemination in terms of export (from Israel abroad) and import (through the engagement of non-Israeli actors in the Israeli dance scene). For the former, I focus on the production of pamphlets of folk dance descriptions sponsored by Zionist organizations, and on the diplomatic initiative in the United States of whom I identify as the political leader of the "folk dance assemblage," the Ashkenazi (white European) Gurit Kadman. Here, I show how Israel's domestic policies on migration and ethnicity intertwine with Israel's positioning during the Cold War. In particular, I follow the arc of the dance company Inbal, led by the Yemenite dancer Sara Levi-Tanai, from the kibbutz to the international stage through the support of American left-wing, modern, theatrical dancers such as Jerome Robbins. It is in the 1950s and 1960s that Israel and American Zionist bodies invest in the "Americanization" of the Israeli dance scene, obscuring the specificity of a kibbutz dance culture founded on folk dance. In this phase, kibbutz dancers had to negotiate how to maintain a Zionist and kibbutz identity in the light of the expansion of the State's cultural and political scope. In particular, I show how Levi-Tanai and Inbal first benefited from the State's policies of valorization of ethnic diversity until the national agenda changed with the intensification of the conflict between Israel and the surrounding countries.

The circulation of dances from the kibbutz abroad provoked a reorganization of the dance agenda of the site of performance itself. Part III deals with these changes throughout the 1960s and 1970s. I focus on the institutionalization of modern dance in the kibbutz system through the complicated process that led to the establishment of the Kibbutz Dance Company. Once again, I reframe the romantic narrative of the Zionist dance genius (or pioneer) to show how several women dancers in their collective effort had to contrast the gender and labor norms of the kibbutz system, and finally proposed an idea of modern dance as public service in order to gain the recognition of dance as a professional activity. In order to do so, they tactically created antagonisms among institutions, and then strategize to inscribe a professional dance company in the system. Their livability is organized around the negotiation of labor among themselves, and with their assumption of responsibility as promoters of the institutional autonomy and cultural distinctiveness of the kibbutz. In other words, the livability of the dancers relies on the fact that their political agenda has to match that of the site of performance.

In the last part of Chapter 1, I show how the Kibbutz Dance Company responded to its new status as an institutionalized enterprise of the kibbutz system, and to the economic and political crisis of the system itself since the 1980s. By embracing an organizing neoliberal model, the renamed Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company combined a local and national identity in order to increase its possibilities of international expendability, expand the kibbutz's economy, and thus guarantee its survival as a site of performance for both kibbutz dancing bodies and national politics.

Chapter 2 traces the journey of dance practice in the Israel Defense Forces from training system for the soldiers in the newly established army, to "recreational" entertainment practice performed by conscripted soldiers for their fellows stationed in the territories occupied after

1967, until the more recent non-institutionally led dance performances of IDF soldiers circulating on digital platforms such as YouTube. Dance in this site of performance allows me to complicate existing discourses on civil-military relations in Israel, and show variations in the definition of Sabra ("native Israeli") body.

In Part I, I introduce the concept of "choreocracy" to show how the implementation of folk dance practice in the IDF structures the administration of military bodies and life in accordance with the Israeli governmental principle of "state consciousness." First, I show how dancers invest in choreography as a practice of settler colonial affirmation in pre-State Jewish militias in Palestine, articulating dance in the military setting as performance of Zionist military machoism. While, in this site, male dancers and choreographers will play a more dominant role in the formulation of dance as a practice for the molding of a specific Israeli cultural militarism, in the 1950s, the experience of the women of the "folk dance assemblage" still helps to structure the idea of an "Israeli" soldier's body through folk dance as military training.

Part II develops through the 1960s and 1970s with the evolution of dance from choreocratic tool to spectacular device for the mitigation of the perception of Israel's military violence, represented by the expansionism of the Six Day War in 1967 when the IDF occupied the Sinai, the Golan, Gaza, and the West Bank. I follow in particular the arc of the Pahad Dance Troupe, constituted in the aftermath of the Israeli defeat in the Yom Kippur war (1973), when the macho strength of the Israeli soldier was publicly questioned. The Pahad not only reinforced heteronormativity as an IDF value but contributed to the Americanization of Israeli popular culture through jazz dance and musical theater. Being in the Pahad Dance Troupe allowed the semi-professional women dancers to continue dancing and the men to avoid combat; the choreographic sexualization of the women allowed men to exhibit an idea of masculinity that the

fact of being a non-combatant soldier undermined. Dancing primarily for military units stationed in the Occupied Territories, the Pahad dancers willingly gave up the social prestige of a traditional role in the army while continuing to inscribe their presence in the IDF territorial expansionism.

Part III follows the practice of dance in the Israeli army through the private initiatives of conscripted soldiers in the 2000s. More specifically, I look at dances choreographed and filmed by Israeli soldiers on duty in the Occupied Territories, transgressing the rules of military discipline. Soldiers upload their dance videos on social media and internet platforms such as YouTube, becoming viral and triggering a wide array of reactions from the public. While some frame insubordination through dance as a soldier's humanizing tool, I claim that while choreography in dances perhaps shortens the distance between the soldier's military self and civilian self, it actually reinforces the soldiers' inscription in the military scheme of normative power by parodying military power as the legitimized exercise of violence.

The Epilogue, "Choreographing Livability," summarizes how dance similarly and differently articulates as a form of knowledge and shapes ideas of livability in the kibbutz and in the Israeli army. It also offers particular choreographic conceptualizations of the kibbutz and the IDF through, respectively, Neta Pulvermacher's *Five Beds/Children of the Dream* (1993) and Arkadi Zaides's *Archive* (2014). These works highlight the discomfort of having a body inscribed in an ideological project that relies in the production of the other's unlivability. I conclude by considering the choreographic tactics of livability practiced by independent choreographers Hadar Ahuvia, with her deconstruction of the dance mechanisms of reiteration of Zionist settler colonialism, and May Zarhy, who utilizes choreography as a practice for the reception of reciprocal difference.

Trajectories

This dissertation initially had two aspirations: to complicate existing narratives about the development of dance in Israel, and to find an appropriate mode (tone and framework) to talk about a highly politically-charged topic. It is not the ambition of this project to propose solutions to the ongoing dilemmas inscribed in Zionism and Israel/Palestine (dilemmas that Neil Caplan outlines under the title "Righteous Victimhood" in Caplan 2010, 255). However, I hope to contribute to a more productive discussion about the political impact of dance practice in Israel and about the role dance plays in Israeli history, culture, and society.

The livability framework primarily brings into play a new set of questions about dance in Israel in relation to politics and historical events on the local, national, and international level. In this way, my dissertation constitutes an original contribution in the expanding field of Jewish and Israeli dance studies. It also offers a new reading of politics in Israel from the perspective of the bodies, introducing dancers as agents in the political life of Israel, in contrast with hegemonic narratives in the field of Israel Studies led by predominantly male political scientists, and focused on the government and male politicians as dominant decision-making figures. Indeed, my dance scholarship looks up to the interdisciplinary work of scholars such as Gil Hochberg (2007, 2015), Rebecca Stein (Stein and Swedenburg 2005; Beinín and Stein 2006; 2008; Kunstman and Stein 2015), and Eyal Weizman (Segal, Weizman, and Tartakover 2003; 2007; 2011), who undo hegemonic, State-lead narratives and mechanisms of oppression while scrutinizing how everyday practices and visual culture contribute to their reiteration.

It is within this mode of studying Israel that I have organized my livability framework. Precisely because of its crucial questions (What is at stake in a dancer's dancing? How does dancing impact lives?), and the specificity of its application to the context of my research,

livability is a theoretical project that will demand further thinking and specifications. In particular, further archival and ethnographic research on spectatorship and on the reception of specific dance case-studies can help me assess the relationship between dance labor and choreography, and their impact on different audiences.

As widely articulated in dance studies, our bodies, techniques, choreography, gestures carry with them legacies, histories, ideas—consciously and unconsciously, willingly and unwillingly—that continue to operate in the present and reverberate beyond. In conversations with contemporary Israeli choreographers, many manifest a "sense" of history—a heavy sense of history, that of settler colonialism—in their practice as well as a sense of responsibility towards the present forms of oppression exercised by their governments. Such feelings are common among citizens in different contexts. However, I hope that future elaborations of this study, showing how Israeli dancing bodies organized their stakes in relation to their communities and larger state apparatuses, will inform dance practices that foster a more shared, reciprocal livability.

Chapter 1

The Kibbutz

It will be something whole and pure...

— Rivka Sturman, folk dancer, 1947 (in Ingber 2011, 122)

*... The new child would mature into a new man living on a kibbutz,
fully connected to and involved in the life of the country*

—Yael Neeman, *We Were the Future: A Memoir of the Kibbutz* (2016, 147)

The kibbutz is a structure of communal living specifically conceived as a Labor Zionist agricultural settlement in Palestine. The first kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz) were built during the Third Aliyah, the third migratory wave of Zionist settlers organized by the Zionist Organization between 1919 and 1923.⁵⁸ The construction of kibbutzim continued systematically until the early 1950s, and resumed, less intensively, in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily along the borders and in the territories occupied after the Six Day War (1967). The kibbutzniks (inhabitants of a kibbutz) of the Third and Fourth (1924-1929) Aliyot (plural of *aliyah*) mainly came from Eastern Europe, and the majority of German Jews arrived with the Fifth Aliyah (1932-1936).⁵⁹

The main goal of the kibbutz movement was to territorialize the Jewish presence in Palestine; however, with its emphasis on physical labor and an open-air lifestyle, the kibbutz became the main site of production of a New Jewish corporeality, exemplified in the figure of the *halutz*, the pre-state Zionist “pioneer.” The Zionist “pioneer” (and his post-1948

⁵⁸ The first kibbutz, Degania Alef, was built in 1909-1910 under in Ottoman Palestine.

⁵⁹ The majority of the German Jews in Palestine coming from a middle-class background preferred to settle in urban centers like Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and did not aspire to embrace an agricultural lifestyle.

reincarnation the Sabra, the native Israeli) is primarily conceptualized as male, masculine, exclusively Jewish, Ashkenazi (white European), normatively healthy, preferably young, strong, and efficient—what scholar Meira Weiss (2002) exemplifies as the ideal “chosen body.”⁶⁰

Life in the kibbutz is organized around Socialist Labor values of collectivism and egalitarianism among kibbutzniks. Until the economic crisis of the 1980s, the concept of property was only defined in terms of shared property.⁶¹ Kibbutzniks were assigned activities for the practical and economic sustenance of the kibbutz on the basis of the distributive principle “from each according to their ability to each according to their needs.” Before the reorganization of the kibbutz system after the crisis, kibbutzniks did not have a wage.

Generally, each kibbutz has a secretariat that meets up on a weekly basis and makes decisions for the collectivity with the aid of specific sub-committees. The kibbutz system supplied all needs and services—from food and clothes to health services and education. Labor distribution was normatively gendered, with the women primarily assigned roles as caregivers (see Shilo 2014). The kibbutz claims its structural autonomy from the central state government but has historically contributed to the enhancement of statehood in different ways. In fact, in Mandate Palestine, the settlement function of the kibbutz favored the demographic distribution of the Jewish population in Palestine, and the kibbutzniks constituted the main military force in the Zionist-Arab war of 1947-1949. After 1948, new kibbutzim were built to expand Jewish settlements along the borders with a buffering function of security and surveillance. But, above

⁶⁰ As Weiss underlines, “Israeli society (like the pre-state community before it) has always molded and regulated bodies as part of the ongoing construction of its collective identity” (2002, 5).

⁶¹ Scholars have highlighted the dramatic turning point represented by the kibbutzim’s economic crisis in the mid-1980s, which then lead to structural renovations in the 1990s – a phenomenon known as *shinui* (‘the change’), which is primarily of economic order. More specifically, *haShinui* manifests itself, starting from the 1990s, with the externalization of activities once exercised within the communal life-system of the kibbutz and privatization.

all, the kibbutz still works as a symbol of Jewish territoriality in Palestine, of an Israeli sense of democracy and egalitarianism, and of a vigorous corporeality.

Chapter 1 conceptualizes how dance has operated in relation to the kibbutz as a site of production and performance of Zionist values and ideas of Israel, from the so-called nation-building years with the fabrication of “Israeli folk dance” to the most recent affirmation of contemporary dance as an economic agent in kibbutz culture. In particular, I unpack the different functions that dance assigns to the kibbutz as a site of performance while considering how different dancers and dance projects have invested in certain kibbutz values and structures in order to pursue their artistic agendas. In the interconnectedness of subjects and structures, I dissect how the agendas of various power systems and historical events affect the different dance experiences I examine. Ultimately, the evolution of a dance corporeality in kibbutz culture illuminates the evolution of the kibbutz from incubator and propagator of the Socialist Zionist settler colonial project to local champion of globalization and neoliberal values.

Part I explores the mechanisms of affirmation of folk dance in kibbutz culture in the 1940s. Here, I introduce the idea of “folk dance assemblage” to show how dancers, with their own individual stakes and methods, cooperated with the fabrication of a Zionist folk dance “tradition” in Palestine. In particular, I focus on their processes of selecting primary sources of movement to create folk dances that are readable as “authentically” rooted in the territory. More specifically, I highlight the politics behind the investment in two main categories of sources: “ancient” and “non-ancient” sources, which imply the idea, respectively, of “Eastern” and “Western.” I conceive this process of selection and categorization of sources as a method for authenticating and then repertoiring dances that, since the establishment of the state in 1948, have been called “Israeli folk dances,” and that, in the pre-state era have territorialized and

normalized, both culturally and corporeally, the Zionist presence in Palestine. I will show, in fact, how repertoiring works a strategy that serves the Zionist statehood project. In order to assess the political reverberations of this process, I engage with the orientalist assumptions and practices of cultural appropriation activated in the fabrication of “Israeli folk dances.” In particular, I elaborate the concept of corporeal appropriation to underscore how the settler colonial ideology that informs the work of the folk dance assemblage aimed at deactivating the political and historical significance of indigenous bodies and their corporeal practices.

Part II examines how dances fabricated in the kibbutz system, with their epistemic significance as *dispositifs* of Zionist settler colonial affirmation, assumed an ambassadorial role as Zionist and Israeli cultural capital in the Western world, in the 1950s and 1960s.⁶² In the Cold War years, the global projection of the dances of the “folk dance assemblage” was part of the governmental politics of alignment of Israel to the Western bloc. Part II also shows how the circulation of these dances further aggravated the colonial and hegemonic dynamics already in place, particularly through gendered strategies of exoticization. I start off with the analysis of the dissemination of folk dances through dance notations published for an anglophone audience since the 1940s both in Palestine and the United States. By promoting the production of a strong and joyful Jewish corporeality in Palestine in the years of the Holocaust, this written mode of

⁶² In this dissertation I employ the French term *dispositif* as a synonym of apparatus. Michel Foucault extensively utilizes this term while theorizing the structures and mechanisms through which the State exercises its governing function. Foucault never offered a specific definition of apparatus, but he showed its doings. Philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2009) outlined a philological excursus of the use of the term in Foucault, linking it to Hegel’s philosophy of history, and to the German philosopher’s investigations of the constants in history and the role of reason in its making. Philosopher Matteo Pasquinelli (2015), has contested Agamben’s genealogy and highlighted how Foucault refers instead to Georges Canguilhem and his research on organic normativity. This latter interpretation seems more coherent and appropriate in relation to Foucault’s notion of biopower and his interest in social normativity. I combine Foucault’s use of *dispositif*/apparatus with Agamben’s definition. According to Agamben, “apparatus” does not only refer to a “technology of power” (2009, 6), but also to the network formed by different technologies of power. He also points out that the concept includes “practices and mechanisms [...] that aim to face an urgent need and to obtain an effect that is more or less immediate” (2009, 8).

repertoirization contributed to the acceleration of the statehood process. Then, I reconstruct how dance also worked as a strategy of cultural diplomacy in the American-Israeli relations. In particular, I follow the diplomatic activities of the dancer I indicate as the political leader of the folk dance assemblage, Gurit Kadman. Through festivals, publications, and educational activities, Kadman fixed a kinesthetic and verbal canon of “Israeli folk dance” to facilitate its global expendability.

Part II also shows how the global-domestic relations strategically molded the passage from “Zionist” to “Israeli” dance, in conjunction with the Israeli demographic policies that favored the transfer of non-Ashkenazi Jews to Israel. This process, activated by the so-called melting-pot ideology, worked to affirm Israel as a modern, democratic, and cosmopolitan state. Here, I conceptualize the melting-pot as a program finalized to the domestication of non-Ashkenazi bodies for the affirmation of Ashkenazim as the Israeli norm. I illustrate this by scrutinizing the arc of the Inbal Dance Theater, the company established by the Yemenite Sara Levi-Tanai, who was also a driving force of the folk dance assemblage. In order to pursue the possibility of claiming artistic autonomy and ethnic dignity for the Yemenite dancing bodies, Levi-Tanai alternatively benefited from and, mostly, endured mechanisms of orientalizing, exoticizing, and a process of “whitening” of her choreographic practice through North American “universalization.” While this granted Inbal international visibility, after 1967, when the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries exacerbated, the government dismissed its melting-pot policy, and Inbal started what I call a process of museification, which ultimately fixed the Yemenite dance heritage as the ethnic “other” in the Ashkenazi normative dance system.

The establishment of the state and the placement of Israel in the geopolitical system, which projected kibbutz dancers and dances in the global dance landscape, activated a reorganization of the kibbutz system and redefined the agenda of dance in the kibbutz. In Part III, I dissect how the kibbutz dancers negotiated with the various administrative bodies of the kibbutz system in order to establish a modern dance company in the kibbutz—what will be later called Kibbutz Dance Company. Besides historiographic and choreographic analysis, here I also employ auto-ethnography to orientate my historical inquiry into the way dance in kibbutz Ga'aton activated a structural and architectural change in the organization of the kibbutz. To narrate this evolution, I break with the romanticized narratives of the *genius loci* and highlight how, in the end, the competition between kibbutz system and urban centers, as well as the de-localization of dance in the kibbutz from “folk” to “modern,” allowed dancers and administrators to intervene in the general kibbutz agenda. Dancers challenged the rigid Socialist labor norm, and ultimately obtained support from the governing bodies when they managed to frame modern dance as a kibbutz public service. Here, I also highlight how different dancers fostered different ideas of modern dance and “kibbutz” in order to gain leadership. In the end, I show how also national discourses decisively determined the emergence of Yehudit Arnon as leader of modern dance in the kibbutz in the 1970s. After the Eichman Trial and the Arab-Israeli wars of the 1960s and 1970s, Arnon, a Holocaust survivor, managed to propose a specific kibbutz corporeality that complied with the national agenda.

Part IV continues to follow the arc of the Kibbutz Dance Company, and shows how dance in Ga'aton helped the kibbutz cope with the general economic and institutional crisis of the kibbutzim in the 1980s and 1990s. More specifically, I explain how dance, from kibbutz public service, followed the general politics of privatization of the kibbutz system, and reconceptualized

its role as an enterprise able to forge Ga'aton's competitiveness on the national and global market. This implied a further reconceptualization of the kibbutz dancing body, a body adapted to the implementation of the rules of the neoliberal market—what I call the “industrialized body.” The further break of the kibbutz labor norms with the introduction of individual wages fostered the internationalization of the members of the dance company. Its investment in dance education both as a kibbutz value and strategy of marketing also relaunched Ga'aton as a site of dance training and dance tourism with the creation of the “International Dance Village.” Under the new artistic direction of Rami Be'er, the company added the “Contemporary” label to its name. This sealed its belonging to the Western theatrical global dance market both choreographically and as a globalized training center. However, its entrepreneurial success relies on the company's and on the dance educational structure's investment in the locality of the kibbutz, its values, and its own history as a distinctive brand within the anonymities of the globalized system. In this way, the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company, has also found the strategy to differentiate itself within the globalized Israeli concert dance scene.

Part I The “Folk Dance Assemblage”: Introducing Dance as a Kibbutz Practice

This section investigates how folk dance practice supported and articulated the Zionist idea of the "new Jewish" body in kibbutz culture between the 1930s and the 1950s.

First the meal and after... as usual. And by “usual” I mean the habitual way, the score that everybody knows in advance: come together and sing a song. Happy or sad, everything develops as expected—and everybody also knows this, for sure, ahead of time. ‘David King of Israel is alive’ and so on... And after this, we arrive at a song that suits dancing. So everyone gets up,

moves the tables, stacks the benches one on the top of the other along the walls of the dining hall, and the hora breaks out.

They dance in a large circle, then in concentric circles, but the song doesn't work out as expected so they look for another song, and continue to dance around and aren't satisfied yet... Some start to leave, while a small group remains forming a small circle, and continues to dance around and scream... until they also leave. And then they all come back again to dance a polka in couples... a couple leaves and another one comes back, and, as usual, the harmonica accompanies the dancing. (...) So the dance ends, and everybody has a "blast." So called fun-making: singing, yelling, whistling, jumping, letting out steam, hanging down from the walls, tossing and all together dragging one "victim" to the center of the room, and the crowd enjoys the debauchery and chaos.⁶³

This is a passage from the journal of a male member of kibbutz Beit Hashita. In his description of the evening routine in the kibbutz in the late 1930s, with humorous sarcasm, he depicted communal folk dancing as an ecstatic experience that escalates into uncontrollable chaos. Writing as a kibbutznik committed to the political socialist mission of the kibbutz movement, in his journal, he described singing and dancing as an "obscenity" that distracted the kibbutzniks from political affairs. Dancing, he claimed, weakens the comrades' discipline. He denounced that, after dancing the hora, the kibbutzniks engaged in socialist conversations but "their spirit isn't enthusiastic... and things end in murmurings and laughter..." Blaming the "lack of seriousness" represented by the ongoing dancing, he complained: "This is how socialist workers behave within this life structure they created when facing the greatest enterprise of realizing their individual and collective morals?!"

⁶³ From the journal of a male member of kibbutz Beit HaShita. The family has asked me not to cite his name. The English translation is by a family member.

This kibbutznik found a deep contradiction in the collective practice of dancing and the realization of socialism in the kibbutz. He also could not accept the ongoing spatial rearrangements in the kibbutz communal dining hall. Moving tables, moving benches, moving bodies: distractions from the actualization of the Labor Zionist project. His confusion and irritation were exacerbated by the lack of coherence in the dances: horas, polkas, even Scottish dances. The dancers' frustration at the inadequate music also inflated the author's annoyance: too much commitment to and engagement with dancing rather than with political matters. The author doubted that the realization of the Jewish, Zionist, socialist worker in Palestine could be achieved through activities like dancing—to him, it was all “emptiness [that] threatens the future.” In this rare critique of folk dance practice in the kibbutz, the author overlooked the political force that folk dancing was acquiring for the enhancement of Zionism and the realization of its project in Palestine.

Labor Zionism was the ideological engine of the kibbutz movement. It predicated collectivism on a political platform and on a principle able to activate the so-called nation-building process through mechanisms of collective action.⁶⁴ During the Mandate era (1920s-1940s), folk dance in particular effectively worked as an immediate and spectacular organizing tool for the assimilation of a heterogeneous community and for the representation of collective unity on a large scale. The implementation of the idea of the “New Jew” as the symbol of Jewish

⁶⁴ Collectivism did not exclude individualism or an emphasis on the individual as a political agent. On the contrary, while apparently competing principles, they cooperated: collectivism for nation-building, and individualism for the inscription of the Zionist project of statehood within a Western capitalist frame. Within this view, I do not consider collectivism per se as a form of oppression in Zionist/Israeli culture, as in right-wing discourses that see collectivism as a strategy for the ethnic amalgamation of Israeli society.

Following Foucault, Meira Weiss defines “collective action” as that which is “geared to producing large quantities of standardized products put together from standardized components. The components of the collective are human beings, and these also must be standardized in terms of values, expectations, commitment, and prestige. The internalizing of such a process of standardization can be so far-reaching as to result in the subject's genuine need to fulfill the ‘requests’ of the collective” (Weiss 2002: 19-20).

national regeneration was not sufficient to practically unite and affirm a Jewish national movement in Palestine.

It is important to note that in my discourse, I intend “movement” simultaneously as a political force and as a collectivity of bodies moving a certain political energy. I argue that during the 1940s and 1950s, dance, as an ideologically-charged practice able to move the collectivity of kibbutzniks, allowed the kibbutz to work as the site of affirmation not only of Labor Zionist values and its idea of collectivism (see Lissak and Horowitz 1989, 110-111) but also of affirmation of the methods of Labor Zionism. The emergence of the so-called “folk dance pioneers” produced major political and cultural effects. First, by claiming creativity as an individual skill at the service of the collective realization of the Zionist project, such pioneers invested in collectivism and individualism as non-antagonistic principles. Second, as I will unfold in this chapter, their activities contributed to the absorption of the principles of Cultural Zionism, such as the production of a shared culture and language among the Jews in Palestine, into the Labor Zionist practice.⁶⁵ Third, their initiatives generally favored the configuration of Zionist folk dancing in Palestine within the cultural frame of Western dance. The following section specifically deals with the Zionist strategies of fabrication of an “authentic” dance tradition in Palestine, able to be perceived, at once, as indigenous and multicultural.

⁶⁵ Cultural Zionism is a stream of the Zionist ideology which conceived “the Jewish homeland” primarily as a national cultural center for the revival of Judaism and the cultivation of shared cultural practices. Its main proponent and ideologue was Ahad Ha’am (born Asher Zvi Ginsberg, 1856-1927), a Russian Jew, who, in contrast to Herzl’s Political Zionism, never hid his skepticism towards the possibility of establishing a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. Other representatives of Cultural Zionism were Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922), who contributed to the revival of Hebrew as a modern spoken and literary language, and Hayyim Mahman Bialik (1873-1934), the writer and poet who marked the passage from a Jewish literary tradition to a Hebrew national one. Michah Joseph Berdichevsky (1865-1921)’s Cultural Zionism differs from Ahad Ha’am’s one. Differently from the latter, who believed in the revitalization of Jewish tradition, Berdichevsky, who grew up in a Hasidic family in Ukraine, rejected a cultivation of Jewish tradition especially in religious terms and questioned its fundamental premises (such as the existence of a Jewish “tradition” and “nation”). Martin Buber (1878-1965) worked with Herzl in Vienna but soon established an oppositional Zionist group with Chaim Weizmann during the Fifth Zionist Congress (1901).

I. 1 Dance and Zionism: Fabricating “Tradition”

Discourses on the production of culture among the Yishuv—the Jewish community in Palestine—often assume that “the new [Zionist] society [in Palestine] lacked a folk culture, since the traditional Jewish folklore that existed in the Diaspora was regarded as outdated, or religious in nature. [...] Hence a new folklore had to be invented, one that would suit the character of the new society and its different manifestation” (Shavit and Sitton 2004, 15).⁶⁶ Here, I do not look at the New Yishuv in terms of “new society”; this approach, in fact, can invite a reiteration of the sense of exceptionalism that produces narratives of heroism and the romanticization of utopia. Instead, I consider the Yishuv a unifying project and a process, a collectivity that combined individuals with different cultural backgrounds, brought together in order to vivify the Zionist project. To prioritize a view of the Yishuv as a coherent group allows me, first, to acknowledge and consider the functions that different backgrounds played in the communal practices, and, secondarily, to scale down the “pioneering,” heroic rhetoric in order to show how *halutzim* (male pioneers) and, more prominently, *halutzot* (female pioneers) participated in their culture-making enterprise as an assemblage.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ By the term Yishuv, in this dissertation, I generally refer to the Jewish population that settled in Palestine through the Zionist migration process. Hence, I refer to what historians more specifically call the New Yishuv, differently from the Old Yishuv, which indicates the Jewish community in Palestine before the first *aliyah* of 1882. Yehouda A. Shenav claims that the distinction between Old and New Yishuv is an invention of the Zionist settlers of the second *aliyah*, and then became an accepted and convenient historical category (2006, 90). See Barnai (1992), Friedman (1977), Herzog (1984 and 2009), Kaniel (1978).

⁶⁷ Assemblages are, simply put, “sets or relationships” (Braidotti 2011, 6). I refer to the Guattarian concept of assemblage to overcome the limiting distinction between individual and collective and to add “non-human, machinic elements to the collective mix.” (Young 2013, 34). In my use of the concept, I also include the reference to territoriality elaborated by Deleuze, which allows us to assess how assemblages “hold together” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 327). Methodologically, this is my attempt to de-individualize existing narratives and to look at the larger connections and implications of the development of a dance matrix in kibbutz culture in connection to the making of the State of Israel.

Dance scholars have demonstrated the importance of dance in the nation-building process for the Jewish people in Palestine (Roginsky 2004, Spiegel 2013, Eshel 2016). Considering their research as pivotal contributions for the narrative of Jewish and Israeli history from a corporeal standpoint, I shift my perspective in order to investigate the folk dance assemblage's stakes at play in relation to its nation-building activities. Within the nation-building discourse, the kibbutz dance assemblage is cohesive in relation to the Zionist settling and regenerative ideology, but how does it relate to other ideological tensions or political questions? To look at folk dance subjects and experiences in the kibbutz as an assemblage favors a double move. On the one hand, it allows us to reconsider experiences and questions assessed through romanticized accounts of the "pioneers" and their scholarly reiterations.⁶⁸ Such narratives depict Arab Palestine as a physical and cultural territory in need of being fertilized and animated (Levi-Tanai in Ingber 2011, 29). In this way, the pioneering rhetoric, while highlighting the energy, productive labor, and heroic sense of struggle of the New Jew, it denies corporeal presence and thus cultural relevance to non-Zionist subjects and experiences. On the other hand, the folk dance assemblage frame facilitates an analysis of the sense of structural transformation and affirmation through creation, which is how Zionist dancers were pursuing and perceiving their work in the kibbutz system.

How did the folk dance "pioneers" intervene on the "desert" territory the Zionist propaganda depicted? What kind of strategies did the folk dance assemblage organize to create a "national ethos" (Spiegel 2013), to build the New Jewish nation in Palestine? How did they utilize folk dance to "find ourselves" as a nation—in the words of folk dancer Yardena Cohen

⁶⁸ In a recent article, dance scholar Ruth Eshel writes: "The artists' encounter with Eretz Israel [Zionist expression for Jewish Palestine] – its sun, powerful scents and odours, wild expanses of primitive country where time had stood still in their eyes seems to have contributed to their creative outputs" (Eshel 2017, 1004).

(1910-2012) (in Ingber 2011, 137). In 1947, folk dancer Rivka Sturman (1903-2001) declared that their goal was to create a folk dance different from other traditions, that would be recognized as “Hebrew,” as proper of the Jewish people of Palestine, something “whole and pure” (in Ingber 1974: 20).

In order to unpack (and undo) romanticized and exclusionary narratives while looking at the political interventions of the folk dance assemblage in the kibbutz, I consider the problematic Zionist quest for “original” dance—intended as both innovative and rooted in an original source. This double meaning corresponds to two different set of sources: “ancient” and “modern.” By strategically selecting and defining what is “ancient” or “modern,” and rechoreographing these sources, the Yishuv’s dancers aimed to fabricate an “authentic” Jewish culture in (for) Palestine.⁶⁹ In order to problematize this complex maneuver of the folk dance assemblage, I am going to scrutinize their taxonomic criteria, and analyze the stakes of this operation. According to the dancers’ discourses, they categorized two main groups of “ancient sources”: (1) movement and gestural indications from the Bible and traditional Jewish rituals, (2) and local (Arab and Yemenite) dances and movements. They considered “modern” sources, (3) communal dances practiced in the Diaspora (such as the *hora*), and (4) other Western folk dances.

At the same time, I am interested in considering the intensity with which the kibbutz dancers conveyed their experience, the self-consciousness they manifest in relation to the grounding role of dance as a valuable cultural practice, and as a tool for nation-building and Jewish affirmation. A key point in my discourse is indeed the political and intellectual role dance practitioners performed and claimed for themselves in the kibbutzim and in relation to Zionist institutions.

⁶⁹ On the issue of “authenticity,” see I. 2.

The Folk Dance Assemblage's Politics of Movement Selection

Leading dance figures among the Jewish community in Palestine between the 1930s and the 1950s acknowledged indigenous Arab and Yemenite dances as primary sources for the creation and territorialization of New Jewish dances.⁷⁰ However, from their testimonies (several of which are published or reported in Ingber 2011), we do not grasp how they interacted and shared dances with local communities, or their process of selection of movements or themes from specific dances. Their point, in brief, was to identify “ancient sources to yield something authentic,” (Levi-Tanai in Ingber 2011, 29) meaning something that could help them root and fabricate a modern Jewish tradition in Palestine to be recognized as originally belonging to the territory. According to Rivka Sturman, who was born in Warsaw and settled in Palestine in 1929, Yemenite and Arab dances constituted “authentic sources” for the production of dances that would be called Israeli (in Ingber 2011, 118). On the one hand, the authenticity discourse (temporally) distances Arab and Yemenite dances from the present through their recognition as part of an ancient tradition. On the other hand, it territorializes them as part of a local, ready-made heritage. While “Yemenite” referred to dances of the Yemenite Jewish community, “Arab” encompassed Jewish, Muslim, and Christian people from the Middle Eastern region. Only later, since the 1950s, with the Ashkenazi development of ethnic policies and dance institutions within the Israeli Ministry of Education, the term “Arab” would be qualified according to “ethnic groups”⁷¹ (see Roginsky 2006b).

⁷⁰ Historian Nitza Druyan has extensively published on the presence of Yemenite Jews in Palestine before and during the Zionist *alyiot*. See, in particular, Druyan (1981), and (1982). On Arab communities in Palestine, see, at least, Jacobson and Naor (2016).

⁷¹ However, in one of her later publications, from 1982, Gurit Kadman classifying what she defines as “ethnic dances,” utilizes a generic “Arab” to indicate dances from the “Israeli minorities,” along with Druze (Christian) and Cherkess (Muslim). To which Arab minority in Israel she refers is unclear. Other ethnicities she identifies in the

Yemenite dancer Sara Levi-Tanai (1910-2005) merged Biblical and local references under the same category of “ancient sources.” However, for her, this merger did not only represent a philological operation aimed at rooting Zionist dances in “Eretz Yisrael” (“the land of Yisrael”). It was also a strategy of rediscovery and revival of two categories of dances enduring a similar lack of recognition in the present. In particular, for Levi-Tanai, the Zionist project represented an opportunity to rehabilitate Yemenite dances, through which she could obtain visibility within a predominantly Ashkenazi environment.⁷²

The use of the Bible as a source deeply affected the conceptualization of the kibbutz body from a gender standpoint.⁷³ Referencing a dance she choreographed in kibbutz Beit Alfa for men-only to celebrate Hag HaGez, a feast that marked sheep-shearing, Leah Bergstein (1902-1989) paralleled “the strength and energy of the rams and the young men” (in Ingber 2011, 143), extending the feeling to the whole environment, filled with a sense of “vigor and freedom.” According to Bergstein, the spreading of energetic vigor through a dance choreographed for men evoked a Biblical past. In this view, the Bible is not primarily conceived in spiritual terms but, first and foremost, in energetic and corporeal ones. “I wanted the boys,” Bergstein explained, “to feel the power and also the simplicity of our ancestors, for David had been king, but he was also a shepherd” (ibid.). While sheep-shearing was associated with men, dances for the celebration of

Israeli folk dance tradition are: Yemenite, Hasidic, Kurdish, Moroccan, Libyan, Bukharan, Georgian, Indian, and Ethiopian. See also Roginsky 2008. Among the “Arab,” indigenous sources are the dances of the Bedouins. I will expand on Leah Bergstein’s use of a Bedouin dance in I. 2. On the Zionist Ashkenazi/“Euro-Israeli” politics of fabrication of “Arabness,” see Shohat ([1999] 2017).

⁷² I expand on the ethnic politics of Levi-Tanai’s dance project in Part II. See also Roginsky (2006a).

⁷³ On the influence of the Bible as a source for the conceptualization of the New Jew’s body, implicitly intended as a male body, see the writings of the Zionist ideologues Theodor Herzl, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, and Max Nordau (in Troy 2018). See also Brenner and Reuveni (2006), and Baker (2017: ch. 3). For a wider overview of Biblical references in the construction of Jewish corporealities, see Gilman (1991: *passim*), 2004 (in partic. 16-18). Matti Goldschmidt (2001) has created a sort of canon of Israeli folk dances that reference Biblical themes, selecting fifty-three choreographies still practiced nowadays, with detailed dance notations.

harvest and grains were associated with women. Kibbutz dances, indeed, replicated the binary conceptualization of gender roles at the basis of the kibbutz system, despite the Labor Zionist predicaments of gender equality.⁷⁴

Differently from Sara Levi-Tanai or Leah Bergstein, Gurit Kadman (1897-1987) mainly invested in the circulation and implementation of dances from the Diaspora, especially from Eastern Europe, into the Yishuv practice (see Ingber 2011, 107). In contrast with Levi-Tanai, she claimed that, “especially in the kibbutzim,” the impulse for the creation of dances for the Yishuv “came from a lack of folk dance material rooted in the earth,” from the lack “of folk art in the Land of Israel” (in Ingber 2011, 111). Kadman strongly reiterated the imaginary of Palestine as a desert land before the Zionist settlement. Hence, within this logic, she invested in non-ancient sources as a necessary starting point for the establishment of a modern folk dance movement in modern Jewish Palestine. Kadman did not dismiss indigenous dances overall (see Chapter 2, part I) but favored a conceptualization of dance for the Jewish community in Palestine as a modern and modernizing endeavor. Embracing the Labor Zionist idea of renewal and re-construction for the establishment of a state, exemplified in the slogan “to build and be built,” and in ideologue Aaron David Gordon’s call for “vitality and creativity” (in Troy 2018, 52), Kadman did not focus on the restoration and revival of an ancient past. It is, indeed, a matter of focus. Even though the work of bringing together and re-choreographing “ancient” and “non-ancient” sources was a shared task of the folk dance assemblage, individual modes of conceptualizing the formation of a national folk dance movement denote different ways of conceiving one’s own political investment in the Zionist project. Kadman did not reject what the assemblage classified

⁷⁴ On the gendered dynamics in kibbutz culture and the false construction of gender equality in Labor Zionism, see Palgi (2003) and Shilo (2014).

as “ancient” sources (see Chapter 2, Part I), but, as I will show in Part II, she encouraged the use of existing dances from the Diaspora and other folk dances practiced in Europe to establish a cultural commonality and disseminate a Zionist dance culture in the West.

While “ancient” sources automatically affirmed territorial presence in order to construct a Zionist indigeneity, Western and Diaspora folk dances needed to be territorially reconfigured. In order to do so, several dancers re-thematized circle folk dances through references to the environment. One of these folk dances, still practiced in Israeli folk dance meetings, is *Mayim Mayim* (‘Water Water’), choreographed in 1944, and described by Kadman as a “dynamic dance [in which] you feel the eternal rhythm of the waves, the movement of the water drawn from the well, and, above all, the supreme joy in finding water that revives the desert” (1946, n. 3).

“Above all” it is the modern Zionist *civilizing*, technological enterprise of bringing water to the previously “desert land” that needs to be promoted and incorporated in the collective practice. The relation that dancers like Rivka Sturman and Gurit Kadman establish with the environment is not kinesthetic, meaning that dance does not help them expand the way they perceive the environment or how their consciousness accesses it (see Foster 2011). On the one hand, their choreographic works utilize the environment as a source for images or themes (water, hills, etc.). On the other hand, the environment is not an actual object of exploration but an instrumental tool for the affirmation of the presence of Zionist bodies in the Palestinian landscape. In other words, I am suggesting that the environment works as more than a thematic source (“The sources of the Israeli folk dance,” Kadman states, “are earth, labor, and the resurgence of the Jewish nation” [in Ingber 2011, 111]). In fact, by emphasizing “dynamic,” “movement,” “rhythm,” ‘revivification’, Kadman seems to claim that the physical energy of the dancing bodies serves the progression and advancement of the Zionist cultural and political engine.

To summarize, a choreographic practice that before statehood invested in the classification and recuperation of ancient sources worked as a strategy for the Zionist re-elaboration of the past in a present that, from a teleological Zionist perspective, was under construction (with its realization being the establishment of the state). Within the folk dance assemblage's conceptualization of dance, the kibbutz's political "utopia" (the construction of a society based on Zionist ideas) articulates a temporal utopia. More specifically, dance constructs the kibbutz as a site for the convergence of different temporalities aimed at legitimizing and fabricating an ideal present. Within this logic, "ancient" and "non-ancient" sources converge in the situatedness of the bodies, and dance works as an intellectual and practical engine that presentifies fabricated legacies and retrieves them in a modernized form.

Numerous and problematic are the implications of selecting movement legacies, re-choreographing them to form a "new tradition," disseminating that tradition through Zionist events, and fostering its circulation under the label of "Israeli folk dances." The very classification of these dances as "folk" was part of a political process of negotiation. Sara Levi-Tanai preferred to indicate them as "ethnic dances," while others, like Yardena Cohen, still in the mid-1940s did not feel the need to label them according to a genre. "I just did dances for the kibbutzim," Cohen explained (in Ingber 2011, 139), "I don't call what I do folk dance". On the contrary, Gurit Kadman decisively marked dances produced in kibbutzim as "folk," as she called them in her publications (Kadman 1946 and 1969). Recounting her history of the inception of a Zionist folk dance movement in Palestine, Kadman explained the uneasy path to have a shared agreement on what to call their dances. She admitted that "it was clear to all, especially the [Inter-Kibbutzim] committee people, that there is an exaggeration in this term [folk dancing] we used for our dances." But, she added, "in a generation or two it will become apparent which of

them will remain true folk dances” (1969: par. 14). Nevertheless, dancers and the organizing structures of the kibbutz system agreed on the fact that dance worked as a laboratory for the experimentation of how a Zionist body should move, look, and feel like.⁷⁵

By locating and choosing specific roots to fabricate and localize a nationally-marked cultural product, Yishuv dancers were performing an effective merger of key-principles from different Zionist orientations. Dancers that mainly focused on the revitalization of “ancient sources” seem to align their work to the agenda of the Revisionist Zionism of Ze’ev Jabotinsky⁷⁶. Differently, by updating existing artistic and physical energies already circulating in the Yishuv, Kadman’s politics seem closer to those of Theodor Herzl, the ideologue of Political Zionism, who envisioned State-making through an investment in modern technologies and the development of an autonomous Jewish market in Palestine (see Herzl in Hertzberg 1997, 221). As Part II will clarify, indeed, Kadman approached dance-making in the kibbutz as a modern enterprise able to officialize and internationally promote the establishment of a sovereign Jewish community in Palestine. By organizing international tours and establishing diplomatic relations, Kadman set into practice the Political Zionist idea theorized by Herzl in 1896 according to which “the labor invested in the soil will enhance its value,” showing that “a new and permanent frontier has been opened up for [the Jews’] spirit of enterprise” (in Hertzberg 1997, 221).⁷⁷ At

⁷⁵ Here, I purposefully employ the notion of Zionist body, instead of Hebrew body (Spiegel 2013). Generally, the category “Hebrew” allowed Zionism to overcome religious and cultural ideas and behaviors connected to the word “Jewish.” In dance scholarship, the notion of Hebrew body seems to encourage a deflection from the analysis of the political implications and consequences of Zionism as a set of guidelines for the installment of a specific corporeality.

⁷⁶ Jabotinsky advocated for a Jewish majority in Palestine as a “minimum” request before the Palestine Royal Commission in London, in 1937, while expressing “the profoundest feeling for the Arab case, in so far as that Arab case is not exaggerated,” specifying that “there is no question of ousting the Arabs” (see Hertzberg 1997, 561-562). Similarly, some dancers like Levi-Tanai believed in the recognition of a non-Jewish heritage in the dances produced in the kibbutz system.

⁷⁷ Political Zionism is the foundational ideological stream of Zionism associated with Theodor Herzl. Political Zionism indicates the establishment of a state for the Jews as its main goal. Herzl systematized his program in

the same time, along with Rivka Sturman, Kadman followed the leading principle of Cultural Zionism, namely to establish in Palestine a cultural center to which the whole Diaspora could refer, thus combining in her practice the Cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am and the competing Zionism of Herzl.

In order to lead the discourse towards the strategies of dissemination of folk dances and synthesis of different articulations of Zionism through dance, in the following section, I am going to elaborate on authenticity claims in Zionist dance discourses, and unpack how that notion was instrumental in the process of the repertoiring of folk dances produced in the kibbutz system.

I.2 Authenticating, Repertoiring, and Their Implications

As Sarah Levi-Tanai claims, kibbutz dancers generally conceived choreography as the process of “developing ... something authentic” (in Ingber 2011, 29) from the combination of “ancient” sources and non-ancient sources. Through those “artificial” arrangements (Kadman in Ingber 2011, 109), kibbutz dancers aimed to affirm “authentic roots” (Levi-Tanai in Ingber 2011, 32) while producing works that “would be Israeli in spirit” (in Ingber 2011, 34).⁷⁸ I read claims

writing, with *Der Judenstaat* (1895), by establishing a Zionist newspaper in Vienna, *Die Welt*, and by organizing the first Zionist congress in 1897. Differently from the ideologues of Cultural Zionism, Herzl did not believe that, in order to establish a nation-state for the Jews, they also needed new or shared cultural practices. Among the representatives of Political Zionism were Leon Pinsker (1821-1891), who considered the establishment of a Jewish state as the ultimate strategy for Jewish auto-emancipation; Max Nordau (1849-1923), a disciple of Herzl and author of *Muskeljudentum* ('Jewry of Muscle', 1903); and Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), who criticized Herzl for his excessive secularism and later became the first president of the State of Israel.

⁷⁸ It is worth noting that the ultimate goal was the creation of dance products per se, meaning the local affirmation of the Yishuv through products that, in their fabrication, could circulate as “authentic.” On this point, Gurit Kadman recounts that, at the second folk dance festival organized by the Yishuv at kibbutz Dalia in 1947, “apart from the Druze and Arab performances all the dances and songs were newly created in the three years since the first Dalia [1944]. I don't say that even half were good, but that's not important. Those three years were really years of creation” (in Ingber 2011, 111).

of authenticity in this context as conscious affirmations of a fabricated tradition whose goal was to normalize such tradition while popularizing it. In sum, claims of authenticity work as performative speech acts that establish folk dance as authentically rooted in the territory. In other words, by asserting their folk dances as authentic (rather than as fabricated), folk dancers normalized the idea of authenticity as a legitimizing criterion for territorial sovereignty.

The notion of “authenticity” is complex and unstable. During the first decades of the twentieth century, Germany (where Zionism ideologically developed), in particular, experienced a romantic revival of discourses of authenticity and nostalgia that, in the nineteenth century, fueled the establishment of European nation-states, and later favored the cultural adhesion to totalitarianisms. What a specific group assesses as “authentic” determines what the group conceives as “natural.” On the one hand, modern nationalisms offer discourses, practices, and platforms to exercise “authenticity” and ideas of “natural” (intended as an essentializing premise to claim indigeneity). From such platforms, nationalism derives legitimization and validation (see Hobsbawm and Roger 1983; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Bruner 1992; Chatterjee 1993; Kaschl 2003). On the other hand, from a post-colonial standpoint, authenticity is a value affirmed by oppressed and dispossessed native peoples in order to formulate land claims, obtain political recognition, and reestablish indigenous sovereignty (see Aluli-Meyer 2008). Thus, in modern nationalist discourses, authenticity is discursively fabricated for the affirmation of a political set-up based on dominion—what Patrick Wolf (1999, ch. 6) calls “repressive authenticity”—as the key instrument of settler colonialism. In the case of indigenous populations, authenticity can become a discursive strategy for the restoration of social justice in

response to dispossession. In this way, the concept can be strategically and tactically employed, and elaborated by multiple actors claiming sovereignty.⁷⁹

Within a Zionist settler-colonial frame, the activities of the folk dance assemblage sought to implement corporeal practices whose dissemination aimed at normalizing the Zionist sovereign claims on the land. The Yishuv perceived itself as a minority willing to become majority in the territory. Within this scheme, the kibbutz works as a site that actively cooperated in the design of the larger Zionist project of sovereign statehood. In order to serve this goal, the process of authentication—choreographed through the combination of movement sources and their performance as national and traditional products, and reinforced through claims of authenticity—finds its systematic naturalization (as Zionist and territorially rooted) in repertoirization.⁸⁰

A peculiarity of the Zionist folk dance movement in Palestine is the dancers' shared consciousness that they are individually and collectively operating for the realization of a national political goal. I claim that the very act of selecting and classifying sources and authenticating them through choreographic systematization works per se as an act of repertoirizing, meaning a process strategically informed by the synchronic needs of the larger political goal of the folk dance assemblage. Traditionally, the concept of repertoire implies the crystallization of a performance so to grant it future reproducibility, and thus guarantee the reiteration and celebration of the values it incorporates. The force of those values is emphasized in their ongoing “presentification” and regeneration through the performing bodies. Dances

⁷⁹ For debates on authenticity in Dance Studies in relation to choreography, see DeFrantz (2002), Gottschild (1996), Manning (2004), Shea-Murphy (2007), Scolieri (2013), Srinivasan (2011), Wong (2010).

⁸⁰ See also Kaschl (2003, 57).

produced in the kibbutz system, and disseminated outside of the kibbutz and beyond the borders of Israel (see Part II in this chapter), were not meant to be only repertoired but to be *continuously* repertoired.⁸¹ *Mayim Mayim*, from 1944, is still practiced in Israeli folk dance gatherings around the world, and new folk dances connected to and inspired by the experience of the folk dance assemblage have been continuously choreographed in Israel and abroad.⁸² In order to reiterate their being “Israeli in spirit”⁸³ and assert their and Israel’s future continuity, these dances had (and still have) to ceaselessly reaffirm the historical and political value of their sources.

In less than a decade, the folk dance assemblage organized specific strategies to guarantee temporal continuity to their dance practice, and disseminate them. This task required deep investment in the larger Zionist project, and in the physical and intellectual labor that the fabrication of a sharable “tradition” required. In the words of Levi-Tanai, “We worked earnestly. We very slowly learned the sources, and the more we progressed, the more we realized that the path would be long and complicated, a path that would require significantly more contemplation and extensive study and documentation” (in Ingber 2011, 34). Levi-Tanai’s declaration signals

⁸¹ Dina Roginsky (2017) refers to the folk dances’ constant process of creation, which differs from my concept of ongoing repertoirdization for this implies, despite new choreographic arrangements, the reiteration of foundational values. Roginsky writes: “Contrary to the commonly held notion that folk dances have a deep past, Israeli folk dances are relatively new, and they are constantly being created. In the early 1940s, less than 10 Israeli folk dances existed; today there are more than 8000 registered dances. Israeli folk dance is a modern creation, an invented tradition, and an example of the production of heritage. Its creation was part of a deliberate Zionist plan to regenerate a cultural Hebraic identity in the Land of Israel 17 by creating new ceremonies and festivities that were based on Jewish traditions and Semitic images” (1150). Kaschl (2003) writes about a “twice invented tradition” in relation to the Arab dance *dabkeh*, rechoreographed by the Zionist dancers as *debka*. Kaschl write about “the Israeli appropriation of the Arab *dabkeh*” (40) I will offer my take on this in Chapter 2, Part I.

⁸² This is a global phenomenon, supported by a variety of institutions affiliated, in various degrees, with Israel. In my seminar on choreography in Israel at UCLA, students have shared with me “new” Israeli folk dances choreographed in Jewish summer camps, and that circulate through the instructor/choreographer’s network, through online videos, parties, and specifically-created apps.

⁸³ An expression Sara Levi-Tanai utilized (in Ingber 2011, 34).

the awareness that practices of nation-building for the establishment of a state needed to accelerate in the crucial 1940s, when, in the midst of the Shoah and of the reconfiguration of the Middle East after World War II, international talks and strategies for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine increased. Such acceleration was marked by the Biltmore Conference in 1942, when Zionist leaders from eighteen countries gathered in New York City to deliberate that the flow of new Jewish migrants to Palestine (*olim*) had to pass under exclusive control of the Zionist authorities (in particular the Jewish Agency), meaning without British interference. This was the first official document in which Zionist leaders claimed legal control over the management of the population in Palestine against the British authorities. The goal of this policy was to create a Jewish majority among the population of Palestine (which created disputes among those parties within the Zionist movement that believed in smoother Jewish-Arab negotiations).⁸⁴

The process of repertoiring folk dances enabled their possibility of circulating beyond Palestine. As I will show in detail in Part II, these dances disseminated Zionist values and played a critical role in the affiliation of the Diaspora to the Jewish Zionist community in Palestine. Such affiliation would generate political and popular support for the Zionist cause and, possibly, for *aliyah* (migration to Palestine). The very activity of the folk dance assemblage in the kibbutzim showed its capacity to create a shared practice for Zionist migrants coming from different cultural, social, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. This capacity of dance to create community (cf. Hamera 2007) around the affiliation to a shared “national ethos” (Spiegel 2013)

⁸⁴ Itzhak Galnor (1995) recounts such disputes and negotiations about strategies and policies for statehood within the Zionist process.

served not only the embodiment of Zionist values but also the management of the population and the further implementation of proto-state administrative infrastructures in Palestine.

Following the precepts of early Labor Zionist ideologue Aaron David Gordon (1856-1922), according to whom the realization of the Zionist project needed the “mobiliz[ation of] all our national energies” (Gordon 1973), the dancers of the folk dance assemblage consciously invested in the fabrication of a corporeal and exportable dance production not only as an expression of Zionism but as the affirmation of Zionism as a settler project in-the-making. Folk dancers associated the stakes of their dancing to the realization of statehood. In this process, national self-affirmation oriented the folk dancers’ choreographic mechanisms, including the selection of movement sources (described in the previous pages), in order to fabricate a dance practice perceivable as “authentically” Jewish and rooted in Palestine at once. To conclude Part I, I am going to reflect upon possible reverberations of the politics of movement selection the folk dance assemblage operated in order to claim the authenticity of its dance products, and repertoireize them.

Zionist Folk Dances and Cultural Appropriation

Reflecting upon the use of Arab sources for the “invention” of a Zionist dance tradition, Elke Kaschl (2003) affirms that the appropriation of Palestinian dances was not mere “stealing” (58), trying to suggest the complexity of the appropriation process. “Seeking to reconstruct, or at least come as close as possible to reconstructing ancient Jewish practices,” Kaschl elaborates, “Zionist dance leaders turned to the indigenous population of Palestine. To them, the Arab peasant, perceived in an Orientalist manner as timeless, unchanging and primitive, represented an authentic image of the biblical, pre-exile Jew. As a pristine Other, the Arab villager came to

serve as a standing for Jews searching for their authentic cultural roots” (59). Kaschl inscribes the appropriation of Palestinian dances within a process of Jewish self-orientalization aimed at realizing Jewish emancipation in Palestine. According to Kaschl, the Zionist folk dancers’ livability as subjects seeking territorial legitimacy to emancipate themselves as autonomous political subjects depended upon the possibility of orientalizing themselves through appropriation (58). She also observes that “choreographers appropriated local cultural practices for purposes of culturally authenticating their own Jewish presence in the land without integrating the local population” (2003, 57). Complicating Kaschl’s analysis, I am interested in shifting the focus from cultural authentication, to cultural and corporeal authentication as settler colonial strategy of territorialization and as an instrument for repertoireization (which then allows the normalization of settler colonialism).

Moreover, Kaschl’s claim that Zionist appropriation implied Palestinian exclusion (non-integration) is worth expanding in the light of the ethnic and racial dynamics (and related socio-economic backgrounds) that governed this process. The folk dance assemblage was mainly formed by Ashkenazim who moved from central Europe through *aliyah* (for instance, Kadman and Sturman, moved from Germany, Bergstein from Ukraine, via Vienna, where they grew up in a middle class environment).⁸⁵ Levi-Tanai’s story is different. She was born in Jerusalem from parents who migrated from Yemen. Her family suffered expulsion, poverty, and famine. When she was about seven years old, she was assigned to a home for war orphans run by Ashkenazi educators, where she was schooled in the European tradition (Toledano 2005 and 2009). As I will show in Part II of this chapter, on the one hand, her Ashkenazi education granted Levi-Tanai access to and recognition within the kibbutz folk dance assemblage. On the other hand, her

⁸⁵ Sturman was born in Warsaw but emigrated to Leipzig with her family when she was two years old.

Yemenite ethnicity and heritage, which she valued throughout her career, became the object of orientalization and commodification by governmental propaganda—processes from which Levi-Tanai only partially benefited. Mechanisms of internal appropriation and leveling of ethnic, cultural, and economic privilege within the folk dance assemblage were generally accepted for the shared stake of establishing a Zionist folk dance tradition.

Corporeal Appropriation

If appropriation affected members of the folk dance assemblage, how did the Zionist chain of strategies of settler colonial affirmation affect subjects outside of it and beyond the Zionist audience? This question reflects my understanding of cultural appropriation. The way I conceive cultural appropriation does not imply the cosmopolitan idea that cultural products and aesthetics simply circulate with humans and their practices. On the contrary, even what is perceived as exchange and free circulation is governed by sets of institutional mechanisms and power structures of which cultural agents can be aware in different degrees. Hence, even in the processes of pacific and consensual exchange, the political reverberations of the exchange itself cannot be fully predictable.

Considering this perspective, the political dynamics at play in the folk dance assemblage's selection of sources were clear to the Zionist practitioners. Conceptualizing their systematization of ancient and non-ancient movement sources as a creative act (Ingber 2011, *passim*), dancers claimed authorship and intentionality over their choreographic maneuvers. As I mentioned above, we have no documental evidence of the Zionist dancers' mode of interaction with the indigenous communities.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, a suggestion about the quality of such interaction

⁸⁶ Judith Brin Ingber opts to frame it as “encounters with the cultures of the East” (2011, 31).

comes from Leah Bergstein. “Once when the men [in kibbutz Beit Alfa] bought sheep from the Bedouin,” she recounted, “I went along so that I could catch a glimpse of the tribe’s dancing. The Sekrim tribe of Bedouin lived in the valley near us. Gradually we saw them more and more, and they invited us to their weddings. I remember we traveled in carts, bringing coffee and sugar. They made big celebrations for the guests” (in Ingber 2011, 142). It is in one of these occasions that Bergstein saw a woman dancing with a sword whose specificity in movement reminded her of the *Ausdruckstanz* choreographer and dance theorist Rudolf Laban (1879-1958).⁸⁷

“Arliah, the wife of the Sheik, became a friend of mine and she danced with a sword, doing a dance of attack. (...) I remember Arliah would finish her sword dance and then she would invite me to dance with the sword, but I was frightened because it was a real one” (*ibid.*).

Leah Bergstein’s narrative has significance that is worth unpacking. Arliah and Bergstein established a friendship. Arliah holds a privileged position within her Bedouin tribe as the Sheik’s wife.⁸⁸ The relation between the Bedouin community and the kibbutz’s community was based on a commercial partnership, which incentivized amicable relations among individual members. Because of the business interests, some Bedouin communities maintained generally positive political rapports with the Yishuv, in contrast with Palestinian national leaders (see

⁸⁷ Interested in grasping how to organize harmonious movement relations with the human body, Laban visually inscribed it in various geometric solids in order to measure a body’s kinesphere, meaning the space a body can reach through its extensions without moving away from its location. In his theoretical works, Laban elaborated methods to read, notate, and classify body parts and combinations of movement according to spatial, rhythmic, and energetic criteria. While his organizational structures help viewers, they also imply a universalized idea of the human body. Several Zionist dancers, before and after *aliyah*, trained with *Ausdruckstanz* dancers. Despite Laban’s and other *Ausdruckstanz* dancers’ notorious active participation in Nazi propaganda (see Karina and Kant 2003), Jewish dancers in Palestine neither denied nor openly problematized their *Ausdruckstanz* lineage.

⁸⁸ On the Bedouin communities of Palestine, see, for instance, Assi (2018) and Nasasra (2017).

Cohen 2008). In this context, the appropriation of a Bedouin dance tradition happened in terms of amicable exchange within the larger context of a commercial partnership. Such exchange also marked Arliah's tribe economic and cultural autonomy in a territory in which political competition among Arab actors was strong. In that context, Bergstein's appropriation of Arliah's dance worked as the symbolic cultural marker of a political alliance.

Writing about racial dynamics of cultural appropriation in North American dance, Anthea Kraut underlines that "the exchange of dance almost never occurs on an equal playing field" (2015, 4). "The history of dance in the United States," Kraut specifies, "is also the history of white 'borrowing' from racially subjugated communities, almost always without credit or compensation" (*ibid.*). For Bergstein's case, let me consider and summarize the political relations and dynamics implied in this Ashkenazi-Bedouin encounter. Within the Yishuv, Ashkenazim (like Bergstein) enjoyed leadership roles and a hegemonic status. On the one hand, within the Zionist movement there were ideological tensions but the leadership was unified in the realization of the settlement plan. Despite the episodic tensions between the Zionist leadership and the British authority in Palestine, the Zionist movement was backed by the British Empire, the U.S., and other European nation-states, and was expanding its network of international support. On the other hand, Bedouins were experiencing another transition in terms of governance of the territory (after the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate), trying to maintain cultural and political autonomy within the rise of the Palestinian national movement. They were not backed by international forces, and thus had to strategize at the local level. Simply put, the two communities' stakes and power networks were clearly different.

On the one hand, Bergstein's operation of appropriation serves the larger Zionist project and contributes to choreographic processes that would grant her social recognition within the

folk dance assemblage and the kibbutz system. On the other hand, Arliah's sharing of her dance functions as the cultural symbolic confirmation of an existing economic relation. Some claim that Bergstein's appropriative move does not constitute a *real* problem because the exchange occurred along amicable terms, consensually, and with no copyright to protect Arliah's dance.⁸⁹ These arguments, first, dismiss the networks of power implicated in any exchange, and, second, conceptualize such exchange within the modernist, Eurocentric legal frame of copyright (Kraut 2015, 7). Such points demonstrate Arliah's disregard for the stakes or rules involved in sharing the dance.

As mentioned, in Bergstein's choreographic adjustments of Bedouins and other indigenous dances, the goal was to create dances recognizable as Zionist and able to circulate as such. The folk dancers' emphasis on their creative authorship, particularly promoted by Kadman's modernist insistence on their dances as "new," indicates the intent of aesthetically and politically intervening in their movement sources. In her operation, Bergstein did not consider the fact that "for those whose livelihood depended on physical expressivity, the body was arguably the most logical instrument for enacting such claims" (128). The folk dance assemblage's adaptations of the sources to an aesthetic taste and corporeal habits suitable for a Western audience, and their repertoirization as a new Zionist product disregarded and dissipated the stakes at play in Arliah's and other indigenous dancing bodies.⁹⁰ In this way, within the Zionist settler-colonial frame, cultural appropriation more specifically manifests as corporeal appropriation.

⁸⁹ I am specifically referring to a roundtable on appropriation in Israeli folk dance at the "Jews and Jewishness in Dance" conference, at Arizona State University, Tempe, on October 14-16, 2018.

⁹⁰ In his critique of Zionist appropriation, Nicholas Rowe (2011) focuses on the Zionist assumption behind the use of indigenous dances, namely the colonial paradigm of the indigenous inhabitant as savage. Hence, he looks at the Zionist process of re-choreographing indigenous dances as a "civilizing" maneuver.

In fact, for the folk dance assemblage, indigenous dances worked as, using an expression of Randy Martin, “worthy fodder” (2012, 70) for the realization of an expendable Zionist corporeality. Moreover, corporeal appropriation disperses the political agenda of the appropriated dance by selecting sequences, gestures, fragments of movements that seemed aesthetically convenient. Such a process of fragmentation is exemplified in Bergstein’s account when, with the gaze of a modernist dance ethnographer, she isolated Arliah’s arm movements, and associated them with the German modern choreographer and dance theorist Laban. In this way, Bergstein employed Laban as a legitimizing lens and authority to assess the appropriateness of Arliah’s dance for the Zionist rechoreographic maneuver.⁹¹ The mechanism of such a maneuver entails the decontextualization of the appropriated dance and its depotentialization as a culturally situated practice. The reduction of a dance to appropriate, usable movement material allows a choreographer to aesthetically and politically reorganize it.

As Kraut states while analyzing a recent case of choreographic appropriation, “the inversion of a legacy does not signify its death” (2015, 272). Indeed, Arliah probably kept performing her sword dance in numerous further celebrations. So what is the problem? The problem is that the rechoreographing, repertoireization, and global circulation of dances appropriated for the fabrication of a Zionist tradition reiterated and, perhaps, amplified the power imbalance between the two communities (Ashkenazi Zionists and indigenous Bedouins). While this discourse can be generalized and transferred to other contexts, in this specific case we need to consider the settler colonial project that has been informing Zionist practices in Palestine. Aiming at the replacement of the indigenous population with a settler society, settler colonialism

⁹¹ Anthea Kraut implies this discourse of appropriateness in appropriation when, in the “Coda” of her *Choreographing Copyright*, she highlights how a videoclip constructed around visual tropes from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, found the most suitable choreographic references in postmodern choreography from the 1980s and 1990s.

elaborates and enacts different strategies for corporeal replacement. In the 1930s and 1940s, when the Zionist leadership was preoccupied with the achievement of a Jewish majority in Palestine, practices invested in this goal and in the larger settler colonial project aimed at the displacement and replacement of an indigenous corporeality.

Practices of corporeal appropriation in a settler colonial setting do not need to be exercised through violence. Indeed, Bergstein's collection of movement material happened in an 'amicable' interaction. As settler colonial scholars underline, settler colonialism does not exclude the concomitant presence of colonial dynamics and methods. In fact, I read Bergstein's narrative as an episode of colonial encounter. Even though at that time the actual colonial ruler was British, Zionist leadership positioned itself as a direct competitor for sovereignty on the territory, and adopted colonial behaviors as a Western strategy of control over the indigenous population. In fact, it is Bergstein's Western, orientalist gaze that filtered her encounter and her absorption of Arliah's dance as valuable and suitable material of appropriation: "I thought her [Arliah's] movements looked exactly like Laban's" (in Ingber 2011, 142).

To conclude, the methodological chain of appropriation, re-choreographing, and repertoiring-for-circulation reveals itself as a settler colonial mode of corporeal appropriation. Critics of cultural appropriation as a critical framework claim that it is too binary and does not give a voice to the colonized.⁹² Through the concept of "colonial mimicry," Homi Bhabha has nuanced the discourse by showing how also the colonized appropriate elements of the colonizer as a strategy of resistance. Pro-Zionist discourses frame Bergstein's operation in a similar way. Considering Jews in Palestine as subject to British colonial rule and in search of a

⁹² This is the criticism primarily moved against Edward Said (1978) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999). Without dismissing cultural appropriation as a fundamental problem, some, like Bhabha (1994), Gilman (1985), and Varadharajan (1995, 144), nuance the strict colonizer vs. colonized binary.

safe place in Palestine, they conceive cultural appropriation as an innocuous transfer of practices. They reinforce this perspective by underlining the non-violent nature of the transmission of Arliah's dance. While this is truthful, it is not exhaustive. In fact, I have already framed the Zionist leadership as a para-colonial authority, with para-military militias (see Chapter 2, Part I), and with policies and institutions for the management of the population. The power imbalance represented by Bergstein's and Arliah's bodies becomes evident when we frame their encounter in relation to the multiple power structures that govern the very possibility of that encounter. In order to claim historical legitimacy on the land, Zionist dancers appropriate not only the movement material from the sources but the historical significance incorporated into those practices. In the chain of appropriation, the (cultural, political, historical) significance of Arliah's dance is reduced to its territorial specificity. In this way, Arliah's corporeality is reduced to a placeholder for the development of the Zionist settler colonial discourse.

Part II Dance as Ambassador

The choreographic and repertoiring process of a folk dance tradition in Palestine not only worked as a form of territorialization for the Yishuv but also as a tool for the affiliation of Diaspora Jews to Zionism as a nation-state project. In fact, the folk dance assemblage's production of cultural capital for the state-in-the-works allowed its use as a propaganda agent able to increase the circulation of Zionist ideas and sentiments, and enhance international institutional relations (see Savigliano 1995).⁹³ The bodies performing folk dance are both

⁹³ For a definition of propaganda as a tool of political persuasion, see Bar-Gal 2003, 10. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1994), cultural capital is the system of practices, behaviors, tastes, material objects, etc. that individuals acquire by being part of a specific group, environment, and class. Here, I intend cultural capital as cultural products that can circulate in various markets and transmit cultural and political ideas, while consolidating economic, political, and cultural hierarchies. In the capitalist nation-state logic, cultural capital is fundamental for the forging of a nation-state imaginary (at the national and international level), and for the state's investment in the international economy and politics. The presence of cultural capital implies the presence of "guardians of cultural tradition" (Hall

capitalized and agents of capitalization. While being invested in the Zionist enterprise, they invest in it. In this sense, the Jewish folk dance project instituted in Palestine was already “global” and not only international.⁹⁴ Folk dances that, with the establishment of the state in 1948 started to be called “Israeli Folk Dance,” are global in the sense that dances and dancers circulate according to an international politically and financially-charged market and a network of institutions that supports this process of import/export of Zionist dances.

In order to lay out the mechanisms of circulation of folk dances and their implications, in Part II, I circumscribe my discourse mainly to the relationship between the Yishuv and the Zionist American Jewry through the analysis of the circulation of the dances of the folk dance assemblage and of the Sara Levi-Tanai’s company Inbal. I start off with the analysis of booklets published in English, in both Mandate Palestine/Israel and in the United States, and sponsored by institutions such as the World Zionist Organization. These documents helped to construe the reciprocal perception of the Yishuv and the American Diaspora as filtered by Zionist values. The fact that the publication of these booklets blossomed immediately before the establishment of the State shows how folk dances accelerated and bolstered state-making through nation-building. Their publication kept proliferating throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Gurit Kadman’s work of cultural diplomacy through tours in Europe and the U. S. helped her consolidate her position as the assemblage’s political leader. As Part II demonstrates, in those decades, dances stemmed

in Sharma and Gupta 2006, 372). In the light of my analysis in Part I, I consider the folk dances produced by the folk dance assemblage as cultural capital representing the Ashkenazi majority.

⁹⁴ By opposing global and international, I mean to highlight the economically-charged component in the process of circulation of cultural capital. The global frame also allows me to trace the continuity between the circulation of folk dances in Part II and the circulation of dances produced in the kibbutz in the rest of Chapter 1. Following Doreen Massey’s theorization of “place” (1994), the notion of global does not exclude or put aside the national and the local; on the contrary, these plateaus constantly inform each other and form “a global sense of place.” And this is the conceptualization in which I try to give a sense of the kibbutz as a site of performance in Chapter 1 and of the IDF in Chapter 2. In this dissertation, when I use “international,” I always imply the presence of global mechanisms.

from kibbutz culture decisively contributed to Israel's consolidation of its presence as a Western country in the midst of the Cold War (hence, Part II's title). The selection of Inbal as the most "authentic" Israeli dance company to tour in the United States illuminates how Zionist institutions and cultural agents articulated their ethnic, cultural, and international politics.

II. 1 Repertoirization through Writing

This section analyzes folk dance booklets from the 1940s, originally published in English both in Palestine and in the United States with the support of Zionist organizations. I argue that the use of writing as a technology of repertoirization of the folk dances of the Yishuv enabled the canonization and transnational circulation of Zionist corporeal values, in order to affirm Jewish Palestine/Israel as the new cultural and political center of reference for the Jewish Diaspora. Scholars such as Emily Alice Katz (2015) have emphasized the important presence of folk dances for the shaping of Israeli-American cultural and political relations, but what I hope to offer here is an assessment of the political and ethical implications of these dances' role in this diplomatic process. In 1941, Corinne Chochem (1905-1990), a Hebrew and folk dance teacher that migrated from Eastern Europe to New Jersey, opened her publication *Palestine Dances!* with a conventional, romanticized description of *halutzim* dancing in a *kevtzah* "against the setting sun."⁹⁵ Ten years before this publication, Chochem traveled to Palestine for some months

⁹⁵ The *kevtzah* differs from the kibbutz only because it does not hire workers from outside the agricultural settlement. In other words, it employs only the labor of its inhabitants.

The publisher of *Palestine Dances!*, Berhman House, in the early 1940s was establishing itself as a leading Jewish publisher, specializing in textbooks and education. The target audience of his bookstore, based in New York on the Fifth Avenue, was mainly comprised of Jews who recently migrated to the U.S.

For a biography of Chochem, see Koner (2009).

to work and study dances in a kibbutz.⁹⁶ The first picture in the book shows a young man and a young woman joyously laughing, with the sky as their background. He holds her waist, her breast resting on his forearm. Pushed towards him by the centripetal energy of their dance, her white dress billows. Her hair and his hair sway and dance too. The two look young, happy, full of energy, healthy, and beautiful. This image is perfect to open such a book. “Their zest for life is undaunted,” Chochem underlined. This picture perfectly works as a touristic advertisement for the land of the new Jews of Palestine.

When Chochem writes that the kibbutz dancer’s “zest for life is undaunted,” it reminds me of the “effervescent zest for life” that musicologist Curt Sachs, the author of the influential *World History of the Dance* (1937), indicated as the original force of dance (see Foster 2011, 58). Similar to the positivist, progressive conception of dance elaborated by Sachs, Chochem affirms that “all dances have their origin in primitive ritual.” She adds that folk dances produced among the Yishuv in Palestine were the refined and improved elaboration of agricultural dance rituals. This universalizing discourse inscribes kibbutz dances in the “totalizing framing” of a worldly narrative, and announces the legitimate introduction of dances revived, produced, and re-elaborated in kibbutzim as marketable products “out there” in the global dance economy (Savigliano 2009, 163). Differently from the dancers-writers in Palestine, Chochem only tangentially acknowledges Arab and Yemenite dances as valuable sources. In this way, they are simply absorbed in a worldly Western and Ashkenazi-centered narrative. According to Chochem, the main sources for the dances of the folk dance assemblage were dances practiced

⁹⁶ In the United States, Chochem studied modern dance with Martha Graham and established herself as an “outstanding promoter of Jewish folklore dancing in America,” as announced by The Jewish Agency’s *Digest of Press and Events* (vol. 1, n. 38-39). In 1949, she traveled again to the newly-established Israel on a one-year grant from the Hebrew University (*Dance Observer*, vol. 17, 1950).

by Ashkenazim in the Eastern European Diaspora.⁹⁷ While the *hora* is the most representative dance for world Jewry—Cochem explains—the one practiced in Palestine acquired a peculiar character through the influence of “oriental dances” characterized by rhythmical crescendo and an “excited whirl.”

The different ways in which kibbutz dancers and Zionist dancers from the Diaspora dealt with indigenous sources is strictly connected to the relevance of gender in the construction of an idea of Zionist body. For the dancers of the kibbutz folk dance assemblage, it was relevant to identify the locality of Yemenite and Arab dances in order to masculinize Diasporic bodies within the Zionist project of corporeal regeneration. This point is not immediately evident, considering that the colonial feminization of the “oriental” body served as a counterpart for the physical and erotic hypermasculinization of the heterosexual *ḥalutz* body (see Almog 2000, Yosef 2004). In fact, the racialized gender politics of Zionism have strategically appropriated Arab corporealities according to its shifting agendas. David Biale (1997) effectively summarizes the politics behind this apparent contradiction:

For the early Zionists [of the third and second *aliyot* (1904-14 and 1919-23)], Oriental Palestine promised the liberation of senses from the suffocation of Europe, a suffocation at once traditional and bourgeois. The image of the Arab as a sensual savage played a key role in this mythology: later, when the national struggle between Zionism and Palestinians became sharper, the Arab was frequently seen as effeminate in opposition to the virile modernism of Jewish nationalism. The

⁹⁷ Chochem also mentioned re-elaborations of “the old Sephardic Hora” performed in the Balkan area. The *hora* is a circle dance largely practiced among Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. It became one of the most symbolic dances of the Yishuv, because of its collective formation, the presence of physical touch (male and female dancers hold each other’s shoulders or waist), the facility of its steps, and its intense rhythm. *Halutzim and ḥalutzot* often danced it barefoot. I have not been able to find information about or descriptions of the *hora* as specifically performed by Sephardi communities, and it is worth future research. See Friedhaber (1987-1988), Roginsky (2004), Spiegel (2013).

image of the impotent diaspora Jew was now projected onto the Palestinian, who, like the exilic Jew, refused to free himself from medieval traditions (183).

In the process of corporeal appropriation of indigenous dances, Zionist folk dancers looked for those virile elements that could contribute to the construction of a tough and territorially rooted Zionist body. Differently, Corinne Chochem only marginally mentioned Arabic influences on Zionist folk dance among a list of European referents. For her American audience, Chochem encapsulated all non-Jewish influences under the label “oriental dances.” In line with the folk dance assemblage, she utilized the “oriental” body as a source of physical strength. At the same time, Chochem’s position also mirrored the white American modern dance exoticization of bodies of color, as exemplified by Ted Shawn’s Westernization and de-feminization of the “oriental” by hypermasculinizing it through Greek iconography (Wong in Foster 2011, 162). Chochem was aware that her readership understood “oriental” as related to vigor and masculinity, and thus strategically played with sources to appeal her specific audience.

At the same time, Chochem did not overtly stress the influence of Biblical stories or gestures from Jewish religious rituals. In fact, her “ancient sources” were “original” pastoral dances. Her only religious reference was to dances performed among Hassidic communities, which were not overemphasized by the kibbutz “pioneers.” By indicating “ancient” Hasidic dances as the source of the strength and dynamism needed to practice the folk dances of the Yishuv, Chochem appealed to the observant American Jewish communities.⁹⁸ According to Chochem, and in line with the Western modern dance emphasis on the delivery of inner emotions (Morris 1996), Hasidic dances were also able to express an emotional sensitivity necessary to

⁹⁸ On the relevance of Hassidism and Hassidic performance in the United States, see Rossen (2014).

impact the audience through movement. By the time Chochem wrote, the presence of Hasidism in American dance culture was affirmed, both in folk and concert dance.⁹⁹ However, while American modern dance choreography based on Hasidic themes often included the queering of gender and gestural norms, challenging traditional Judaism (Rossen 2011), Chochem's Hasidism referred to the traditional mystic rituals of the "Hasidic forbears," characterized by ecstatic abandonment and exaggerated movements. By emphasizing the energy of Hasidic bodies as inscribed in traditional gender norms, through Hasidism Chochem confirmed the same corporeal values that kibbutz dancers affirmed through indigenous sources. In this way, Chochem's emphasis on Hasidism for her Jewish American readership constitutes a brilliant move to shorten the distance between American Jewry and Zionists in Palestine. The American branches of Political Zionism highly employed dance as a practice able to move Zionist ideas transnationally and mobilize the American Jewry for *aliyah*. Chochem's *Palestine Dances!* not only aimed at teaching the steps of the folk dances choreographed in Palestine through movement descriptions. It also represented Jewish Palestine as the new cultural and political center for the Diaspora. With only its apparently disengaged and recreational purpose, folk dance contributed to the affirmation of the idea of Jewish Palestine as the repository of both an authentic tradition and a new beginning for world Jewry.¹⁰⁰

Chochem's book was published three years before the first historical Dalia Festival in Mandate Palestine, when several folk dance groups from different kibbutzim gathered in kibbutz Dalia to share their practices and new folk dance choreographies (see Spiegel 2013). Several

⁹⁹ Dance scholar Rebecca Rossen shows how, between the 1920s and the 1940s, several American Jewish modern choreographers queered the representation of the Orthodox Jewish man on stage and allowed dancers to "capitalize on an exotic persona" (see Rossen 2011, 335).

¹⁰⁰ This image of Zionist Palestine as regenerative is exemplified in Chochem's observation about the old hora, which in Palestine "seems to have an even more authentic color."

scholars have indicated the Dalia Festival as the event that marked the institutionalization of a Zionist national folk dance movement in Palestine. However, there are many factors indicating that institutionalization is not an event but a process. I conceive Chochem's book as part of this process and, at the same time, already a result.

In Palestine, several years before the Dalia Festival of 1944, Gurit Kadman had already organized folk dance festivals in moshav Ben Shemen in 1929 and 1931. Historian Emily Alice Katz signals that one year after Chochem's *Palestine Dances!*, in May 1942, about forty American Jews, coming from different Zionist youth groups, participated in the National Folk Dance Festival in Washington DC under the name "Palestine Jewish Pioneers" to perform "the dances of Jewish Palestine" (2015, 49). The source of this account is the leader of the group, the journalist Carl Alpert, a Zionist activist affiliated with the group Young Judaea, who, besides promoting *aliyah* through his magazine *The New Palestine*, understood the importance of dance as a tool for the international dissemination and legitimization of the Zionist project. By performing in an international folk dance festival in the U.S. Capital, he aimed to showcase how Jewish bodies moved while performing Zionist values.¹⁰¹ Thus, a folk dance repertoire from the Yishuv was internationally circulating both in print and in live performance, in particular in the United States, before the Dalia festival and before Zionist institutions actively intervened in order to accelerate the international dissemination of dances produced in Israel.

Kadman's Political Leadership

In Palestine, Gurit Kadman took the lead in the development of the folk dance assemblage at the local, national, and international level. While, in her later accounts, Kadman

¹⁰¹ Alpert made *aliyah* and settled in Haifa in 1954.

(1969) utilized a certain rhetoric of spontaneity to narrate the dissemination of the folk dance practice of the Yishuv,¹⁰² the network of contacts she established for the organization of dance festivals and education programs illustrates how the affirmation of folk dance as a political tool was the result of a strategic (and by no means spontaneous) process. Under Kadman's leadership, different actors, indeed, strategically invested their energy and expertise to realize a coordinated system and circulate a Yishuv folk dance repertoire beyond Palestine.

In early 1944, Dr. Yeshayahu Shapira, director of the Inter-Kibbutz Music Committee, invited Kadman to organize a folk dance component for the festival of choirs, scheduled to take place in kibbutz Ein Harod during Passover (Kadman 1969).¹⁰³ In order to prepare for this gig, Kadman put together a group of thirty women and thirty men, and “decided to tour the settlements and see what people are dancing there.” Kadman's ethnographic attitude, aimed at collecting, classifying, and selecting dances that could be perceived as “Israeli” in public events, shows her adherence to a process of cultural bureaucratization.¹⁰⁴ Kadman also recounted that Shapira asked her to organize a dance festival in kibbutz Ein-Herod, Rivka Sturman's kibbutz. Scholar Elke Kaschl (2003) differently writes that it was Abraham Levinson, head of the education department of the Histadrut, the Zionist labor organization, who proposed Kadman to organize a dance festival.¹⁰⁵ Either way, Kadman was recognized as the institutional engine of the folk dance assemblage by different Zionist leaders. This acknowledgement gave Kadman the authority to expand the

¹⁰² “Only after some time it was found out that the conference [in kibbutz Dalia in 1944] was an important turning point in the becoming of new folk dances in Israel” or “Then we didn't know, of course, that it was a historic moment, that we witnessed the birth of the new Israeli dance” (Kadman 1969).

¹⁰³ See also Spiegel 2013, 137.

¹⁰⁴ Kadman's taxonomic initiative shows already her projection of a “bureaucratic logic,” typical of a national institutional system. On this point, see Roginsky (2006). See also Chapter 2, Part I.

¹⁰⁵ Levinson is also the author of the article “Israelite Folk Dancing,” published in 1947 in the official gazette of the Yishuv, and later of the Israeli government (*Reshumot*, n. 3, 1947, 149-164).

activities and influence of the folk dance assemblage not only at the national level but also internationally.¹⁰⁶

While the folk dance festival in kibbutz Dalia, in 1944, “illustrated how folk dance was already becoming central to the public expression of national sentiment in the Yishuv” (Spiegel 2013, 141), it also worked as an event through which the folk dance assemblage, by reuniting folk dancers from different areas of Palestine, could systematize at national canon and later circulate it abroad through international tours. The year 1944 was crucial in this respect. On the one hand, Zionism was successfully accelerating its path to territorial sovereignty (through militarization and negotiations with the U. K.). On the other hand, the Holocaust outpaced the Zionist politics of outreach towards the European Jewry. In 1969, Kadman recounted how “the threat of the Jewish Holocaust in Europe” casts doubts on the possible perception of a celebratory dance event. In order to explain her decision to continue her politics of dissemination of folk dances despite the Shoah, Kadman framed the Dalia festival as an act of Jewish resistance through an adage by Labor Zionist leader Aaron David Gordon: “If the whole world is hitting and attacking me, I’ll *davka* go dancing” (in Kadman 1969).¹⁰⁷

In 1945, following the national success of the Dalia Festival of folk dance in the previous year,¹⁰⁸ the Telavivian printer Eli Lion proposed to document the folk dances performed at the

¹⁰⁶ While I agree with Roginsky’s claim that “the creation of new Israeli folk dance was an administrative project of nation-building” (Roginsky 2006, 248), I also assert that such a nationalizing enterprise was instrumental in centralizing the management of Zionist activities for a global outreach.

¹⁰⁷ According to Yosef Aharonovitch, editor of the Labor journal *Hapoel Hatzair*, Gordon, during his first years in Palestine, at the very beginning of the twentieth century was passionate about dance—“he could dance to the point of exhaustion”—and adapted some songs for dancing. (<https://goo.gl/aSU8pf>).

The word *davka* can be translated in different ways, such as “actually” (which works in Gordon’s statement) or “precisely.”

¹⁰⁸ For an account on the importance of this event for the construction of a national folk dance project, see Spiegel 2013: 133-173. Spiegel depicts the 1944 Dalia Festival as “a defining moment in the creation of Israeli folk dance”. See also the testimony of the promoter of the festival, Gurit Kadman, in Kadman 1968, 6-8, and of another “mother” of folk dance, Rivka Sturman, who declared in 1973: “I know now that [with the Dalia festival] we inspired those

festival. Gurit Kadman, promoter and organizer of the festival at the kibbutz Dalia, immediately recognized the potential of this editorial enterprise. *Palestine Folk Dance Series* was published with the support of the Youth Department of the Zionist Organization and printed in English. Kadman selected five dances, and presented them through pictures, drawings, and detailed written descriptions. As Kadman later recounted, this project gave her the opportunity to codify a specific “Hebrew dance vocabulary.”¹⁰⁹ Kadman’s publication proposed to reflect upon the force of folk dance as a practice able to represent, promote, and even realize a political project. In order to do so, she used writing as a repertoiring strategy to fix in print the choreographic works circulating among kibbutzim and performed for and by kibbutzniks. Systematization through writing also guaranteed choreographic authorship, not only to individual choreographers but to the Yishuv as a movement able to establish its own culture. Kadman’s series of pamphlets, besides expanding the “nationalizing and institutionalizing” process (Spiegel 2013, 133) of folk dance in Mandate Palestine, addressed an English-speaking audience to show that the dances the Jews practiced in “Eretz-Israel” were suitable for a global Jewish audience.

Zionist intercultural vs. intracultural practices

At this point, Kadman was considered the ambassador of the Zionist folk dances of the Yishuv, and, during World War II, her group started to perform abroad. In August 1947, the Department of Physical Education of the International Committee of the Labor and Social

3,500 spectators by our enthusiasm and brought them full force into a whole new folk dance movement” [in Ingber 2011, 120]. The second Dalia festival, in 1946, gathered an audience of 25,000.

¹⁰⁹ Gurit Kadman, interviewed by Judith Brin Ingber, in Ingber 2011, 109. The use of the term “Hebrew” aligns with the Cultural Zionist idea that, in order to create a state in Palestine, the Zionist New Jews had to revive old sources and create a modern Hebrew culture. Differently from Nina Spiegel (2013), who opts for the use of the adjective “Hebrew” to define the dance and the culture of the Yishuv, I primarily utilize “Zionist” as a strategy to maintain the focus on the political driving force at the basis of the cultural endeavors of the Yishuv.

International, of which the Zionist Labor party was a member, appointed her to represent Jewish Palestine at the “World Festival of the Democratic Youth” in Prague. For this special event, Kadman selected “eight couples of good-looking dancers, many of whom farmers” (Kadman 1969) and created a sort of bootcamp during which the sixteen performers trained intensively “for a number of weeks.” It is possible to assume that, for the purposes of this expedition, the dancers were relieved from their communal duties in the kibbutz. The program Kadman presented in Prague included dances she published in her series, such as *Mayim Mayim* (“Water Water”)—to represent the Jews as the bearers of water in Palestine—and the *Hora Agadati*—“a new,” energetic hora made of a “series of jumps and skips, (...) bows and stompings,” created in 1924 in Palestine by Baruch Agadati (Kadman 1946).¹¹⁰ These two dances wanted to represent more than twenty years of creative endeavor in Jewish Palestine.

She also included one dance choreographed by the Yemenite dancer Rachel Nadav (1912-2003), who creatively played with variations on the “Yemenite step,” in order “to demonstrate an Eastern style as well.”¹¹¹ Kadman recounted that her dancers “had a tremendous difficulty to perfect this foreign and weird movement, which was as far from them as Yemen is from Israel!” (Kadman 1969). This leads me to assume that, like the majority of the kibbutz population, her dancers were of Ashkenazi ethnicity, unfamiliar with peculiar quality of the Yemenite step. “But a year later [in 1948],” Kadman continued, “when the successful journey of the ‘Yemenite step’ began here [in Jewish Palestine], (...) no one could believe that in 1947 ‘Yemenite stepping’ was

¹¹⁰ Baruch Agadati (1895 - 1976), was a dancer, choreographer, and filmmaker, who made *aliyah* from Moldova in 1919. He is considered the “pioneer” of the folk dance “pioneers” in Zionist Palestine. See Manor (1968), Manor (2002), Manor (2010), Eshel (2017).

¹¹¹ The Yemenite step is performed in a four count. It is a combination of three small steps, rhythmically going quick-quick-slow, to be danced with a bouncy quality. On the first step, the right foot opens to the right, then the left one closes behind the right foot, and on the third and fourth count the right foot slightly crosses in front of the left one. The weight of the body shifts only on the third step.

considered hard for our dancers!” (ibid.). This anecdote reveals how Kadman in her practice needed to assimilate a kinetic signifier of a culture perceived as “oriental” by the Western audience. I cannot say if Kadman exaggerated her narrative about the “tremendous difficulty” in performing a pretty basic step in order to highlight the radical difference between Ashkenazim and Yemenite people, or if the dancers actually experienced problems in performing the Yemenite step. In any case, to introduce the Yemenite step in her program worked as a strategy to “indigenize,” make territorially recognizable the Zionist dances from Palestine, and clearly distinguish them from the Diaspora ones.

At the same time, Kadman’s appropriation of the Yemenite step represented the Zionist corporeal response to the international policies for the governance of Palestine. One year before the Prague festival, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, appointed in late 1945 to assess the status of the Jews in Europe and favor their migration to Palestine, deliberated that “(I) Jew shall not dominate Arab and Arab shall not dominate Jew in Palestine. (II) Palestine shall be neither a Jewish state nor an Arab state. (III) The form of government ultimately to be established, shall, under international guarantees, fully protect and preserve the interests in the Holy Land of Christendom and of the Moslem and Jewish faiths” (Laqueur and Rubin 2008: 63-64). In order to maintain the support of the U. S. and Europe, the Zionist leadership had to comply with their indications. When considered in the larger power structure in which it was produced, Kadman’s anecdote about “goofy” dancers reveals her ability to read and choreograph a political agenda.

The Prague festival worked as another valuable platform to gain international recognition as a cultural and political reality. First, by presenting original “national” creations, and, secondarily, by including choreographic domestications of the “East,” Kadman’s troupe could

show “the mixture of styles that lived *among us*” (Kadman 1969, my emphasis). The festival produced the desired effect. “We arose curiosity, interest, recognition.” Kadman recounted. “No one knew that something like this exists — Israeli folk dancing” (1969). In this way, Kadman and the institutions that invested in the training and touring of the folk dance group capitalized on the dancing bodies through a program that could be *perceived* simultaneously as national and intercultural, in order to project an image of a nation able to perform and manage both values at once. The choreographic management of national and intercultural values suggested a Zionist’s ability to manage “national” (Jewish Ashkenazi) bodies and “othered” non-Ashkenazi bodies.¹¹²

Borrowing Rustom Bharucha’s differentiation between interculturalism and intraculturalism (1990 and 1997) to analyze different modes of engagement with the Yemenite step within the folk dance assemblage, I read Sara Levi-Tanai’s investment in the choreographic use of the Yemenite step as an intracultural strategy, in opposition to Kadman’s intercultural one. Bharucha calls intercultural performance those practices that engage with various orientalizing efforts in which universalizing elements conceal Eurocentric mechanisms of hegemonic power. In the light of this, I consider Kadman’s use of the Yemenite step as a strategy to camouflage the Ashkenazi colonial method of corporeal appropriation. Sara Levi-Tanai always positioned herself as Yemenite within the Israeli dance scene, and established the Inbal Dance Theater to celebrate the Yemenite dance heritage as an autonomous dance form among the various forms practiced in Israel/within the Zionist movement in Palestine. According to Bharucha, intracultural performance involves “exchanges within, between, and across regions in the larger framework of a nation[-state]” (1997, 31). While Kadman wanted to systematize Zionist dances for export, within the Israeli state-in-the-making, Levi-Tanai and her dancers continued to investigate

¹¹² For a critique of interculturalism in performance—especially in Western performance—see Bharucha (1990) and (1997).

variations within the Yemenite dance tradition, and research the possible effects of the Yemenite Jewish diaspora.

At the same time, Levi-Tanai considered how to combine her Yemenite heritage and her research on Yemenite dances with the larger Zionist dance movement (of the folk dance assemblage as well as of the modern dance tradition, on which I expand in Part III). In this way, I read Sara-Levi Tanai's choreographic endeavors as intracultural: her work looked at ways of integrating Yemenite culture in its complexity (not only as the "Yemenite step" reduction) in the larger Zionist framework, while resisting its assimilation to the hegemonic strategies of the Ashkenazi majority. Kadman's strategic inclusion of an "Eastern" dance expressly choreographed for the Prague Festival shows how localities and differences needed to be absorbed and repertoired under a national Ashkenazi umbrella in order to affirm a specific idea of Zionist nation on the global stage. Kadman's operation also aimed to show that Ashkenazi bodies could manage to master a dance form that initially did not belong to them.

In Kadman's experience, the "euphoria of a nation attempting to re-establish its authenticity" (Bharucha 2000, 26) through the export of a dance capital able to promote Zionist life in Palestine heavily contrasted with the reality of the Shoah she witnessed while touring in Eastern Europe. After the festival, the Jewish delegation from Palestine toured in traditional theaters (Ingber 1987) as well as in several camps for Jewish refugees, survivors, and displaced people. In Kadman's narrative, meeting Jewish communities in Eastern Europe in 1947 resulted in an opportunity to highlight competing elements between the Diaspora and the Yishuv. "The few Jews who remained alive there, who were isolated, after desperation, lived in constant fear," Kadman wrote. "They came to the show, filled the theater, saw, heard, and didn't believe their eyes and their ears: in front of them Jewish youth from the land of Israel... A ray of light, a ray

of hope...” (Kadman 1969). In her account, Kadman emphasized the “depression...[and] total destruction” of the Holocaust survivors against “the beauty, the movement and the joy of life of our young ones on the stage... creatures from another world, angels that came down from the sky.” What Kadman witnessed, in the first place, was a radical clash in physical as well as political energies. That experience certainly shocked Kadman’s delegation.

However, Kadman’s need to advance and affirm the validity of the Zionist agenda produced the (almost brutal) straightforwardness of her comparison between survivors and Yishuv dancers. Her account of the survivors’ reaction is limited to the description of their desire “to touch” the bodies of the young Yishuv dancers so to have confirmation that they were not “a dream.” Therefore, the only response she registered from the audience was a desire for the Yishuv bodies, for their health and energy, for the political reality that allowed them to cultivate and reinvigorate their bodies. Thus, while in Kadman’s words, the audience worked as a mirror for the reaffirmation of the political agenda that motivated the international tour in the first place, she validated the fetishization of the Yishuv bodies as desirable commodity for export. The kibbutz dancers’ bodies touring in displaced people camps showcased and advertised the life benefit of investing in *aliyah* and in kibbutz life. While the rest of her delegation returned to Palestine, Kadman continued her tour to the United States as “an unofficial delegate ... on matters of folk dancing” in order “to spread our new dances yet unknown among American Jews” (Kadman 1969).

II. 2 Kadman in the U. S. and Zionist Anxieties

International relations for the Yishuv intensified at the end of World War II, when the negotiations to end the British Mandate in Palestine, through the Anglo-American Committee of

Inquiry and the United Nations General Assembly, accelerated, eventually resulting in the declaration of independence of the State of Israel in May 1948. This section shows how the Zionist folk dance machine operated globally through collaborations and affiliations with figures in dance and United States culture at large.

Kadman arrived to New York City following the invitation of the executive director of the Jewish Education Committee, Alexander Dushkin,¹¹³ a leading figure in Jewish education, pedagogically and institutionally, both in Palestine and in the United States.¹¹⁴ In his memoir, Dushkin recalled attending the first Dalia festival, in 1944, remembering it as a “normal experience” in the midst of “abnormal” situations such as riots (with the Arab population) and political struggles (1975: 140). Dushkin did not mention the dances but remembered the festival as “a most moving experience” for which military authorities lifted the curfew, and as a grandiose and aesthetically spectacular event: “the floodlit spectacle at sundown of tens of thousands on the mountain slopes” (ibid.).

Dushkin not only was fascinated by the dance event but understood the strategic mobilizing force that it could exercise on a community looking to assert its cultural and political autonomy. By 1947, Dushkin had already developed institutions and curricula that mirrored his

¹¹³ The Jewish Education Committee was formed in 1939 in New York in order to manage an array of services (educational, social, financial, etc.) across a variety of Jewish schools in the city. The Committee also produced Hebrew textbooks and magazines as well as studies in the field of Jewish pedagogy. Dvora Lapson was the head of the dance committee within the JEC.

¹¹⁴ Alexander Mordecai Dushkin (1890-1976) grew up in a family of Russian migrants who moved to New York in 1901. He became familiar with Zionist ideas during college (1907-1911) and became president of the City College Zionist Society. In 1917, he got a Ph.D. from Columbia with a dissertation on Jewish education in New York City. In 1919, he travelled for almost two years in Palestine, “not to settle, but to learn what I thought would be of importance upon my returning to do educational work in America” and to help building “the nascent Zionist school system” (Dushkin 1975, 25 and 41). He was appointed “Mandate Government Inspector of the Jewish schools, and, in 1934, he obtained an appointment at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, while maintaining leadership positions in Jewish institutions in the U.S., such as the Histadrut Ivrit. He settled in Israel in 1949. In Jerusalem, at the Hebrew University, he structured their undergraduate program and, after 1948, helped introduce performing arts in curricular and extra-curricular programs. He retired in 1956.

political agenda as a Zionist cultural leader in the U.S. Through “club work, mass celebration of festivals, and the distribution of Zionist literature,” he believed it was possible “to instill [...] devotion for Palestine as the Jewish homeland” (Dushkin 1918, 86). Similarly, Gurit Kadman also relied on collective engagement and alphabetization in dance as a method for the dissemination of Zionist values.¹¹⁵ They both shared the opinion that in order to “develop [...] tradition,” mass participation was necessary (Kadman 1960, 86). For Kadman, the New York tour represented the opportunity to share in practice her Zionist folk dance canon in the city with the densest Jewish population in the U.S., via the most influential Jewish education body in the country.

Dushkin and Kadman also had a similar conceptualization of time in relation to their enterprises. Writing about his activity of modernization of the Jewish schools’ curricula, Dushkin claimed that “very little, if any, attention is paid to the Jewish Present and to that which the Present is creating.” Thus, he proposed the inclusion of “the *Immediate Past*, the *Living Present* and the *Approaching Future*” in the “scheme of American Jewish education,” in order to propel

¹¹⁵ In an article on the different ideas of body in Nazism and Zionism, Judith Brin Ingber writes that Gurit Kadman (then still Gert Kaufmann) “warned her fellow teachers about the dangers of group movement à la the German concepts [the Berlin Olympics happened in 1936] in a talk she gave during the Tel Aviv meetings [of the physical education teachers] on December 8 and 9, 1939.” Ingber quotes from Kadman’s conference paper: “[In the 1930s,] gymnastics and sport have become broad pillars for the masses, with the intent and goal of showing how folk movements’ needs have become an indivisible part of the culture as a whole, for teaching an individual and for an entire people. On the other hand, various governments have recognized the unbelievable value and enormity of readiness, self-defense, and the preparation of the healthy, whole body organizing these forces on a big scale. But they have taken advantage and exploited all the previous experience and know-how of the individualistic-oriented era. Multiplying the individual by the thousands, governments achieve a great number, marching together and folk dances together add one value: joy in being with the group, though there is sublimation of the individual to the group. What do these developments signify for us? Is there a need for a popular movement in Eretz Yisrael? Before we can answer this, we must recall that the nation of Israel in its origins is talented in movement abilities and in this youthful period; as a free people in its own land, we can physically celebrate holidays with movement” (Ingber, “Vilified or Glorified?” in Ingber 2011, 261). Ingber does not expand on how and why Kadman strategically welcomed mass aesthetics to promote folk dance from the kibbutzim on a national level through the Dalia festivals. I think it is worth reflection. For instance, perhaps Kadman fathomed that the method she at first warned against could help governmental bodies affirm their sovereign power, and, in the light of this, her strategic employment of mass aesthetics makes sense. In fact, mass culture—intended not only as the organization of bodies in mass, but also as mass production and consumption—is a modernist phenomenon that did not pertain only to Nazism (see Paese 2000).

“the Jewish will-to-live as a group and the hopes for a Jewish future” (1918, 309). Similarly, Kadman participated in the acceleration of the modernization process among the Yishuv by emphasizing the importance of creating new cultural products (see Kadman 1960, 86). She was also concerned about the Yishuv’s need to keep up with the present and the future: “Will our developing tradition hold its ground against the devastating forces of this over-technicized ‘atomic age’ which is rapidly killing folk tradition all over world?” (ibid.) Dushkin’s and Kadman’s anxieties about the end—the end of a proper American-Jewish education, of a future for the Jewish people, of folk dance—find a remedy in the Zionist cause and in the establishment of a nation-state for the Jews.¹¹⁶

Towards the end of World War I, Dushkin published his dissertation about the status of Jewish education in New York. There, he wrote that “the fortunes of the War have profoundly affected and quickened the hopes of American Zionists. The possibility of realizing ‘The Third Jewish Commonwealth’ ‘quickly, in our own day,’ has increased the responsibility of the Zionist organization to spread the love of the ‘old-new land’ among American Jews” (Dushkin 1918, 87). The tragic experience of the Holocaust during World War II probably re-galvanized Dushkin’s commitment not only to the Zionist cause in general but to the promotion of *aliyah*. At the beginning of 1947, Dushkin traveled to Palestine to monitor the educational activities of Youth Aliyah, an organization whose goal was to rescue Jewish children from Nazi persecution and relocate them in kibbutzim. “In Eretz Israel, and particularly in the kibbutzim,” Dushkin wrote remembering that trip, “we later saw these young people transformed—sturdier, healthier, with proud and secure experience as successful workers” (Dushkin 1975, 185). His assessment of the transformative effect of kibbutz life on the bodies, along with his experience at the Dalia

¹¹⁶ On Zionist “existential anxieties,” see Feige (2012).

festival, explains his interest in the work of Gurit Kadman and in folk dance as a corporeal regenerative practice. While Dushkin, as a professional educator, generally found lacunae in the pedagogical training of the *madrichim* (the leaders of educational activities in the kibbutzim), he viewed Kadman as a reliable professional figure within the kibbutz system and an ideal ambassador of kibbutz corporeal culture. Dushkin directly invited Kadman to New York and other Jewish and non-Jewish centers in the U.S. in order to train local folk dance teachers for six months. Kadman later recounted that many non-Jewish folk dance experts across the United States expressed great interest in her dances for their “freshness and modernity” (Kadman 1969, par. 25). The recognition of the peculiarity of Israeli folk dance represented for her a landmark in the international affirmation of a Zionist dance movement.

Kadman’s teaching tour influenced, in different ways, several American Jewish dance instructors. The director of the dance sector of the Jewish Education Committee was Dvora Lapson (1907-1996), an affirmed modern dancer, educated in the school of Isadora Duncan and Doris Humphrey, and a choreographer working on Jewish themes, who also devoted her work to folk dance and its implementation in the curricula of American Jewish schools. Born in New York, she traveled for the first time to Palestine in 1929. Folk dancers Ruth R. Goodman and Ruth P. Schoenberg (2009) write that “[Lapson’s] work was inspired by Jewish customs and Zionist ideology,” as her institutional collaboration with Dushkin proves. However, in her English publications,¹¹⁷ all dated after the establishment of the State, she never explicitly referred to Zionism (differently from Kadman or Chochem). In *Dances of the Jewish People* (1954), her

¹¹⁷ Following a model already set by Chochem and Kadman, Lapson authored four books on *Jewish* folk dance and some articles in the *Journal of Jewish Education*. Her books are: *Dances of the Jewish People* (New York: Jewish Education Committee of New York, 1954); *Folk Dances for Jewish Festivals* (New York: Jewish Education Committee of New York, 1961); *Jewish Dances the Year Round* (New York: Jewish Education Committee of New York, 1957); *The Bible in Dance* (Jewish Education Press, 1970).

depiction of Israel as a “young country” of farmers “vigorously building a new life on its beloved soil” is instrumental in her wider presentation of Jewish folk dances as stemming from agricultural life and then disseminating through the Diaspora into urban centers. If we compare Lapson’s book with Kadman’s *Palestine Folk Dance Series* (1946), whose publication in the U.S. preceded her teaching tour,¹¹⁸ we can see that Lapson, in the short texts that introduce her step-by-step dance descriptions, did not emphasize the energetic aspect of the bodies, and contextualize the dances dramaturgically. Lapson offers brief indications about the energetic labor of the bodies only for the dances choreographed within the kibbutz context and that by 1954 became iconic in Israel. For instance, Lapson writes that Lea Bergstein’s *Livshu Na Oz* (“Put on strength”) needs to be “performed with much vigor” (10). The Yemenite step-based *Hanodeid* (“The wanderer”) by Sara Levi-Tanai “is subtle in accent and beat” (11). The hora danced on the melody of *Hava Nagila* “is danced staccato, fast, and with abandon” (18). The *Hora Agadati* “is fast and brisk” (23). Nevertheless, Lapson’s emphasis was on the highly scrupulous description of steps, bodily orientation, and details in execution.

Lapson concludes her book with a Hebrew-to-English glossary of “Hebrew dance terms,” which includes body parts; action verbs (jumping, bending, marching, etc.); and Hebrew nouns about movement quality and expressivity, like “energy” and “enthusiasm,” or expressions such as “facing in the same direction, girl slightly in front of boy,” “hand clap in cymbal style,” or “light knee bend and straightening of knees or balancing ankles,” which in Hebrew correspond to one single word. The issue of finding a dance vocabulary specific to dances made in the kibbutz system and in the context of modern Hebrew culture was central for Kadman: “We needed to

¹¹⁸ The publication dates 1946 but in her 1969 book Kadman incorrectly states the printer Eli Leon approached her in 1947.

look, research, consult and define, and eventually began to form a language of dance in Hebrew” (Kadman 1969, par. 34). How to define very specific movement patterns? How to create a choreographic signature verbally translatable and transmittable? These issues became central when, since 1946, Kadman had to translate and transfer dances from Zionist Palestine to an international public through publishing, performance, and teaching. As the head of the dance education committee, Lapson was part of this conversation. In 1949, when Lapson toured in Israel, performing in kibbutzim Ein-Harod and Degania, Kadman started an official systematization of an “Israeli folk dance” language in the series of booklets *Hava Nirkoda* (“Let’s dance”). For this editorial enterprise, Kadman collaborated with academics, linguists, and educators. With the publication of notations and descriptions of fifty dances throughout a period of eight years, the series *Hava Nirkoda* also continued the process of repertoireization of Zionist folk dances.

II. 3 From Zionist to Israeli Dances

The work of repertoireization and global circulation of dances that the folk dance assemblage, under Kadman’s political and intellectual leadership, exercised through publications, tours, festivals, and educational initiatives in the 1940s aimed at proposing Zionist Palestine as a new compass for Jewish life, and as a place of regeneration and emancipation for world Jewry. In particular, publications such as those of Chochem, Kadman, and Lapson promoted the folk dances of the Yishuv—simultaneously “ancient” and “new”—as a practice able to unify different Jewish communities, compress cultural and geographical distances, and intensify the idea of Israel as a place capable of protecting and cultivating a feeling of global and local belonging at once (see Robertson 1992).

In a review of the edited volume *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance* (Ingber 2011), Walter Zev Feldman (2012) suggests how the rhetoric of the dance “pioneers” and the reiteration of the Bible as an original source of Israeli folk dance worked as a universalizing matrix for world Jewry. He also claims that to encompass different Jewish dances under the hegemonic label “Israeli” marginalizes and devalues Jewish dance experiences that are not connected to Israel or Zionism.¹¹⁹ What Feldman primarily laments is the incorporation of dances from Ashkenazi communities under the Israeli-Zionist umbrella, which, in his opinion, devalues the Jewish local dance experiences in relation to the Zionist reconfiguration of Jewish culture. While non-Jewish and non-Ashkenazi dances became an object of Zionist appropriation (as I have showed in Part I), Feldman claims that Zionism also absorbed peculiar Ashkenazi dances. In this way, “Israeli folk dance” works as a *dispositif* of amalgamation and appropriation of Jewish plurality for the universalization of the Zionist project.

The declaration of independence of the Jewish State of Israel in May 1948 further affected definitions of Jewish, Zionist, Hebrew, and Israeli.¹²⁰ Before 1948, kibbutz dancers strategically defined their dances as alternately Jewish, Zionist, Hebrew, or Palestinian, depending on whether they wanted to highlight a sense of universal, political, cultural, or territorial belonging. The adjective “Israeli” programmatically encompassed all these elements and performed their simultaneous realization and coherence in a legalized form under the Ashkenazi political hegemony. Ella Shohat (1988) explains how Zionism, framing itself as a

¹¹⁹ While Feldman expresses appreciation for some articles in the edited book, he particularly criticizes Ingber’s approach: “She calls [the folk dance choreographers] ‘modern-day tzaddikim.’ But if we Jews revere early Zionist choreographers as prophets or saints (tzaddikim), there is not much room for critical review” (2012).

¹²⁰ One major way is that, with the State of Israel, “Jewish” becomes a *hegemonic* criterion for citizenship. On the issue of ethnicity, religion, and citizenship in Israel, see, among others, Butenschøn, Davis, and Hassassian (2000), Molavi (2004), Abdo-Zubi (2013).

universal movement of liberation for the world Jewry, made “Jewish” and “Zionist” essentially synonymous. As a matter of fact, it primarily favored the settlement of European Jews, and expanded its migration policies to non-European Jews to provide labor to the Ashkenazi majority. In her scholarship, Shohat has undone the mechanisms of “structural oppression” that non-Ashkenazim have experienced in Zionist Palestine and, even more so, with statehood. The exacerbation of these mechanisms with the establishment of the state, and the production of racist policies to respond to the “ethnic problem” manifested also within the folk dance assemblage.

Within the specific context of the kibbutz system, Labor Zionism fostered the principle of *‘avoda ivrit* (Hebrew work) as a leveling, egalitarian idea aimed at affiliating the largest number of people to the Zionist settling project.¹²¹ As previously mentioned, the label “Hebrew” became a synonym for the Jew of Palestine, for the “New Jew,” thus in opposition to “Diaspora.” In this way, “Hebrew” communicated an illusion of egalitarianism among Jews in Palestine. Sara Levi-Tanai, who grew up in Zionist Palestine and actively participated in the formation of a folk dance movement in the kibbutz system, always marked her distinctiveness as a Yemenite dancer among the Ashkenazi majority. She once declared that “anything Israeli must first be Hebrew, and then it will belong to the world” (in Ingber 2011, 134). These words show that Levi-Tanai complied with the universal Zionist project but, at the same time, her reference to “Hebrew” as a prerogative principle of egalitarianism and collectivism suggests her preoccupation with the hierarchization of ethnicities and citizenships in the Ashkenazi-led state. In an interview with Judith Brin Ingber from the early 1970s, Levi-Tanai looked back at the experience of what I have called the folk dance assemblage of the kibbutz system, and criticized the festivals in kibbutz

¹²¹ Shohat explains how the notion of *avoda ivrit*, by promoting the idea of Hebrew “pioneer,” helped to promote an image of Zionism as a non-colonial enterprise that did not exploit indigenous labor (2017, 50).

Dalia and similar public events that showcased folk dances for “their triumphal declarations of being, their showing of the glory of youth, the intensity that reflects only a one-sided view of life” (in Ingber 2011, 134).

In the same interview, Levi-Tanai claimed her Mizrahi identity, declaring that as such “my face is toward Africa and Asia in regard to movement sources, and I feel dancers whose parents came from Yemen or Morocco or other North African places are the ones who will speak for us, using the Jewish concepts.” She did not specify what she meant by “Jewish concepts,” but confirmed the Bible as a fundamental source for dance-making: “meaningful to all; it is where we all meet, and we are here [in the State of Israel] at the place of its creation.” Utilizing the Bible as a “Hebrew” marker, she then reclaimed space for her practice as a Yemenite dancer and for non-Ashkenazi practitioners, warning against erasure: “But all artists must first come out of their own environment, for without their own roots, they and we will disappear in the winds” (ibid).

Levi-Tanai’s critique of grandiose folk dance celebrations manifesting “only a one-sided view of life” seems a direct provocation against Kadman, initiator of the Dalia festival, and proponent of the use of Ashkenazi sources for the fabrication of “Israeli folk dances.” Levi-Tanai continued criticizing the Ashkenazi secularism that characterized the Labor Zionist circles, thus insisting on the Bible as a non-hegemonic source. A festival like Dalia, Levi-Tanai declared, “shows only the earthy element, with little reverence for the delicate interweaving of the holy and the secular that is my heritage and my religion” (ibid.). Levi-Tanai’s criticism underlines the strategic management of ethnic politics that Kadman staged in the different editions of the Dalia festival, finalized to reinforce the political Ashkenazi leadership. In particular, the second Dalia festival from 1947, because of the presence of “Arab” groups and audience members, has been

framed as apolitical and as an “image of peace and coexistence” between Arab and Jews (Spiegel 2013, 144). The dynamics were more complicated, however. I have mentioned the pressure of the international community on the Zionist leadership to foster amicable relations with the Arabs, and the Zionist need to foster Jewish immigration to Palestine. Kadman’s program reflected these needs, utilizing folk dance as a homogenizing tool.

The Modernization of Yemenite Dance

After the establishment of the state (after the three-year long war between Zionist militias and the Arabs, culminated with the displacement of about 700,000 Palestinian Arabs), Jewish immigration to Palestine escalated. For the first Dalia festival in the statehood era, in 1951, Kadman planned a two-night event, hosting an audience of 50,000 to 60,000 people. Along the lines of the 1947 edition, Kadman invested in the creation of a specific fashion “for the kibbutz and the country,” with costumes that “unit[ing] biblical characteristics, Eastern (Yemenite), and modern [elements]” could promote the “multiculturalism” of “the Israeli landscape, and our lifestyle” (Kadman 1969, par. 28).¹²²

The end of the 1940s produced a proliferation of dances based on the “Yemenite step.” Among those, Rivka Sturman’s *Dodi li*, created in 1949 for the military performance group Lehakat Har-El, received highly positive responses from the audience. Sturman located its success in the fact that “something new had entered into Israeli folk dance,” namely what is “now generally acknowledged as the Yemenite step” (in Ingber 2011, 121). She also suggested that, after 1948, the “Yemenite step” became a signature element in the folk dance vocabulary. Sturman attributed her knowledge of the Yemenite step to the circulation of Yemenite people and

¹²² The third Dalia festival was meant to happen in 1950 but was postponed to the following year for a polio epidemic (see Kaufman 1951, 57, and Kadman 1969, par. 28).

traditions facilitated by the so-called Operation “Magic Carpet,” the government-organized immigration of Yemenite Jews between 1948 and 1951 in order to increase the population of the newly-established state, in a time in which “the main Zionist slogan had been ‘free immigration’” (Shapira 2012, 222).¹²³ As a matter of fact, by the time Sturman choreographed *Dodi Li*, Yemenite dances were already circulating in Israel and before that, in Mandate Palestine, with Levi-Tanai and her circle of dancers. Whether Sturman strategically attributed her knowledge of the Yemenite step to Operation “Magic Carpet” or not, this anecdote suggests the political and cultural impact of the orchestration of the mass migration of Yemenite Jews on her choreographic agenda.

Gurit Kadman described Sturman’s *Dodi li* as a highly complex dance, “not meant for the masses,” whose “thoughtful craft” and details reminded her of “Yemenite jewelry” (Kadman 1969, par. 26). In 1952, Kadman published on the *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* an article entitled “Yemenite Dances and their Influence on the New Israeli Folk Dances.” Kadman underlines in this article that “with the re-establishment of the State, the

¹²³ Yemenite Jews had been migrating to Palestine since the late nineteenth century. With the establishment of the State and the organization of official governmental structures, the Israeli authorities needed to pursue a double goal: “victory in the war to ensure Israel’s existence, and immigrant absorption” (Shapira 2012, 208). By favoring immigration, Israel could populate the country, expand the army, and differentiate labor in economic terms. Operation “Magic Carpet,” the orientalized, “magical” version of the official name “On Wings of Eagles,” referencing *Exodus* and *Isaiah*, brought to Israel around 50,000 Yemenite Jews between late 1948 and early 1951. The British authorities supported the operation ruled by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (with the economic assistance of the Jewish Agency) and the government of Israel, by providing aircrafts to secretly fly Yemenite Jews to the State. Historian Esther Meir-Glitzstein asserts that those who traveled to Israel by foot sometimes arrived in extremely poor health or did not survive, thus defining Operation “On Wings of Eagles” as “one of the most complicated, dangerous, and glorious but also the most painful events in the history of aliyah to the new State of Israel.” (Meir-Glitzstein 2011, 150). She also explains how this operation represents “the first stage of creating the myth of the magical rescue of Yemenite Jews,” finally arguing that “with a stroke of the pen, the well-known European myth of Muslim tolerance gave way to another myth—the myth of Muslim radicalism, antisemitism, and persecution. The establishment of the State of Israel and the immigration of Jews from Islamic countries to Israel were the watershed between the myth of tolerance and the myth of extremism” (157-158). Moreover, as Yehuda Sharim demonstrated (2012), the Yemenite community was already politically present in Palestine and struggling for a Sephardic-Mizrahi affirmation within the Ashkenazi-European majority.

process of dispersal [of Jews] has been reversed,” causing “a steady, numerically overwhelming influx of diverse communities.” She then cites Operation “Magic Carpet” as a rescue mission through which Yemenite Jews arrived “by planes straight from a medieval feudal theocratic land to our modern democratic country” (Kadman 1952, 27). Kadman reported that before this migratory operation “their ancient traditional patterns of fine silver jewelry and beautiful embroidery [already] conquered the hearts of the population” (implying the Ashkenazi population), but their dances were still “too oriental” (28) for the festival in kibbutz Dalia in 1944. After two more editions of the festival (1947 and 1951) and “Magic Carpet,”¹²⁴ Kadman realized how Yemenite dances “naturally” (28) became part of the Israeli folk dance canon. But not quite. In fact, differently from the Ashkenazi-based dances, they do not perform “vigor” and do not celebrate “youth.” On the contrary, “the best Yemenite dancers I have seen were 70 years old and more,” and “their dances are graceful, quiet and restrained, without exciting crescendos and climaxes.” With these words Kadman praises the dances of the Jewish Yemenite community, and contrasts them with those of Muslim Yemenites who “dance far more wildly” (29). Nevertheless, the elements in Yemenite dances that Kadman valued the most were “acrobatic features” (ibid.) such as a sudden knee-bend followed by an immediate jump, or improvised solos that surprised and entertained the audience.¹²⁵ Kadman neither acknowledged the grass-

¹²⁴ Kadman’s words perfectly mirror the governmental goals expressed by Anita Shapira (see previous footnote): “Last year, when they came in their thousands with the ‘Magic Carpet,’ their economic integration went more smoothly than that of the other returning exiles; they were accustomed to every kind of work. So they are gladly building up their agricultural workers’ villages; they settle down as craftsmen, diligently, humbly and contentedly; productive, positive forces wherever they are” (1952: 28). It is evident how her tone and word choice reproduce a hegemonically Ashkenazi mindset that I will assess in the following pages.

For a sociological analysis of migration movements in Israel immediately after the establishment of the State, see Moshe Lissak (1998).

¹²⁵ Kadman’s discourse proceeds in an orientaling mode and ends by juxtaposing European “occidental trends” to the “oriental influence” of Arab dances (with “the quietness in the contours of the landscape, the vibrating monotony in the endless Debkahs) and the “elaborate world of motions of our long lost brothers, the Yemenites” (Kadman 1952, 29).

roots work of Levi-Tanai and the existence of her dance company, Inbal Dance Theater, formed in 1949, nor the work of other specific Yemenite dancers. Decorporealizing the presence of Yemenite dancers in an article dominated by a colonial domesticating gaze, Kadman's point was to affirm that Israel was a democratic Jewish State "situated on the crossroads between Orient and Occident," on the pages of an international English publication affiliated with the UNESCO.¹²⁶

The previous year, Kadman's daughter, Ayala Kaufman, published in the same journal a paper she delivered, in her capacity as a member of the Israeli Folk Dance Committee, at the Third Conference of the International Folk Music Council, at Indiana University in Bloomington (July, 17-20, 1950).¹²⁷ This article utilizes concepts and expressions that Gurit Kadman also employed in her 1952 article. Whether mother and daughter were simply sharing notes and drafts, what matters is that their articles not only established formulae to discuss Israeli dance,¹²⁸ but internationally disseminated the political agenda of "Israeli folk dance."

Similarly to her mother, Ayala Kaufman wrote that "another outstanding dance-loving group are the Yemenite Jews who, for many centuries, lived in the primitive Arab kingdom of Yemen in South Arabia." She also outlined what makes Yemenite dances appropriate for what Ayala Kaufman still called (as in the pre-state years) Palestinian folk dances: "...Restrained leg

¹²⁶ See *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 1 (1949). Israel became a member of the UNESCO in 1949 during the organization's General Conference in Paris. Alexander Dushkin was part of the Israeli delegation at the General Conference in Florence the following year (see *Jewish Education*, vol. 22, n. 1-2, Winter-Spring 1950-1951, 100-102).

¹²⁷ "Indigenous and Imported Elements in the New Folk Dance in Israel," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 3 (1951), 55-57.

¹²⁸ "The Jewish nation in biblical times was doubtless a dance-loving nation" (Kaufman 1951) vs. "We are a dance-loving nation. We always have been" (Kadman 1952); "[the Yemenites] are probably the tribe in respect to song, dance, natural dramatic expression, and crafts such as silver work, embroidery with their own oriental style" (Kaufman 1951) vs. "It started with arts and crafts; their ancient traditional patterns of fine silver jewelry and beautiful embroidery conquered the hearts of the population. Then we discovered their astonishing talents in the field of motion, song and dramatic expression" (Kadman 1952).

movements, tiny steps, intense body movements, especially in the hips, vibrating in knees and ankles, stylized and very expressive movements of hands and arms. Those are the main sources for revival of Jewish folk” (Kaufman 1951, 56). Gurit Kadman’s article, however, worked as an amendment to her daughter’s one in two ways. First, Kadman did not refer to dances produced within the Jewish community of Palestine as “Palestinian” anymore. Second, she specifically focused, even in the title, on the Yemenite element, reducing references to dances of European and Arab origins. These articles published on an international, official platform set the stage for the circulation of “Yemenite dance” as Israel’s main dance cultural capital through the tour of Sara Levi-Tanai’s company between 1958 and 1963.

II. 4 Inbal’s Arc: Disassembling the Kibbutz Dance Assemblage

Up until this point, the dances of the folk dance assemblage mirrored an idea of kibbutz as the site of vigor, health, and efficient community work, able to promote the revitalization of Jewish culture and Jewish body in Palestine. The kibbutz teachers’ training and the Folk Dance Committee, parastatal institutional bodies formed to organize educational and cultural activities in Mandate Palestine, were based in Tel Aviv, which will become a governmental center with the establishment of the state.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, the kibbutz remained the official site for the enactment of the Yishuv’s regenerative corporeal culture. In the previous pages, I have illustrated how, since the late 1940s, the political scope of the kibbutz expanded from site of production of a Zionist identity in Palestine to site of performance of a Zionist corporeal culture for global export. This function further developed in the mid-1950s when, with the intensification of the

¹²⁹ Roginsky states that “by 1945, one year after the first [Dalia] dance festival, Kadman had already become the head of the Inter-Kibbutzim Folk Dance Committee, a formal committee established to nurture Israeli folk dance creation” (2017, 1152).

political and cultural tensions of the Cold-War, Israel needed to clarify its position in the post-World War II geopolitical scenario.

With the assumption that local, national, and global tensions inform and influence one another, in the following pages, I will reconstruct how the international-national cultural politics of Israel determined the emergence, public acclaim, and later “archivization” of the Inbal Dance Theater directed by Sarah Levi-Tanai, and the subsequent reformulation of the agenda of the kibbutz as a site of performance. The Dalia festivals were events in which folk dances were performed recreationally, to disseminate dances among kibbutzniks, but also in theatrical form, on stage, to affirm folk dance as an artistic creative endeavor. The urgency to perform an official “Israeli” culture manifested more clearly after the establishment of the state. In those years, Kadman and the Folk Dance Committee were strategizing “how to bring folk dancing on stage” (Kadman 1969, par. 31), meaning how to transfer folk dances from a communitarian and education setting to a theatrical one.¹³⁰ This implied, in the first place, a shift in focus from the kibbutz as a site for the production and dissemination of folk dance to the concert stage as a site able to promote folk dance to the status of “official public culture.”

As Middle Eastern Studies scholar Howard Patten (2013) synthesizes, after 1948, Israel had to strengthen its international alliances outside the Middle East and find reliable allies among the non-Arab minorities in the region. For the latter, in the mid 1950s, Israel instituted what is known as “the policy of the periphery,” which “was intended, *inter alia*, to create the perception, both in the region and in the world, that the Middle East was not solely Arab, or Islamic, but rather a region with a diversity of peoples, religions and languages” (Patten 2013: 2). This was a

¹³⁰ This implies the typical European modern idea that artistic practices reach the status of “official culture” and obtain state legitimation within the theatrical setting.

task the Jewish Agency already elaborated in 1931, but after 1948 its implementation became imperative within the larger scheme of the Western strategic and military plan in the Middle East in the aftermath of World War II. The cultural practices—dance included—that fostered the enactment of this policy contributed to Israel’s proximity to the agenda of the Western bloc, and to the mitigation of its Socialist-leftist imprint.

The government of the United States notoriously held a rigid anti-communist position, which entailed the surveillance of several leftist artists by the FBI. Trying to mitigate the American concerns, in his first radio address to the nation as the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion utilized a language typical of the Cold War tension to declare: “We are the last generation of oppression and the first of deliverance” (May 15, 1948).¹³¹ Emphasizing the idea that the establishment of an independent Jewish State in Palestine signified freedom for the world Jewry, Israel shared with the United States a governmental, centralized rhetoric of freedom. In the early 1950s (and even before 1948), Zionist centers in the U.S. greatly contributed to the weaving of diplomatic relations between Israel and the American government. Zionism incentivized the mobility of both its American and Israeli cultural ambassadors between Israel and the United States. The intensification of these exchanges after the establishment of the State responded to both Israel’s positioning on the geopolitical map and to its domestic politics.

The Melting Pot as Domestication of Non-Ashkenazi Bodies

In 1945, Sara Levi-Tanai moved from kibbutz Ramat HaKovesh to Tel Aviv with the intention of forming a dance troupe made up only of Yemenite dancers and able to highlight the

¹³¹ Speech available at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ben-gurion-broadcast-to-the-nation-after-the-arab-invasion-may-1948>. See also Zmora (1967).

artistic value of Mizrahi culture by assigning choreographic dignity and public visibility to the Yemenite dance tradition.¹³² In the urban context, Levi-Tanai hoped to find a more professional frame for her work¹³³ and support for her agenda. She envisioned a theatricalization of folk dances with the intention of resisting an Ashkenazi normalization of her work, and affirming Mizrahi and Yemenite identity as an integral yet distinct part of the national project. Finally, in 1949, in conjunction with the operations that brought thousands of Yemenite migrants to Israel, Levi-Tanai managed to select a group of Yemenite dancers and form the Inbal Dance Theater.

Here, I argue that Inbal played a fundamental role in the shaping of the Israeli-American relations in the 1950s and 1960s, and in the popular perception of Israel as a Western country. I will illustrate how the “Eastern” elements of Levi-Tanai’s work were strategically employed for this larger process of Westernization. Historian Emily Katz claims that the American Fund for Israel Institutions (AFII) sponsored the Inbal Dance Theater tour in 1958 “in an effort to portray Israel as a natural cultural—and political—ally of the United States during the Cold War” (2015, 70-71). The transformation of Inbal from “natural” Yemenite to “natural” Israeli needs to be clarified. In the 1950s, both the Western and Soviet blocs utilized dance as an agent for the affirmation of their cultural-political hegemony through the export of dancers, choreographers, and companies able to project national values while being recognizable as international—what dance scholar Yutian Wong defined as the process of production of “the international artist” (see

¹³² For biographical details about this phase of Sara Levi-Tanai’s life, see Toledano (2005) and (2009). Tel Aviv was the cultural center of reference for the modern dance community. Folk dancers that produced folk dances for the kibbutz setting often used to train also in modern dance in Tel Aviv. A study that casts light on how different dance experiences (theatrical, salon, and folk) have shaped Tel Aviv is Spiegel (2017).

¹³³ Several professional dancers and actors, especially of European origin, lived in Tel Aviv. For instance, Gurit Kadman established her home in Tel Aviv in 1927, and, in 1945, started “the first leadership course for folk dance teachers” in the city. While Tel Aviv affirmed itself as the center for dance training and institutional organization, the kibbutz still worked as the privileged site of performance of political values, recognizable as “national.” On the peculiar agenda of urban Zionism, see Shoham (2014).

Wong 2009, 160).¹³⁴ Inbal is an example of how interweaving national and international cultural interventions crafted a company that, as a project emerging from kibbutz culture, in little time not only obtained international artistic recognition but developed international value.

In order to expand the political scope of the role of dance in Israel, in 1952 the old Inter-Kibbutzim Commission of Israeli Folk Dance was replaced by the Folk Dance Section, part of the cultural branch of the Histadrut (see Roginsky 2006). Its main goal was to organize training programs and to manage the dissemination of selected folk dances among different national groups and abroad (Roginsky 2006: 251).¹³⁵ Gurit Kadman and her daughter Ayala Kaufman were part of the commission in charge of the activities. In parallel, in 1954, in the United States, the ANTA (American National Theater and Academy) established the Dance Panel.¹³⁶ As dance scholar Claire Croft underlines, the Dance Panel was selecting American artists for international tours on the basis of State Department's directives (2015: 22). As I am going to demonstrate, the work of these Israeli and American dance institutions intertwined, and their relation in the 1950s established diplomatic dance ties that continue to endure to the present day.

In Spring 1951, the AFII, whose mission was to support Israeli artists and showcase them in the United States, invited established American theater choreographer Jerome Robbins to

¹³⁴ On the role of dance in the Cold War see, at least, Caute (2003), Croft (2015), Giersdorf (2013), Kowal (2010), and Prevots (1998).

¹³⁵ Dina Roginsky specifies that the Folk Dance Section “was responsible for the promotion of Israeli folk dancing as a widespread social practice. It controlled all related activities: choosing the ‘appropriate’ dances to be popularized; arranging studios for training instructors; forming the educational programs of the national ‘dancing schools’ and the ‘dancing nurseries’ for pre-school children; teaching Israeli folk dances in the army; exporting dances abroad; and establishing national dance performance groups and *harkadot* (regular dance gatherings) that encouraged people to participate in the national activity” (Roginsky 2006, 251).

¹³⁶ The Baroness Batsheva de Rothschild, who played a central role in the development of Israeli concert dance, was an original member of the ANTA Dance Panel and resigned in December 1956. A choreographer that highly benefited from the support of the ANTA Dance Panel was Martha Graham, first artistic director of the Batsheva Dance Company.

travel to Israel to report on the dance scene and, eventually, select a dance company for an American tour.¹³⁷ It is known that Robbins selected Sara Levi-Tanai's company (Lawrence 2001, Jowitt 2004, Vaill 2006, Rossen 2014, Katz 2015); however, the larger reasons behind that choice, which lead to the company's international tour in 1958, remain to be scrutinized. After his third visit to Israel in three years, in 1953 Robbins decided that Levi-Tanai's Inbal was the company with the most "indigenous" character and with the potential of originally channeling such indigeneity through the theatrical Western dance apparatus. Less interested in the development of an original movement vocabulary, Robbins was personally more invested in seeing how movement language (e.g. ballet) could be transferred from one site to another (e.g. from the ballet stage to Broadway or Hollywood). Similarly, Levi-Tanai was utilizing a specific movement vocabulary based on Yemenite tradition, and studying how to transfer it from kibbutz celebrations to the concert stage. In this way, Robbins and Levi-Tanai shared an idea of choreography as a *dispositif* able not only to reconceive a dance vocabulary according to a new site of performance but to negotiate the relation among dance, drama, and voice/singing.¹³⁸

At the same time, in a letter from July 1952 addressed to Judith Gottlieb, head of the Tel Aviv branch of the AFII, Robbins underlined the need to professionalize dance training in Israel, and openly invited dancers and choreographers not to be "over nationalistic" because "there is no

¹³⁷ Established in 1939 to support the development of the Jewish community in Palestine by founding infrastructures as well as cultural initiatives, the American Fund for Palestinian Institutions changed its name to American Fund for Israeli Institution in 1948, and later was recognized as a US non-profit under the current name America-Israel Cultural Foundation, adopted in 1957. Since 1954, it sponsors only visual and performance artists and institutions. In 1951, Leonard Bernstein was on the board of the Foundation. At the time of the invitation by the AFII, Robbins was successfully choreographing *The Cage* for its debut in June with the New York City Ballet but he was also publicly accused of being a communist on the front page of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and was under investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee (cf. Vaill 2006, 193). Thus, an active institutional role could have helped him restore his public image.

¹³⁸ Giora Manor reports that Robbins called Sara Levi-Tanai "a genius." See Manor (2002, 12-13).

such thing as a foreign technique to a dancer. (...) Everything you are being taught, and particularly the modern and ballet technique, whether they come from Europe or Zululand [*sic*], is a result of years and years of experimentation and development.”¹³⁹ He then concluded the letter saying that an implementation of professional technical training and work discipline was mandatory for his future return to Israel. Without questioning Jerome Robbins’s good intention to help the Israeli dance scene find professional dignity, which is beyond the scope of this study, Robbins did not demonstrate an attention to the specificity of Inbal’s agenda as the proponent of a non-hegemonic culture. On the contrary, Robbins’s idea of professionalization implied the imposition of a Western theatrical dance training on bodies that refused to comply with a Eurocentric agenda. More specifically, by sponsoring Robbins’s workshops in Israel, as well as Anna Sokolow’s Graham classes for the Inbal Dance Theater (since 1954, upon Robbins’s recommendation), the AFII supported a professionalization of dance in Israel in terms of Americanization.¹⁴⁰

Inbal as Ambassador: The Americanization Process

¹³⁹ Letter of Jerome Robbins (421, Park Ave, New-York 22, N.Y.) to The Dance Group c/o Judith Gottlieb – American Fund for Israeli Institutes 32 Allenby Road, Tel Aviv Israel, July 1952. Underlined as in the original. (Dance Library of Israel: Jerome Robbins 221.54.1.7). Published comments of Robbins about his experience in Israel do not clearly address the different functions he was exercising there. For instance, his statement that “the Sabra [Jews born in Israel] will dance ballet like an Israeli and not an American,” (Vaill 2006, 229) refers to the impressions he got by teaching his repertoire in Israel to bodies mainly trained in modern and often semi-professionally (he was also offered to direct the Israel Theater Ballet). So, Robbins was contributing to the professionalization of the Israeli dance community, exploring further work opportunities for himself as a choreographer, and curating a report for the AFII as an adviser.

Notice also that, in order to make Inbal more exportable, the company toured in the U.S. as Inbal Folk Ballet, a name reminiscent of Robbins’s idea of having an Israeli dance company that “dances ballet like an Israeli.”

¹⁴⁰ This process caused also the disappointment, if not the hostility, of those Yishuv modern dancers such as Gertrud Kraus who implemented *Ausdruckstanz* in Palestine since the 1920s (see Kosstrin 2017, 209-210). However, the main technique teacher of Inbal, Yehudit Ornstein was trained in Expressionist German modern dance. Nevertheless, the rapid implementation of techniques developed in the U.S. shows how the national-international political agenda affected the cultural project and the practice of dance in Israel.

In 1954, Robbins sent Anna Sokolow to Israel not only as a Graham technique teacher for the Inbal dancers but as a choreographic adviser for Levi-Tanai.¹⁴¹ Dance scholar Hannah Kosstrin has demonstrated how Levi-Tanai strategically complied with this Westernization process of her company to “upgrade Inbal’s ethnic status” (2017, 203) from “oriental” to “Israeli” and, ultimately, international. Along similar lines, company member Lea Avraham (who joined the company after Inbal’s first American tour) affirmed that the work of Inbal favored the social reputation of the Yemenite community in Israel, and made it a participant in the nation-building process (see Ingber 2017, 12).¹⁴² The company conceived the influence of Robbins, Sokolow, and the AFII as an opportunity to grow socially, economically, and artistically, especially at the domestic level. At the same time, the institutional use of the Yemenite ethnic and artistic heritage was instrumental for the affirmation of a specific idea of Israel in the U.S. (Kosstrin 2017, 199). Back then, the external use of Inbal’s specific cultural background and movement vocabulary did not seem an urgent source of preoccupation for Levi-Tanai. So, on the one hand, the Inbal dancers conceived the prospect of an international tour as an opportunity for their advancement as a minority. On the other hand, Israeli Ashkenazi-led institutions favorably

¹⁴¹ Sokolow was also investigated by the FBI and held overt leftist positions in the U.S., thus she happily accepted Robbins’s offer to work in a country in which Socialism represented the leading political ideology. As Kosstrin claims, Sokolow held “a position of cultural power within Israeli society under the Ashkenazi-led socialist government structure” (2017, 196). From a political perspective, Inbal represented an ideal environment for Sokolow, suffice it to say that Levi-Tanai, transferring kibbutz jargon to her dance studio, used to call the company members comrades (in Hebrew, *chaverim*) (see Levi-Tanai in Ingber 2011, 26-27).

¹⁴² In Avraham’s words: “Imagine Sara [Levi-Tanai] creating a company in Israel in the 1950s during the severe period of rationing—*tzena*. Yemenites worked as simple janitors and charwomen. But Sara saw something different for all of us, something that would stand for all of Israel and represent the country in a magical way. Sara convinced the Yemenites to work with her, that her ideas would be worthwhile. Never mind that the powers that be, the Ashkenazim, looked down on the Mizrahi, down on the Yemenites. They thought they were above us. Imagine what it took not to see us as primitive like the rest of Israeli society. To know instead that we were gems and our knowledge pearls—to believe in the worth of our Yemenite song, and dance. Sara took all of us and our skills and gave us a unique setting” (12). Lea Avraham came from a family that reached Israel through the so-called “Operation Magic Carpet.”

enhanced a Westernizing process in order to ingratiate themselves with American and European audiences, and align Israel to the Western bloc despite its Socialist Labor government.

The Western liberal universalism promoted by the American propaganda circulated also through the American modern dance companies that toured throughout the 1950s. In particular, Martha Graham's international tour in 1955 promoted "a white universal subject by invisibilizing nonwhite elements (...), to the point that bodies of color could be perceived as universal" (Kosstrin 2017, 161-162).¹⁴³ The Americanization of Inbal's bodies of color through Western concert dance techniques (primarily Graham technique and ballet) served the production of universally expendable bodies in order to grant them access to the international concert dance establishment. Levi-Tanai strategically participated in this process of Western acculturation to increase her artistic status on a domestic scene politically and culturally dominated by Ashkenazim. While, in the kibbutz system Levi-Tanai performed and represented her Yemenite heritage, at the international level she could perform a less "local" (read, less "non-white"), indeed more "universalized" (read, "whitened") identity that, within the logic of the Western dance market, corresponded to a higher level of artistry.

To clarify, by riding the wave of the Israeli melting-pot ideological program of the 1950s, aimed at reframing non-hegemonic groups into a homogenous national umbrella, Levi-Tanai found momentum to give visibility to the Yemenite-Mizrahi cultural minority she represented.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, to obtain such visibility, bodies of color had to go through a "whitening,"

¹⁴³ On white universalism through the invisibilization of bodies of color, see also Manning (2004), Shea Murphy (2007), and Croft (2015).

¹⁴⁴ On the Israeli "melting pot" ideological program and related policies, in which the migratory waves of Jews from Yemen were inscribed, see, among others, Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari (1999), Cohen (1997), Lissak (1999), Gutwein (2004). The melting pot was one of the guiding principles of the newly established state, part of Ben-Gurion's statehood ethos—*mamlachtiyut*,—a concept on which I will return in Chapter 2, Part I.

Westernizing process that, as I will show in the next pages, worked as a strategy of corporeal control. In fact, when the domestic political agenda shifted, with the strategic changes triggered by the 1956 war for the control of the Suez Canal and the Israeli government's discarding of the melting pot policy (Lissak 1999), Inbal started its institutional decline.¹⁴⁵ In sum, in the 1950s, the Israeli universalism practiced through the rhetoric of the melting-pot (a continuation of the Ashkenazi Zionist universalism) ideologically matched the American whitewashed universal humanism. This commonality allowed the two countries to overcome the ideological factionalism that framed Israel and its Socialist Labor government as tentatively closer to the Soviet bloc. In those years, cultural wars could reach diplomatic agreements that party ideologies could not.

The use of American modern dance training as the condition of visibility for Inbal's bodies worked as a strategy of surveillance in two ways: first, for the reiteration of whiteness as the *laissez-passer* for the global stage; and second, for the normalization through dance technique of the masculinity performed by the Yemenite male dancers. As Kadman underlined in her article on Yemenite dance from 1952, Yemenite dancers did not comply with the idea of the New Jewish body, reinforced through the kibbutz body of the *halutz*, and systematized through the concept of "Sabra," the native Israeli body (Almog 2000, Weiss 2002).¹⁴⁶ While Levi-Tanai's

¹⁴⁵ The so-called Suez Canal "Crisis" started when, in 1955, Egypt established an alliance with the Soviet Union, after failed negotiations with the U.S. and other Western powers for the construction of an embankment dam on the Nile. At this point, the U.S. feared a Soviet hegemony in the Middle East. Furthermore, in 1955, Israel launched a raid against the Egyptians troops in Gaza. The Suez war of 1956 happened in this network of global and regional interests. In June 1956, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, closing it to Israel and affecting the Western economic profits. For this reason, in October 1956, Great Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt but the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the U.N. demanded them to withdraw. While Israel did not annex new territories, and was disappointed by the American request of withdrawal, the "Sinai Campaign" represents the exacerbation of military tensions with Egypt and the Pan-Arab alliance led by Nasser. See, Shapira (2012, 278-286), Gorst and Johnman (1997), Gat (2018).

¹⁴⁶ As the nation-building bodies, conceptualized by Ashkenazi ideologues and cultural leadership, these bodies are inherently non-Arab and fundamentally non-white.

choreographic narratives were normatively gendered, the movement style of Yemenite male dances did not match the Israeli model of tough masculinity. The Western domestication of the Inbal bodies also intervened in the disciplining of masculine energy. The control over the representation of gender and the performance of energy is an actual choreographic intervention. Hence, the domestication of the bodies of the performers corresponded to a domestication of Levi-Tanai's choreographic agency and authority.

Three years after Inbal's international tour, in 1961, Levi-Tanai manifested her discontent: "And how can a 'melting pot' be realized if one is required to shed his own skin and endure someone else's? The usual answer is: For the sake of integration—give up and adjust. But I do believe that most of us cannot give up and adjust. We can only express ourselves or be silenced..." (in Roginsky 2006, 185). Building on Yutian Wong's argument about how the construction of the category of "international artist" relies on racial bias and manipulation of racial discourses (Wong 2009), I claim that Inbal was conceptualized within and outside of Israel—and always within a Western frame—simultaneously as exotic, familiar, and appropriate. The company was conceived as exotic because it was comprised of *dancers of color*; familiar because those dancers were *Jews of color*, and were thus universally identifiable; and appropriate because of how their exoticism was mitigated through the *Western* theatrical apparatus.

Reporting on the New York premiere of Inbal's tour at the beginning of 1958, *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency* of New York titled "Yemenite troupe scores great success."¹⁴⁷ Attending Levi-Tanai's company American debut there was "a distinguished audience of diplomats, United Nations officials, and the elite of the American dance world" (ibid.). Seated among the diplomatic and cultural establishment, the *New York Herald Tribune* critic, Walter Terry, found

¹⁴⁷ *JTA, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Daily News Bulletin*, vol. XXV, n. 5, January 8, 1958: 4.

that “their vitality alone is enough to make one jump out of his seat.” In his review, he also expressed “special gratitude” to “Jerome Robbins and Anne [*sic*] Sokolow two American choreographers, who provided the dancers with technical and theatrical disciplines but no artistic interferences.” The *New York Times* critic John Martin reported that “nothing remotely like it has been seen in these parts before.” He could not believe that Inbal’s work could be choreographed: “Some of the movement of the Inbal dancers is markedly Oriental, some of it has the stamp of Africa upon it, and a great deal of it is apparently the result of highly sensitive improvisation. But for all its diversity, it has a unity of style that gives it the unmistakable mark of a truly creative artistic organization.” In an escalation of exoticization and commodification, the *New York Post* dance critic wrote: “Their voices suggest at times the weird sing-song of the Kabuki, their use of flutes and gongs are like the Hindus.” In their remarks, the American critics not only confirmed the disciplining Western training and production system as a necessary passport of artistry, but also dismissed Inbal’s peculiarity as Yemenite, by marking it, through orientalizing and exoticizing, as non-white, non-Ashkenazi, non-Western.

During the American tour in 1958, Inbal made an appearance on the TV channel NBC. The famous host of the popular *The Dinah Shore Chevy Show* introduced the “Inbal Folk Ballet” (one of the “whitening” names through which the company was presented in the U.S.) explaining that its Yemenite Jewish dancers got “picked up in an airplane and flown to Israel.” She then referred to them as “primitive people” (*sic*) who kept their culture alive through singing, storytelling, and dance. Sara Levi-Tanai was not mentioned at all. In the choreography presented during the show, and introduced without title and credits, a trio seems to particularly display the influence of Sokolow’s work not only on the dancers’ bodies but on Levi-Tanai’s choreographic practice.

The men stand close to each other facing the audience in a large fourth position with the weight on the front leg. They display their chests by pulling their shoulders and elbows behind, keeping their faces and gazes on an upright diagonal. The following movement clearly originates from the rotation of the right shoulder, which transmits the impulse to the elbow and the whole arm to slowly, delicately swing forward; the arm suddenly retracts and the right leg lifts, balancing with a straight torso on a bent left leg; then, the right leg lowers to form a wide fourth position (with the feet placed outward one in front of the other at a large distance). The right arm reaches forward again, scratching with the hand the infinite space in front of them. With a chest impulse, the torso bends forward, releasing the neck and initiating a chest rotation, to suddenly lift the hand on the forward-left diagonal and then on the upper-left one. They softly shift their weight to the left leg again and, slowly, they swipe their right foot through a first position, so to lift their right bent leg—finally an Inbal signature pose.

The rhythmical impulses, the “cleanness” (a modern dance and ballet value) of the linearity of the trajectories and the precision of the transitions mark the presence of Sokolow in the work on Inbal. To my knowledge, Levi-Tanai has not shared the specifics of her collaboration with Sokolow. Photographic testimonies show that Sokolow was in the studio and actively participating when Levi-Tanai was choreographing and leading rehearsals. My hypothesis is that the presence of the American choreographer monitored Levi-Tanai’s choreographic gesture in order to craft an idea of the Inbal body that could be associated with ideas of “Israeliness” as vigorously Zionist and cleanly Western.

Toward the Theatricalization of the Kibbutz

As political theorist Fredric Jameson reminds us, the premise for the implementation of the idea of melting pot is the production of mass culture (Jameson 1998, 69). Gurit Kadman embraced this political mindset in the early 1950s, and recounted those years as a moment in which both folk dance instructors from abroad and Sabra (native Israeli) instructors favored the assimilation of new Mizrahi migrants into Israeli society. “How to bring the immigrants closer to the dances,” Kadman wondered, “to use them as a kind of entryway to the new Israeli culture and, by doing so, encourage them to preserve their own ancient folklore?” (Kadman 1969, par. 43). Shortly after, Kadman defined Israel as “a nation of immigrants from all over the world” (par. 44). Despite its truthfulness, Kadman’s statement does not acknowledge the different statuses among migrant groups. Inbal’s hypervisibility in the aftermath of “Magic Carpet” through international exposure in 1957-58 was instrumental in showcasing dance in Israel as a means of integration and acculturation of communities of immigrants to the Sabra culture.¹⁴⁸ By organizing smaller, “regional” dance festivals for communities of new-migrants in kibbutzim, Kadman and the Folk Dance Committee adapted their work to the new national political needs. At the same time, for Kadman, the kibbutz remains the site for Zionist propaganda. The State-era Dalia festivals progressively abandoned the “pioneering” feeling of the 1940s and projected a more sophisticated representation of nation-state. The fourth Dalia festival in 1958, in fact, was organized within a theatrical model, expecting participants to perform according to professional standards on three massive stages. “We in fact deviated from our path,” Kadman recounted, “we

¹⁴⁸ Dina Roginsky exposes how non-Yemenite groups reacted to Inbal’s exposure in Roginsky (2006, 183-4). Here, she also recounts how the Histadrut replied to Levi-Tanai’s comment about the process of ‘shedding one’s skin,’ framing the investment in Inbal as “cultivation of distinction” (186).

did not show folk dancing but rather a big performance of directed, impressive movements” (Kadman 1969: par. 54).

Similarly, Levi-Tanai had to abandon the improvisational aspects of Yemenite dances as she had first experienced and practiced them in the kibbutz. Improvisation remained a compositional tool for Levi-Tanai (cf. Roginsky 2006, 179), who kept struggling to negotiate between “natural” and “spontaneous” gesture, and a choreographic method for the creation of “a universal artistic dance language that could be taught to any dancer, irrespective of his or her origin,” as Levi-Tanai declared in 1956, after three years of artistic collaboration with Anna Sokolow. Compared to her words from 1961 in which she seemed to have captured the essentializing procedure behind the choice of Inbal as an ambassadorial company, in 1956 Levi-Tanai still showed hope and active participation in the universalizing project of the AFII program. Moreover, her 1961 claim shows how the whole rhetoric of nature and origin that Levi-Tanai (and other dancers) celebrated in the 1940s as a manifesto of the kibbutz dance assemblage lost its importance when dances conceived in the kibbutz lost their sense of belonging to this specific site of performance.

Undoubtedly, by relying on the Ashkenazi-American universal humanism of the 1950s, Levi-Tanai with her Yemenite dancers hoped to obtain artistic recognition and, consequently, enhance the social status of Mizrahi citizens.¹⁴⁹ However, the reliance on hegemonic values and their mechanisms of realization—such as the affirmation of whiteness as the norm through the exoticization of non-white subjects—which were incorporated into universal ideas of humanism

¹⁴⁹ For the parallel humanism-whiteness in the context of Jewish-Israeli dance, I refer to Kosstrin (2017, 167). Rosi Braidotti offers an effective summary of the humanism developed after World War II, especially in Socialist contexts in Braidotti (2011, 17-18). The humanism that propelled the melting-pot policy in Israel will fall apart in the 1960s following the international anti-Humanist tendency and for domestic reasons connected to the conflict with the Palestinians.

clearly could not offer a platform for the cultural and political recognition and dignity of marginalized communities, as the decline of Inbal will confirm. As we have seen, Inbal's bodies were granted international exposure only under the condition, strictly imposed by Robbins himself in his letter to Gottlieb, of undergoing an American modern dance training. Only in this way Inbal's dancers could be considered sufficiently marketable—and, thus, also inherently disposable (see Braidotti 2013, 71).¹⁵⁰

The Museification of Inbal

In 1962, Sarah Levi-Tanai agreed to have her dancers featured in the Metro Goldwyn Mayer movie *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965, dir. George Stevens), an epic recount of the life of Jesus Christ. Dina Roginsky points out how “in the early 1960s, *Who's Who* rated Levi-Tanai as one of the leading choreographers of the twentieth century,” (2006, 177) thanks also to Martha Graham's endorsement. However, at the same time, in Israel “the audience was gradually losing interest” in Inbal, for it was ultimately “perceived as an exotic, Oriental dance company” (178). While, in the climate of tensions with the Pan-Arab alliance that followed the Suez war, Israel could not politically benefit from the ambassadorial role of a company “perceived” as “Oriental,” the Hollywood industry still could.¹⁵¹

In the five-minute scene (1:25:52 - 1:31:12) that leads to the execution of John the Baptist and to the “Dance of the Seven Veils,” female dancers from Inbal appear as courtesans of

¹⁵⁰ More promising is a posthumanist framework that “rests on the assumption of the historical decline of Humanism but goes further in exploring alternatives” looking forward to the re-emergence of “the structural others” (Braidotti 2013, 37).

¹⁵¹ On Orientalism and orientalization in Hollywood, see, for instance, Bernstein and Studlar (1997), Haydock and Ridsen (2014), Locke (2009), Boone (2014). On the orientalized representation of Arab women in Western performance, see Sabry (2011). See also Klein (2003) on Orientalism during the Cold War.

Herod. In a wide, dark, empty space, a light diagonally cuts the scene to illuminate Herod, who sits on his throne waiting for his messenger's report about the activities of Jesus. The severity of the visual elements contrasts with the diegetic sound of a lively melody played with a ney (a flute utilized in Persian and Arab music), coming from the adjacent room.¹⁵² Note that this is the only scene in the film in which diegetic music readable as "oriental" appears. While the Middle East as such is generally orientalized in the film, in this scene diegetic music seems to specifically alert the viewer toward the presence of female "oriental" subjects. Swaying her hips back and forth through a transparent curtain, a woman leads the spectator from Herod's space to the courtesans' one.¹⁵³ In a more restricted space, filled with women, and only few men holding cups and drinking, three Inbal female dancers hold hands in a line and delicately perform the Yemenite step, swinging their heads from right to left. They sinuously close their feet in a parallel position, place their hands on their own belly and undulate their hips downwards.¹⁵⁴ Their view is disturbed by the presence of a chandelier that raises in the middle of the frame. Simultaneously, two other dancers turn and jump across the screen from the left to right swinging and rotating their green veils, stopping—with their backs to the audience—to subtly shimmy their shoulders. In this ten-second fragment, all the characters wear green costumes, a color utilized in this movie to perform a verdant and luxurious feeling, "natural" and erotic at once. Moreover, all the Inbal dancers wear a black, curly wig that homogenizes them both as women in

¹⁵² The credited music was by Inbal's composer Ovadia Tuvia.

¹⁵³ While, according to some accounts, the figures of Veronica and Herodias are the wife and daughter of Herod, in this scene the two are not related, thus increasing the perception of the women as primarily erotic objects.

¹⁵⁴ I notice that while the first two dancers from the left perform joy with wide smiles, the third one clearly does not, almost displaying discomfort.

the narrative and as members of a dance ensemble. Indeed, the dancers are merely credited as “Members of the Inbal Dance Theater of Israel” and not with their names.¹⁵⁵

A new frame shows Herod receiving news of the threat represented by Jesus, and then communicating to John that he is going to be executed. The diegetic “oriental” music keeps playing in the background to maintain the erotic feeling into the following scene. Afterwards, we see Herod slowly walking to his throne, with his back to the audience. With a point-of-view camera angle, we see from Herod’s perspective the shadows of three dancers that, from behind a light, pink curtain, sway their hips back and forth, smoothly moving their arms in front of their bodies. From this curtain, the character of Salomé slips out in a robe made of several layers of light-green, fluttering fabric. She walks through Herod’s space with long steps keeping her knees bent, turning and jumping with flexed, bare feet. With these elements and the grounded quality of her movement, this Salomé extrudes a carnality in radical opposition to the image of the Western ballerina, with her shoes, pointed feet, and upright posture. Salomé’s sensual dance enters in counterpoint with the edited insert of the executioner walking towards the audience and holding a scimitar (while the “oriental” music keeps playing). Then, from behind Herod’s throne, we see Salomé again, approaching the king by tracing a zig-zag path, which represents the exoticized stereotype of the deceptive Arab enchantress.¹⁵⁶ She stops in front of the throne’s steps, places the ball of her left foot forward, and rhythmically bends her torso backwards in a *cambré*, twice up and down, simultaneously pushing her soft arms to the back to emphasize the exposure of the chest. Now, we see a close-up of Herod’s sad and worried face, indifferent to the dancer, while we hear John the Baptist screaming “Repent!”. After the off-screen sound of the sword that

¹⁵⁵ Unfortunately, I still have not received notice of the names of the dancers involved in the movie.

¹⁵⁶ On the orientalized representation of the enchantress in Western performance, see Starobinsky (2008).

indicates the execution of John, the dancer takes a few light jumps towards Herod, softly shakes her shoulders, moves her veils, and leaves the scene—in front of an unresponsive Herod. This dance works as a counterpoint to the dramatic tension of the scene and to the regal (Herod) and moral (John) composure of the men. The indifference of the king in front of the dancer indicates that governmental reason and manly business have priority over women, female seduction, or, in general, corporeal discourses.

In Israel, because of Inbal's cameo in a film about the life of Jesus, the Rabbinate accused Levi-Tanai of participating in an anti-Semitic movie. Rejecting the accusations, the choreographer accepted a three-month contract to work in Hollywood, considering that the movie would have guaranteed greater exposure to the company and compensation for the company members.

The director of the film George Stevens casted Inbal to bring “authenticity” to the story (Darby 1992, 15). As a confirmation of the Western chain of Orientalism through which colonialism operates, the film's choir supervisor Ken Darby, describing Inbal as an entertaining presence during rehearsal, recounted that, at some point during the making of the film, Inbal dancers participated in a dance contest between the Yemenites and the Navajos “on a nearby reservation” (1992, 26). Though I have not been able to find primary sources regarding this event, Darby's testimony becomes the ultimate metaphor of Inbal's return to a marginalized status.

Further anecdotes also confirm how the orientalization of female bodies, in particular female bodies of color, takes place through patriarchal strategies aimed at their reduction to docile bodies. On set, Levi-Tanai was perceived as “the fussy little mother figure of the Inbal Dancers” (ibid.), rather than as a cultural leader that gave global visibility to an ethnic minority

from the Middle East, while Inbal's dancer Margalit Oved was described as "a lovely tiny woman with a sweet voice and light milk-chocolate skin" (15-16), rather than as a phenomenally energetic performer. In the structural orientalizing, racist, and misogynist mindset that informed these comments and the use of dance in the film, Inbal's cultural practice was not represented. For instance, Margalit Oved explains the back-and-forth swaying of the hips as reminiscent of the act of riding a camel in the Yemenite desert, for which the passenger needs to follow the camel's undulation in order to protect her spine.¹⁵⁷ Differently, in the movie such a movement is sexually connoted, reducing Inbal's practice to a means for the satisfaction of the male gaze (Mulvey 1975). Moreover, the use of Inbal's female dancers as the uncanny element within the court of Jesus's adversary, framing them as part of the "evil" side in the plot, completes the tokenization of Inbal and ratifies the condemnation of the uncanny "Eastern" body within a universal Western moral scheme.

While in Israel the Rabbinate accused Levi-Tanai of betraying the Jews by contributing to the portrayal of a Christian foundational story, Inbal's participation in a Hollywood colossal film inscribed the company in the global, capitalist scenario of the American industry. This inscription implied Inbal to be part of a process of orientalization, self-orientalization, and tokenization that, at the same time, economically sustained Inbal's existence. After the kibbutz beginnings, with the establishment of the State, Levi-Tanai strategically learned to speak the political idiom of the governmental leadership in order to guarantee visibility to the Mizrahi minority. In this scheme of crossing interests, Inbal entered a process of internationalization as Israel's ambassador of the Westernized melting-pot ideology. The very political premise of Levi-Tanai's politics is the

¹⁵⁷ See Margalit Oved interview by Taisha Paggett, *Dance Magazine*, October 28, 2010. <http://www.dancemagazine.com/teachers-wisdom-margalit-oved-2306873889.html>

ongoing minoritarian status of Yemenites and the Mizrahim in Israel. Levi-Tanai had to continuously strategize Inbal's work opportunities around the national apparatus of governance of ethnic minorities and cultural practices, and the larger international cultural-political tensions.

In her artistic (and inherently always political) choices, Levi-Tanai compromised orientalism, capitalism, and tokenization in order to avoid disposability. In order to persevere in their dancing as Yemenite subjects in a company conceived to honor and foster the Yemenite heritage, Levi-Tanai framed Inbal's "Israeliness"—a metonymy of the nation-state apparatus—as the condition of possibility of granting "Yemenite" visibility and recognition among the non-Yemenite dance environment and audience. In an interview from 1956 published in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Levi-Tanai stated: "This is not a Yemenite company but an Israeli one. I don't want to exclude. (...) I want to look for a treasury of consistent gestures; in other words, I am looking for a method that can be taught."¹⁵⁸ With these strategic words, she did not only align herself with the melting-pot ideology but also declared her intent to legitimize and guarantee permanence to Inbal's work with the repertoirization of a specific Yemenite vocabulary in order to affirm its uniqueness.

Later, in 1971, the creation of the "Ethnic Dance Section" as separate from the "Folk Dance Section" within the Ministry of Culture and Education institutionalized what I call the archivization process of the Inbal Dance Theater.¹⁵⁹ Here, I propose to consider the institutional maneuvers that have produced a reconceptualization of Inbal as archive. Following dance scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy, I intend archive to mean the apparatus of collecting cultural products to

¹⁵⁸ *Haaretz*, June 29, 1956.

¹⁵⁹ The process of separation was managed by the Histadrut's Folk Dance Section, members of the Hebrew University, and the Ministry of Culture and Education, with the goal of "preserving" ethnic dance.

be *held* or *framed* in systems specifically designed for the public display of a specific historical narrative or “truth” (Shea Murphy 2009, 49).

Indeed, the differentiation between “folk” and “ethnic” is per se problematic. While the first indicates dances that represent the nation, the latter marks dances “envisioned as local rather than transcendent, traditional rather than innovative, simple rather than sophisticated, a product of the people rather than a genius” (Foster 2009, 2). Inbal was inserted in the “ethnic” category, despite Levi-Tanai’s work in the 1940s as an audacious choreographer and proactive organizer for the expansion of the Israeli “folk” dance movement, and despite the fact that the company reached international recognition in the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, groups marked as “ethnic” were expected to work with non-Ashkenazi bodies, while one of Levi-Tanai’s goals was to extend her “method” (her “treasury of consistent gestures”) also to non-Yemenite and non-Mizrahi bodies. Levi-Tanai clearly grasped the politics that informed the Ministry’s categorization and officially protested the use of “folk” as a synonym of “Israeli,” thus excluding the “ethnic” from national and international platforms.¹⁶⁰ As the leader of Inbal, Levi-Tanai invested in what we call critical multiculturalism, the kind of multiculturalism that minorities embrace in order to participate in public life (Turner 1993). However, she overlooked the mechanisms of Israel’s hegemonic multicultural strategy, expressed in the melting-pot policy of the 1950s, and the disposability of the “East” inherent in what Ella Shohat calls “the hegemonic Euro-Israeli ideology” (2017 [1996]: 93) and in its ethnonationalism.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ See Sara Levi Tanai, “Reply to Yonatan Karmon: Inbal is Not a Single Ethnic Group,” in *Yedi ‘ot Aharonot*, November 19, 1982. See also Roginsky (2006, 182).

¹⁶¹ I have called hegemonic multiculturalism what others have called ‘state multiculturalism’, ‘official multiculturalism’, or ‘managed/corporate multiculturalism’ (Goldberg 1994, Gunew 2004, Hale 2002). See also Ahmed (2000) and Asad (1993).

Ultimately, in 1973, Sara Levi-Tanai was awarded the Israel Prize, the highest cultural award in the country, which in light of the arc of Inbal, seems more than compensatory, rather a seal on the archivization of Levi-Tanai's Inbal. Still, in a public lecture from 1981, Levi-Tanai claimed her Zionist past, ultimately describing herself as a cosmopolitan Zionist.¹⁶² By invoking cosmopolitanism, she claimed for herself an idea of inclusionary universalism that transcends the ethnic differentiations implicit in multiculturalism. And by referring to herself as a Zionist, and not as an Israeli, she expressed an idea of national belonging that exceeds the idea of state and nation-state nationalism (Zionism as a pre-state framework). In this way, Levi-Tanai refused to accept Inbal's decentralization of the national-global dance map, the institutional dismantling of Inbal's image and legacy as an "international artist," and the marginalization of its repertoire.

In 1984, Inbal's funding for international tours were completely dismissed. Nowadays, Inbal's archivization compounds with its museification under the "Inbal Ethnic Arts Center" at the Suzanne Dellal Center in Tel Aviv, just beside the studio of the Batsheva Dance Company, the main company and production center for the import/export of "Israeli" dance. There, outside of one of the theaters, named after the company (Inbal Theater), one can find a picture of Sara Levi-Tanai, a plaque *in memoriam*, and a voice recording that summarizes her contribution to ethnic dance in Israel. Such a mode of vocal memorialization aims to affectively compensate for the extinction of the reenactment of her choreography through living bodies. Nowadays, the Inbal Dance Theater is an active company, that hosts young Israeli contemporary dance choreographers and performers of different ethnicities and, currently all Israelis. It primarily

¹⁶² Sara Levi-Tanai, May 5, 1981, lecture hold at the Tel Aviv Museum. Dance Library of Israel Archive, Sara Levi Tanai, box 121.78E, folder 121.78.5.1.

performs new works nationally.¹⁶³ Inbal is utilized as the epitome of Israel’s diversity and “open cultural discourse among all groups of Israeli society,” as its website—which is only in Hebrew—declares.¹⁶⁴

Throughout her career, in her inclusionary idea of dance, Levi-Tanai seemed to keep looking back to the collective, collaborative melting-pot catalyzed by the first editions of the folk dance festival in kibbutz Dalia. For Levi-Tanai the kibbutz, as she experienced it through dance, constituted a “community of sentiment” (Appadurai 1990; 1996, 8; 2013, 65) unified by the nation-building drive aimed at bringing together a wide array of identities, ethnicities, and backgrounds. In light of the arc of Inbal’s experience, Levi-Tanai’s utopian multiculturalism could not sustain the ever-changing readjustments of the local, domestic, and foreign political agendas. For Levi-Tanai, the kibbutz served as the site of ignition for the utopian revival of a Yemenite culture. The cultural apparatuses invested in and capitalized on Levi-Tanai’s desire to grant Yemenite culture dignity and recognition through choreography.

Thus, the interventions of the AFII, Robbins, Sokolow, and the Folk Dance Section arguably sounded like a promise and an incentive to her. But that very “sentiment” that Levi-Tanai grasped in kibbutz culture and transformed into Inbal’s artistic agenda progressively disassembled with the establishment of the State and the political-cultural moves the government undertook in order to calibrate Israel’s international presence in the post-World War II geopolitical map. In this scenario, the pre-State kibbutz system was rendered unsuitable for the new economic and technological investments of the State (Katz and Golomb 1975: 401) and for

¹⁶³ As of February 2019, the company is scheduled to perform only in its theater in Tel Aviv.

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.inbal.org.il/>

the sustenance of the kibbutzim themselves.¹⁶⁵ In fact, with the economic, political, and social changes of the kibbutz system, its cultural agenda also shifted and adapted. In the 1960s, kibbutzim themselves proposed an actual “industrial revolution” (Maron 1993, 38) that dance seconded.

Part III Rechoreographing the Kibbutz from Within

In this section, I will illustrate how dance, since the 1960s, contributed to the reassessment and reformulation of the politics and structure of the kibbutz. More specifically, I will show how dance re-choreographed the conditions of livability of kibbutz Ga’aton, situated in the north of Israel, not far from the border with Lebanon.¹⁶⁶ In particular, I will look at the process that led to the formation of a stable professional dance company in kibbutz Ga’aton (today known as Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company—KCDC). Through this lens, I will analyze how the members of this new institution, emerging within the rigid structure of the kibbutz system, constructed their space of livability. I will examine the institutional and social movements that the desire of establishing a modern dance company comprised of kibbutz members generated within and beyond the kibbutz system.

¹⁶⁵ In a 1950 speech to the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) renown as “Embarrassed and Ashamed,” Prime Minister Ben-Gurion attacked the kibbutzim arguing that they were not doing enough to populate and advance the newly-established State. (Divrei ha-Knesset [Knesset records], vol. 3, Session 106, January 26, 1950, 536).

¹⁶⁶ Governmental accounts indicate October 8, 1948 as the date in which a group of Holocaust survivors from Hungary and part of the youth Zionist movement Hashomer Hatzair founded kibbutz Ga’aton. Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi (1992) asserts that the area was occupied and depopulated during the 1948 war. Today Ga’aton is mostly renowned for its dance company and dance activities.

Arriving at “the dance kibbutz”

On July 26, 2017, I rent a car in Tel Aviv. The man at the front desk asks me where I am going. “Kibbutz Ga’aton,” I reply. He looks at the screen of his computer. “It’s up in the north,” he says, giving me a suspicious look. “I know,” I reply, “I can make it, don’t worry.” “I’m sure you can. You’re not going to the border, right?” “No, I’m not, don’t worry.” “I worry. How long?” “A couple of days. I’ll stop in Haifa and bring your car back.” “No border, ok?” He starts to fill out the forms, then he checks Google Maps again. “Why do you go to the kibbutz?” “Zoom in Ga’aton,” I suggest. “I go for dance.” “Ah, nachon, lehakat hamachol hakibbutzit.”¹⁶⁷ Google Maps indicates the Kibbutz Dance Company as a site. “Yes, there’s a whole dance village there,” I reply.

I finally rent the car and drive north to the Western Galilee. Along highway 89, a sign indicates “Ga’aton” and another one “Dance Village”; thus, I take route 8833 and easily reach the dance kibbutz. The area is not congested at all. I hope to meet someone to ask where to park. I proceed slowly, it is truly all trees and flowers as in the promotional videos and images one can find online, on the company’s website or its YouTube channel.¹⁶⁸ The signs indicate a theater, dance studios, and offices. Behind some tall bushes, I see few cars, so I turn and park. I’m early for my meeting with Yonat Rothman, the dance archivist of kibbutz Ga’aton, so I walk around. Among trees and bushes, I walk through a series of small houses. A woman nods to say hi while picking up toys from the grass, two gardeners ask me if I need help and I pretend I’m perfectly aware of where I am. A girl with a chignon runs fast towards the theater. More signs in Hebrew indicate other dance studios and offices. Another couple of teenagers in dance clothes

¹⁶⁷ “Ah, right, the kibbutz dance company.”

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.kcdc.co.il/en/>

pass by. I end up in front of the famous building designed by Menachem Be'er, the father of Rami, the artistic director of the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company. The building used to be the dining hall of the kibbutz—the center of the life of the kibbutz community—which used to become a dance hall during holidays and celebrations in the kibbutz. Today the building houses bright dance studios, but the signs still indicate it as “the dining hall.”

Finally, I meet Yonat, who gives me a tour of the “International Dance Village.” We enter a building that hosts the Company’s offices and a cafeteria called “Café in Motion.” In a large studio some Israeli and international students are taking a KCDC repertoire class. They are the students of the “Summer Intensive.” In a smaller studio, other students are taking a ballet class. Yonat explains that these are dance students from the area that regularly train in Ga’aton’s permanent regional dance school. Then, we move to the main dance building, the (former) dining hall. There are six wide and luminous dance studios. In the biggest one, the second company (KCDC II) is finishing its ballet class. This company normally performs in the region, while the main company tours nationally and internationally. In the other studios, more students from Israel, Europe, U.S., and Asia are taking a contemporary dance class. They are part of the long-term professionalization programs. So far, I have seen dancers from three different educational programs and from the junior company. The main company, as it often happens, is on tour abroad. The energy and excitement of the simultaneous presence of so many dancers in training pervades my dancerly body. At the same time, my scholarly self keeps wondering the same question: What is the process that turned the kibbutz’s dining hall and its building into a local, national, and international dance center?

We keep walking among grass and flowers. Only the July heat prevents me from romanticizing the landscape. We continue our tour to the company’s theater and, adjacent to it,

a massive storage room for the productions' props and costumes. We greet the three technicians that are moving panels and boxes around, and head to the company's offices and archive.

The archive seems like a small room but is full of shelves and an enormous quantity of papers and folders, mostly labeled. Yonat has been cataloguing everything by herself fifty years of dance programs, letters, administrative documents, contracts, etc. She is completing a manuscript on the history of dance in kibbutz Ga'aton, relying on the precious documents of the kibbutz administration and on the papers of Yehudit Arnon, the first artistic director and "mother" of the company, who died in 2013. The energy and excitement that the richness of such an archive stimulates pervades my scholarly body. Yonat shows me handwritten letters of Arnon from 1978, when she was organizing the first company tour abroad to Paris and Rome. Yonat explains that Arnon used to take care of every single aspect of the life of the company—its relations with kibbutz Ga'aton itself, with other kibbutzim, with national institutions, and international bodies. We move to the offices of the dance administration. The walls are all covered with dance photographs and posters of past and present works and tours. One poster stands out to me, it's blue, and commemorates the event "Regard sur la Danse Contemporaine en Israel" at the Centre Pompidou, in Paris, in 1980. To its left, a smaller, brown poster indicates in Hebrew that the Regional Council of Ga'aton recognized the establishment of the "Regional Dance Company" by Yehudit Arnon on October 11, 1967.¹⁶⁹ The local and the international one next to the other.

¹⁶⁹ This was the interkibbutz modern dance company before the establishment of the Ga'aton's "Kibbutz Dance Company" three years later.

III. 1 Organizing Modern Dance in the Kibbutz System

Before Yehudit Arnon, other professional dancers tried to form modern dance groups in the kibbutz, in order to introduce a formalized dance training and professionalization among amateurs. All those who tried, from Leah Bergstein to Arnon herself, had to confront the bureaucratic organization of the life-system in the kibbutz. The collective distribution of practical and administrative duties aimed at realizing the larger settlement project were the priority. In the 1950s, the kibbutz administration did not conceive the establishment of a professional dance company as a necessary or urgent means to achieve the larger goal.

Back in the 1940s, folk dances performed an idea of collectivism that contributed to the production of a kibbutz identity and a national identity. Because of this, folk dance was granted institutional legitimacy. Differently, modern dance practices aimed at creating a professional dance environment in the kibbutz were perceived by the kibbutz administration as distracting and elitist. While everybody could learn and practice folk dance, modern dance was less accessible because of its technical demands. How could modern dance enhance the life of the collectivity? Moreover, the idea of having professional, full-time dancers in the kibbutz was a direct threat to the identity of the kibbutznik as a “builder.”

The problem of the kibbutz system was surely not with dance or modern dance per se but with dance as a professional practice. When Leah Bergstein tried to form a company in kibbutz, Ramat Yochanan, the kibbutz committee did not support her. Kibbutz authorities kept encouraging her work as a choreographer and performer, but only to organize folk dances for kibbutz festivities.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, dance genre also mattered because of the ideological function

¹⁷⁰ Ruth Eshel reports that also the pantomime artist Ze'ev Lichtbaum, known as Willy, unsuccessfully tried to establish a company in his kibbutz (1996, 132).

assigned to folk dance. Bergstein was trained in modern dance but for the kibbutz she choreographed according to what I would call the “folk dance norm,” which implied the collective expendability of folk dance as a genre in tune with the values of the kibbutz movement. In the 1940s, Leah Bergstein managed to formalize the existence of a dance group made of practitioners from several kibbutzim only because it was based on folk dance. “The dances of mine that were performed at the Dalia festivals all came from my kibbutz holiday celebrations,” Bergstein recounted. “Even when I directed the Inter-Kibbutz Folk Dance Group we would base our programs on dances from the kibbutz celebrations” (In Ingber 2011: 144).¹⁷¹

Very vocal about the unwritten “folk dance norm” in the kibbutz system was the professional dancer and kibbutznik Rachel Emmanuel (1917-1998), a student of Evelyn Sabin (d. 1998), a member of the first Martha Graham’s company in the 1920s. In a conversation with scholar Ruth Eshel (1998, 135), Emmanuel lamented the impossibility of choreographing with modern dance in the kibbutz.¹⁷² Emmanuel explained that choreographing folk dances fitted in the labor regime of the kibbutz structure but modern dance required special training, thus a more extended dedication. Hence, to re-conceptualize the kibbutz as a site of performance of modern dance required a reorganization of the ideas of time and labor in the kibbutz, meaning an ideological shift in its agenda. This is exactly the threat that the man from kibbutz Beit Hashita, whom I cited in this chapter at the beginning of Part I (*sup.* 54) highlighted in his journal from the 1930s, namely that dance could weaken the comrades’ discipline and the Socialist system of the kibbutz. However, as the evolution of the folk dance assemblage has shown, several factors

¹⁷¹ Ruth Eshel (2008) and Ingber (2011, 141) affirm that Bergstein managed to insert modern dance elements in her folk dances, but they were still conceived and received as folk dances.

¹⁷² Eshel’s article reports other kibbutz dancers’ testimonies about the perceived contradiction between dancing and “pioneering.”

contributed to the disarticulation of the Socialist orthodoxy and to the reformulation of the political agenda of the kibbutz.¹⁷³ As a matter of fact, however, at the beginning of the 1950s, several kibbutzim had informal modern dance groups. In order to get adequate training, the practitioners had to travel to Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem on their day off or at the end of the working day after their kibbutz duties. It was in the urban centers that professional dancers, mostly trained in Europe, offered classes in ballet and modern.¹⁷⁴

Because of the structural and ideological resistance to modern dance and dance professionalism in the kibbutz system, the establishment of a modern dance company for kibbutz members demanded the modern dancers kibbutzniks to strategically act in concert. Rachel Emmanuel's kibbutz Hatzor and Yehudit Arnon's Ga'aton had both been established by members of the youth movement Hashomer Hatzair and were part of the same federation of kibbutzim called Kibbutz Artzi.¹⁷⁵ After the establishment of the Folk Dance Committee within the Histadrut in 1952, following this process of institutionalization of dance in Israel, Rachel Emmanuel initiated a Dance Section within Kibbutz Artzi. This move, in the second half of the 1950s, favored the organization of the kibbutz dancers' mobility to get weekly modern dance classes in Haifa and Tel Aviv with esteemed teachers of both German and American modern

¹⁷³ I am mainly referring to Israel's adherence to a global, capitalist ideological system for the country's alignment to the Western bloc.

¹⁷⁴ In 1952, these groups participated in a choreographic competition in Tel Aviv organized by the modern dancer Gertrud Kraus (see Eshel 1998, 134-35). On Gertrud Kraus, see Manor (1978).

¹⁷⁵ Founded on April 1, 1927, the Kibbutz Artzi federation included 85 kibbutzim in the Israeli territory (not only in the Galilee) and coordinated the kibbutzim's policies and, thus, their ethos. In 1999, it merged with another kibbutz federation to form the Kibbutz Movement. Each kibbutz was characterized by a principle of egalitarianism practiced through collective decision-making in a general kibbutz assembly, with the delegation of specific matters to committees and leading roles—all positions pro tem to limit abuses of authority. However, a more centralized sovereign organism would have limited the decision-making power and the governance of each kibbutz, guaranteeing uniformity in terms of policies and, consequently, economic status. For an overview on the interkibbutz organization system throughout time and its relation to the central governmental power, see Rosolio (1998).

dance. The Dance Section tactically utilized the Socialist structure of the kibbutz system to financially support the dancers' training. Moreover, by importing into the kibbutz dance experiences practiced in the urban and global context, the members of the Dance Section initiated a process of reformulation of the cultural agenda of the kibbutz from a site symbolic of nation-building to a site able to enhance the image of Israel as cosmopolitan.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, while the kibbutz dancers had relations with the Histadrut dance workers through workshops, events, and professional classes, on the political and administrative level they had to refer to the Kibbutz Artzi and the individuals' kibbutzim. At the same time, through the organizational work of the Kibbutz Artzi Dance Section, the kibbutz modern dancers started to decentralize their activities, meaning that they worked to expand their possibilities of dancing and engaging in new relations outside of the kibbutz system. Simultaneously, the Kibbutz Artzi willingly supported its members, who also choreographed for kibbutz celebrations. Thus both the institution and its members were reciprocally benefiting from each other's work.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Cosmopolitanism was a tendency among liberal, anti-communist, Israeli and Zionist intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s. Malachi Haim Hacoheh explains how the Zionist "Cold War liberals" negotiated between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in Hacoheh (2009). On the modern conceptualization of the Jew as cosmopolitan, in relation to capitalism and anti-Semitism, see Gilman (2015). Similar to globalization, cosmopolitanism implies a universalized idea of mobility that generalizes the politics of border-crossing without considering the politics of accessibility which can limit specific subjects on the basis of citizenship, race, ethnicity, class, caste, gender, sexuality, etc. See, among others, Beck and Sznaider (2006), Brennan (1997).

¹⁷⁷ Consider that the Kibbutz Artzi federation was politically affiliated to the left-wing, Socialist, Zionist party Mapam, part of the ruling body of the Histadrut. The role that the different political parties (even those within the same political spectrum) played in relation to dance still needs to be explored, historically and theoretically. The following testimony from Marcel Louza's memoir gives a glimpse into the issue: "At this time, I was sent to a folk dance course affiliated with Nahal [a military body of the IDF with a performance band]. At the end of the course, I was chosen to join a group of dancers who would represent Israel at the International Competition of Folk Dancing in Romania [under the artistic direction of Gurit Kadman]. Rehearsals took place in kibbutz Beit-Alfa [Leah Bergstein's kibbutz] under the direction of Zeev Havatzelet, the renowned choreographer of the day. Even though I was well qualified, I was denied to participate in the event, as I belonged to the Mapam party, opposed to Ben-Gurion party, the Mapai." (*Hamishiya: The Story of Five Friends*. Bloomington: iUniv, Inc., 2011: 82).

The following year, in 1953, Yehudit Arnon, who used to regularly train in modern dance in Haifa, brought together a group of practitioners in her home kibbutz Ga'aton. While other modern dancers used to host informal dance gatherings in their kibbutzim, Arnon decided to select the most talented practitioners and form a regional semi-professional company. By 1959, this group met regularly in Ga'aton, where Arnon managed to obtain the space for a dance studio the previous year. This group realized through dance a sort "interkibbutzship" that mirrored the structure of the Kibbutz Artzi federation itself. In the early 1960s, the Kibbutz Artzi sponsored several initiatives for the kibbutz modern dancers, such as a scholarly symposium on dance history and choreography (1962) and an interkibbutz professional dance seminar, during which special guest Gertrud Kraus announced that Israel was now ready for a modern dance festival in the kibbutzim (1964).¹⁷⁸ In those years, the centralization of the kibbutz governance through federations allowed the kibbutz system to better manage its relations with the central government and its own economy.¹⁷⁹ Those were the years in which technology and mechanization were introduced in the kibbutz agricultural system, incentivizing the evolution of the kibbutz as a site of industrialization. To a certain extent, the kibbutz federations' management of economic, educational, and cultural activities in the kibbutzim decentralized the control of the national government. I consider the formation of a regional modern dance company for kibbutzniks also within this frame of competition between national government and local governing bodies.

¹⁷⁸ I owe this piece of information to Yonat Rothman, who generously shared with me drafts from her manuscript about the development of dance in kibbutz Ga'aton.

¹⁷⁹ As in all federal systems, especially those based on an ideal principle of equality, internal disparities generate problems. Within the kibbutz system, the richer individual kibbutzim did not always enthusiastically share their wealth with the less economically efficient ones.

Ga'aton's Wunderkammer

With a note of excitement in her gesture and gaze, Yonat inserts the key in the lock, looks at me, and, slowly opening the door, welcomes me into Yehudit Arnon's office. Despite the simple furniture—a solid dark wooden desk with a small office chair, a school chair, another couple of unmatching chairs, and some filing cabinets—the small room vibrates like a jewelry box. Such an energy comes from the hundreds of photographs that cover each inch of the walls. Dancers performing or rehearsing, international guest choreographers, Yehudit teaching, Yehudit with dancing friends, the company on tour, some framed programs. A couple of shelves are covered with souvenirs Arnon collected during her international tours with the company (mostly reminders of their trips to East Asia). It feels like being in a Wunderkammer. I would love to take my time and try to reconstruct a history of the company through souvenirs and pictures following the choreographic structure through which Arnon adjusted them in the space. But, despite Yonat's invitation, I feel I'm invading an intimate space—not just because I'm not a kibbutz member, but because Arnon's presence feels palpable. In fact, on her desk, everything remains the way she left it before passing, in Summer 2013—two books open, a notebook, and a photo of her coaching a dancer.

I will later realize such a feeling of presence was also enabled by my memory of Arnon moving, smiling, chatting in her office as seen in documentaries on her career.¹⁸⁰ In an article, Israeli dance historian Henia Rottenberg (2014) also recalls Arnon's office and reads in the presence of pictures of students alongside pictures and letters of renowned choreographers a sign of Arnon's commitment to the (socialist) value of equality. What I see, condensed in this

¹⁸⁰ Documentaries on Arnon include: *Kibbutz Dance Company*, dir. Itamar Hadar (1986); *Dance of Life*, dir. Tzviya Keren (1995?); *A Dream within a Dream*, dir. Carmit Jacobson (199?); and *The Story of Yehudit Arnon*, produced by Yad Vashem (1995).

small room turned into a museum-office, is the vastness of the scope reached by the dance company established in Ga'aton: from the early black-and-white pictures of the 1950s and 60s, with untrained ballet dancers practicing at the barre, to the more recent photographic testimonies of the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company performing in international theaters. Close to the door, Rami Be'er, the dancer and choreographer that succeeded Arnon in the artistic direction of the company and her protégé, hugs her in a dance studio.

III. 2 A Choreography of Local Diplomacy

The group Yehudit Arnon brought together in 1956 encompassed dancers from kibbutzim located in the same area, the Ga'aton Regional Council.¹⁸¹ Arnon strategically thought that to have modern dancers from kibbutzim inscribed under the same administrative umbrella would have favored the institutional recognition of her group. Indeed, in the following years, this point will turn out to be crucial.

In 1962, after three years of regular training, Arnon's amateur company participated in the National Art Youth Festival in Tel Aviv, winning first prize. Watching the competition was Gertrud Kraus, teacher of Arnon and strong proponent of a strengthening of the presence of modern dance in Israel. Kraus directly recommended Arnon's group to the Regional Council for Culture and Art for funding. With their support, in 1962-1963, Arnon's group toured in several kibbutzim around Israel (also outside their regional council). As Yonat Rothman reconstructs, "The rumor of a professional dance group working at Kibbutz Ga'aton passed from mouth to mouth and the members of the [dance] department [within the Kibbutz Arzi] faced a new reality

¹⁸¹ Later, since in 1982, kibbutz Ga'aton will be included in the Mateh Asher Regional Council, in which three former regional councils merged (Ga'aton, Ne'eman, and Sulam Tzur).

that was not known in the past: many invitations to perform outside Kibbutz Ga'aton. Only in 1962, they appeared in 16 kibbutzim, 3 conferences and one festival. In 1963, they appeared in 23 kibbutzim, in two cities and at the Jubilee event of the Kibbutz Artzi" (manuscript).

Therefore, at this point the company, not fully professional or institutionally recognized yet, was funded by two institutions: the Regional Council and the Kibbutz Artzi.

From an institutional perspective, the management of dance in Israel further developed in 1959, when the Ministry of Education and Culture established a Council for Culture and Art, with a dedicated budget for dance activities.¹⁸² In November 1963, the dance committee within the Ministry organized a festival for emerging modern choreographers.¹⁸³ The Ga'aton group performed in both the 1963 and 1964 editions of the festival, obtaining financial support also from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The group's recognition grew along with the dancers' desire to train more consistently, which became increasingly more incompatible with the kibbutz labor system. Such a push of modern dance at the national level (and more specifically of American modern dance, which started to dominate the urban concert scene a decade before, with the arrival of Robbins and Sokolow) culminated in 1964 with the official establishment of the Batsheva Dance Company as a national modern repertory company. In a text published on the first program of Batsheva, its founder, the Baroness de Rothschild recognized the rising demand for dance and mentioned the need for more companies, indicating Inbal as the only existing one: Arnon's kibbutz experience was not acknowledged.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Later, we will see how the political relevance of the different governing bodies (or their future reincarnations) shifts according to shifting political agendas on both the national and local level.

¹⁸³ This festival keeps running nowadays under the name "Curtain Up." I will expand on this festival and other issues concerning the urban concert stage as a site of performance in Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁴ Batsheva Dance Company's first program brochure (Batsheva Archive, Dance Library of Israel).

While the Ga'aton group was artistically growing and building a larger audience, the conflict with the kibbutz system clearly manifested. At the local level, the Kibbutz Artzi federation expressed a certain hostility towards the funding of an artistic group made of kibbutzniks that was challenging the rules of kibbutz system. Even though in 1963 the Kibbutz Artzi offered financial support when the company made it to its first national festival bringing prestige to the kibbutz system, later the federation found problematic that the company was also benefiting from the Ministry's Council for Culture and Art.¹⁸⁵ At the same time, at the national level, in 1964, the Council itself cut support to Arnon's company. With little economic and political support from the Artzi federation, and none from the Ministry, the company disbanded.

At this point, members of Arnon's group and other supporters wrote a letter to a third party, the Western Galilee Regional Council, inviting them to acknowledge the growing importance of modern dance in the region and the positive responses from the audience. The following year, in 1965, the Regional Council responded with the construction of a dance studio in kibbutz Ga'aton and the restoration of the company, now named Western Galilee Company. This was the first official institutional recognition of the group led by Yehudit Arnon. The company started to rehearse three nights a week, after regular kibbutz duties. These rhythms were not easy to sustain, and the relation with the kibbutz system, regulated by the Kibbutz Artzi, had to be constantly renegotiated. For example, the company had to make sure that, in order to allow the dancers to travel to Ga'aton for rehearsal, each home-kibbutz had to sign a release

¹⁸⁵ In her manuscript, Yonat Rothman reports the conditions required from the dance department of the Kibbutz Artzi for the funding of the company. In light of this document, it emerges that, for instance, the way the company was conceived was highly informed by a kibbutz-mindset, for which Arnon is not defined as the artistic director but as a "coordinator," as if the dance group was another kibbutz committee. At the same time, even if the company was not fully considered as such, they recognized the labor of the dancers. According to the kibbutz rules, dancers could not receive any extra salary, but, being the dance group an extension (if not a protuberance) of the kibbutz system, they could receive refreshments or tobacco as a compensation for their extra labor.

form, but sometimes the kibbutz did not want to release its kibbutzniks from duty. Such bureaucratic practice worked as a form of control over the kibbutz members, binding them to the institution. However, the modern dance group had already altered the notion of labor in the kibbutz. They demonstrated, in fact, that physical labor did not have to be exclusively limited to the production of a self-sustainable community, or to the production of a sharable and transmittable feeling of nation-building.

The timeliness of the company's letter to the Western Galilee Regional Council shows the dancers' ability to read the reality of the institutional matrix they inhabited. The experience of the modern dance group allows us to explore and address a level of complexity in the construction of the kibbutz as a site of performance that the folk dance experience standardized in the name of the construction and recognition of a national identity. Nevertheless, the local-national dynamics continued to affect the development of modern dance in Ga'aton and of the kibbutz as a site of performance.

The Western Galilee Dance Company had its official premiere only two years later. Between 1967 and 1970, the company toured in kibbutzim around Israel presenting three different programs with original choreographic works that addressed issues that previous choreography made in the kibbutz never did, such as anti-Semitism in Europe, a theme able to reinforce a sentiment of Israeli nationalism. Modern dance in the kibbutz favored a representation of the Israeli body as vulnerable and hesitant. However, in the years of the Six Day War (1967), the War of Attrition (1970), and the Yom Kippur War (1973), such bodily conceptualization was not popular at the national level. In times of conflict, in fact, governmental and military institutions needed to promote an idea of vigorous idea of body able to fortify the

national imaginary.¹⁸⁶ Along these institutional lines, ideas of physical weakness were still unpopular in Israeli visual culture, and also contrasted with the traditional rhetoric of the kibbutz as the site of construction and dissemination of the New Jewish body.¹⁸⁷ At this stage, despite the limited funding and the unideal working conditions for a dancer in the kibbutz system, the Western Galilee Regional Company was interconnecting kibbutzim, and pushing forward the cultural politics of the kibbutz by questioning the original kibbutz's corporeal values that made it a site for the display of national affirmation.

But which modern dance for the kibbutz?

Back to Tel Aviv, at the Dance Library of Israel, I look for documentation on the early works of the company directed by Yehudit Arnon. In the regional company, and later, in the first years of the InterKibbutz Dance Company, the choreographers were all women, also performers in the company itself—Gabriela Oren, Hedda Oren, Yehudit Arnon, Oshra Elkayam-Ronen, Noa Shapira, and Hermona Lin (cf. Eshel 1991 and Rothman 2009). I find articles, videos, and pictures about all but Hermona Lin. There are only some programs that mention her name and the titles of her works, but no videos. I truly hope Yonat will find something in Ga'aton. At least, in the programs, I find some photographic documentation of On the Way, a piece she choreographed in 1970 and that remained in the company's repertoire for a few years. The web doesn't help either. Hermona Lin remains a figure at the margins of traditional Israeli dance narratives. Her works received little interest from coeval reviewers, just mentions. My interest,

¹⁸⁶ The Holocaust will become an argument of national propaganda only in the late 1970s with the electoral campaign of Menachem Begin. On this matter, see Chapter 2, Part II.

¹⁸⁷ Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust would have become key themes for the Ga'aton company, whose founders were for the most part Holocaust survivors.

though, emerges from the fact that, looking at photographs of On the way, I read strong references to the work of Merce Cunningham, rather than of Sokolow or Martha Graham, who, after her tour in Israel in 1956, became the choreographer of reference on the Israeli concert dance scene. Don't linger in the impression of the still image, I tell myself. Don't make easy connections based on the aesthetic element that all the dancers are wearing unitards. But I persist.

On the left of the image, two dancers, a woman and a man, sitting on the floor, are using their momentum to stand up. One extends her right arm forward (toward the right side of the stage); the other extends it to the right (towards the audience) and his left arm towards the wings in front of him. At the same time, another dancer is performing a temps levé, arms down, relaxed shoulders, feet extended but not pointed, exiting the stage on the right. Entering, simultaneously, facing the audience, a fourth dancer shifts her weight to her left leg, extending her body forward in a diagonal, with the arms that parallel her right leg, which slides on the floor. In the meantime, another dancer is standing downstage, her body faces the audience but she is engaged in moving her left arm. Another dancer is simply walking off stage.

What strikes me the most in this picture is the absence of unison, which drastically contrasts with folk dance choreography, with traditional concert dance in Israel, and also with the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company current repertoire. Looking at the spatial and energetic tensions designed by the different heights, bodily orientations, feelings of weight, directionalities within the ensemble, I have the impression that this is a fresh experience for dance in the kibbutz. And I sense that same "appetite for motion" that Cunningham claimed for his dance (see Tompkins 1968), rather than an appetite for the manifestation of a pre-determined political agenda. This lack of unison, which radically contrasts the sense of collectivism

promoted by folk dance and kibbutz ideology, makes room for the affirmation of an individual presence that shows how subjects can negotiate their singularity through “purposeful actions” (Foster 1986, 34). I’m missing pieces, I don’t have any description or account of the piece. The monochromatic unitards have some random holes on the calf, on the back, on the thigh: they don’t look as smooth and perfect as the Cunningham’s ones, and I cannot tell if these details are related to a particular narrative. Surely these costumes break with the visual rhetoric of gender normativity (skirts or dresses for women and pants for men) that dominates folk dances, many Martha Graham’s choreographies, and the current KCDC repertoire. In any case, the choreographic remnants deposited in this picture show a mode of composing that dodges the dominant modern dance referents in Israel and the founding values of kibbutz culture. Maybe, I’m just overreading.¹⁸⁸ Or, maybe, this is a choreographic direction that didn’t or couldn’t make it in Israel, as much as Merce Cunningham was not (or could not be) part of the American modern dance canon in the country.

III. 3 Dance as Kibbutz Public Service

In the second half of the 1960s, the organization of a regional modern dance company for kibbutzniks relied on a third administrative body (the Regional Council) rather than the Kibbutz Artzi or the Ministry. This situation strategically allowed the company to circumvent the bureaucratic impasse generated by the tension between local and national institutions. In scholarship, while the 1950s and 1960s marked the social and economic flourishing of the kibbutzim, the late 1960s and 1970s indicated the emergence of a crisis rooted in the

¹⁸⁸ On overreading as a method of choreographic analysis, see Martin (1998). Overreading is a strategy that allows the dance scholar to overcome the disciplinary boundaries that confine dance practice and scholarship to a merely aesthetic exercise (“underreading”).

impossibility of competing with the urban Israeli society in terms of consumption and living standards (Ben Rafael 1997, Leviatan and Oliver 1998, Leon 2013). Several studies assume economic growth theory as a foundational framework, and, consequently, imply the necessity of a competing relationship between the cities and the kibbutzim in terms of economic growth rate as the most influential factor for the measurable transformations of life within an inhabited site. Instead of assessing the reality of economic shifts according to the urban-kibbutz relation and their effects on individuals from the perspective of growth and consumption theories, I propose to look at other fundamental dynamics at stake within the kibbutz system, in particular the reassessment of the principles of its Socialist foundation. Thus, rather than relying on generalizations produced through statistics, by looking at the re-articulation of the institutional attitudes that led from the Western Galilee Regional Company to the establishment of the Inter-Kibbutz Dance Company, I will illuminate the ideological disputes fought within the kibbutz system in the late 1960s and 1970s. What role does the modern dancers' "desire to dance" play in this process?

On January 1, 1969, the head of the dance section of the Kibbutz Artzi federation, Shlomit Ratz (who followed Rachel Immanuel), sent a letter to the coordinators of the cultural departments of the three kibbutz federations (HaKibbutz HaArtzi, HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, and the Union of Kibbutzim), advocating for the establishment of a modern dance company (in place of the existing regional dance group), which would serve the whole community of kibbutzniks, and asking for the support of the kibbutz movement as a whole. By that time, each of the three federations had a dance section, and all the three dance coordinators agreed on the dismissal of the regional company for an inter-kibbutz one. One of the arguments that Ratz presented to convince the culture coordinators of the urgent need for an inter-kibbutz dance institution was

that it would have allowed kibbutzniks interested in modern dance to fulfill their individual self-realization (*hagshama atzmit*)—a principle of kibbutz culture (Rosner 1976, Palgi 2017). This would have discouraged modern dance amateurs from leaving their home kibbutz to pursue modern dance training in the city. Strategically building off of the kibbutz-city antagonism, Ratz underlined how the regional company, with its amateurish structure, could not compete with the Tel Aviv-based modern companies Batsheva and Bar-Dor. These arguments clearly centered on some of the pressing matters within the kibbutz apparatus, namely the appeal of the urban environment which had prompted a process of depopulation in the kibbutzim.

Three months later, the coordinators of the dance section met with those of the culture departments. Shlomit Ratz presented a detailed proposal for the future company, with a tentative budget and a working plan. Trying to accommodate the highest ranks of the kibbutz movement in relation to the communal labor obligations, Ratz proposed one day off per week for nine months to rehearse, and then one month off from regular duties for a full immersion in kibbutz Ga'aton before the premiere. She also proposed to have the dancers' work paid half by the home kibbutz and half by the home federations for the nine-month rehearsal period, and fully by the Kibbutz Movement as a whole (the three federations together) for the pre-show intensive month. This budget neither included nor assumed salaries for the individual dancers but items such as transportation or dance clothes appropriate for dancing (the kibbutz, at that time, provided also garments to its kibbutzniks—from working clothes to underwear).

How does such a proposal intervene in the *oekonomia* of the kibbutz and differently envision it? While the idea of the day off from regular duties had already been explored, the intensive month was a radical request. Usually kibbutzniks who were exempt from kibbutz duties were soldiers on duty. Could dance be compared to military service? Such a question assumes

the idea that both the figures of dancer and soldier provide a necessary service to the community. I will soon show how such a discourse became embedded in the modern dancers' rhetoric of affirmation in the kibbutz in the 1970s. Indeed, to have the Kibbutz Movement paying for the intensive month would have ratified the modern dance company's role of public service for the general community of kibbutz citizens.

At the same time, by proposing one weekly rehearsal plus one intensive month, Ratz valued the importance of efficient time-management that, on the one hand, worked to accommodate the kibbutz labor rule, and, on the other hand, assumed efficiency as a necessary skill of the kibbutz modern dancer (i.e., the ability to quickly embodying technique and learn a choreography in a limited amount of time). Both the dance sections and culture departments coordinators approved the proposal, appreciating the project of an inter-kibbutz company as a binding agent among kibbutzniks, kibbutzim, and federations.¹⁸⁹ Finally, Ratz's letter supported a return to a kibbutz-led administration of dance, thus advocating for an affirmation of the kibbutz's governmentality over the national and regional ones. Indeed, Ratz's move proposed the adoption of modern dance as a kibbutz technology able to strengthen the political and social positions of the kibbutz by encouraging individual mobility beyond the normative labor scheme and a wider array of possibility of self-realization. Moreover, such a structure and mindset would have created the conditions to compete with the dance companies based in Tel Aviv. In synthesis, this proposal asked the kibbutz movement to invest in modern dance as a platform for the affirmation of the kibbutz as a valuable site for the performance of political and economic autonomy.

¹⁸⁹ Note that kibbutz federations will officially merge into one Kibbutz Movement only in 1980 with further institutional changes in 1999.

However, the kibbutz general committee rejected the proposal because of alleged violations of the principle of equality on which the kibbutz was founded. The presence of dedicated spaces for the professionalization of dancers already seemed to threaten the collective and shared use of space. And the very idea of professionalization was problematic. A kibbutznik's professional skill had to be limited to the collective livelihood and an excess of specialization would have made the individual expendable per se and not as a kibbutz member. As Uri Zilbersheid (2011) summarizes,

Work was essentially collective activity, i.e. it was not perceived as a social combination of the activities of unrelated individuals pursuing different interests, as work is organized in a capitalist enterprise, but rather as common activity expressing a common will. Work itself was only partially perceived and shaped as a means to an end - the final product or the profit to be gained from its sale (422).

Another argument of the general committee was the possible risk of exploitation of the dancers as kibbutzniks, which became a major topic of debate after the 1967 war. The occupation of the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights increased the exploitation of cheap Arab labor to several moshavim and kibbutzim. The issue of labor exploitation incited moral and ideological debates within the kibbutz movement and, especially within the Kibbutz Artzi federation, traditionally affiliated with the Zionist-Marxist Mapam party, an ally of the Labor Party since 1969 (see Sherman 1982, 56, and Zilbersheid 2011). While the Kibbutz Artzi was trying to uphold the ideological principles of equality and self-labor within the kibbutz, modern dancers proposed to expand them, appealing to the Labor Zionist idea of work as “creative work” and a means of self-realization in the Labor Zionist

tradition of Aaron David Gordon. Hence, in order to ask for the political and economic support of the kibbutz system, modern dancers necessitated an agenda that would not contradict or undermine the institutional one.

Despite the kibbutz Secretariat's refusal, Shlomit Ratz and the supporters of the dance committee's initiative moved forward. After a months-long process of auditions, in the Fall of 1969, a group of twelve dancers began meeting weekly in Haifa to train. They also formed an artistic and administrative board including the head of the Kibbutz Artzi's cultural committee, David Raban, as an economic adviser. In an interview released in November 1970, Ratz affirmed that "about 85 percent of the dancers came from Kibbutz Artzi kibbutzim." "A committee to make artistic policy decisions was elected," she continued, announcing that the company was *de facto* institutionalized,¹⁹⁰ through the support of the cultural sectors of the kibbutz movement. In this configuration, Yehudit Arnon was part of the teaching staff. She was also part of the audition committee, along with Gertrud Kraus, who, differently from Arnon, was a board member. While there were larger institutional dynamics at stake, other tensions emerged within the modern dance kibbutz community. For instance, while the current board was formed with the goal of actualizing the inter-kibbutz project, Arnon believed the primary focus was to establish a solid system of professionalization for modern dancers. In order to do so, she envisioned the centralization of the activities in kibbutz Ga'aton as a priority.¹⁹¹

With its limited funding coming from individual kibbutzim and the dance sections' budget, the Inter-Kibbutz company premiered on November 27, 1970 with mediocre responses.

¹⁹⁰ Interview from November 21, 1970, cited in Eshel 1998: 130.

¹⁹¹ In 1970, members of the kibbutz movement form the Netanya Kibbutz Orchestra. The political history of its formation has not been analyzed in scholarship.

Technically the kibbutz dancers could not compete with the Telavivian professional companies Batsheva or Bat-Dor. Hoping to raise the general quality, in January 1971, Gertrud Kraus was appointed “artistic director” of the company. Insisting on performing and building a sentiment of appreciation among the kibbutz community, Kraus crafted a program addressed to young audiences in order to mitigate the experts’ artistic and technical expectations. With this program, Kraus brought the Inter-Kibbutz company also to Tel Aviv, receiving—as expected—warm responses. However, the success obtained with a performance for the youth did not satisfy the original project of having a kibbutz company able to compete with the companies based in Tel Aviv. While a program for the youth manifested the prominent role that education played in kibbutz culture, the performance showed the Inter-Kibbutz company’s technical delay.

At this point, writers on the kibbutzim’s newspapers and magazines, along with the general kibbutz public opinion, agreed that the poor working conditions were the cause of the company’s artistic insufficiency. Simultaneously, the company’s representatives were intervening in kibbutz media outlets claiming their identity as representatives of kibbutz culture: “We don’t claim to be put on the same level as Batsheva,” choreographer Hedda Oren declared, “They cannot compare because we are all kibbutz members. With all the limitations. And this is also why our company is not built on stars but on group structures.”¹⁹² Such a statement denounces at once the lack of means to increase the level of the company and the adherence to the kibbutz value of collectivism. This is also the period in which dancers were advocating for the company’s “right to exist,” as dancer Ruth Hazan declared on the Kibbutz Artzi’s *Al Hamishmar* (May 24, 1972),

¹⁹² In Hebrew, the word “kibbutz” literally means “group,” “collective,” so the idea of kibbutz resonates on Hedda Oren’s words when she talks about “group structures,” thus the word game reinforces her utterance. The quote is from Snunit (1970).

underlining the need to offer something “special,” probably meaning distinctive from other companies like Batsheva¹⁹³ (see also Eshel 1998, 128).

The structural instability contributed to tensions and discussions regarding the company’s leadership. Yonat Rothman claims that the presence of several choreographers and a loose sense of guidance in the company produced internal conflicts, which risked compromising the democratic process (a fundamental kibbutz value). Moreover, the company had to come to terms with the fact that the direction of one of the most regarded modern dancers—Gertrud Kraus—did not bring considerable improvements. It is within this scenario, in which the Inter-Kibbutz company managed to affirm itself as a kibbutz reality among the public opinion but not as a leading modern dance ensemble beyond the kibbutz system, that Yehudit Arnon regained a leading role.

As Rothman explains in her manuscript, in 1972, Arnon went to London for three months on a “professionalizing” trip. I would contend that, by choosing to go to England, Arnon looked for a dance environment different from Kraus’ *Ausdruckstanz* and from Batsheva’s and Bat-Dor’s Graham influence. May 1968 had a strong impact on the London dance scene. Training at The Place, Arnon met dancers from a variety of dance backgrounds experimenting with a variety of movement vocabularies and choreographic approaches. Leading institutional figures such as Robin Howard (The Place) and Bonnie Bird (Laban Center) were rearranging and integrating dance curricula, and introducing different practices, such as contact improvisation, into the British dance scene. Arnon, who was a ballet teacher in the kibbutz company, went back to Israel bringing with her not just a breath of fresh dance air but an expanded (international) artistic

¹⁹³ Ruth Hazan was a former dancer of folk dance choreographer Yardena Cohen, who declared: “I never felt the need for a dance company because my company was the kibbutz” (in Ingber 2011, 141).

knowledge and a deeper institutional awareness. At the end of 1972, Yehudit Arnon was appointed artistic director of the Inter-Kibbutz company, prompting the centralization of the administrative and artistic activities in kibbutz Ga'aton.

Notes on Arnon as Ga'aton's *genius loci*

On YouTube I find a video, produced by a French TV channel, of a folk dance group that toured in Paris in 1972 called "Le Grand Ensemble des Kibbutzim d'Israel."¹⁹⁴ Six couples, with the women in dresses and the men in trousers, dance barefoot, performing light footwork and sudden jumps—as prescribed by Gurit Kadman (1946). Every now and then, the men shout a cheerful "heh!" to punctuate a change of formation or a successful turn, while the women smile, carving the space with their fashionable ponytails. Then, the dancers rearrange the formation into a group, facing the audience, and keep bouncing with their peculiar footwork. The choreography here is reorganized for the television camera. For instance, a group of women enters with a bouncy walk, proceeding sideways and facing the audience as the ballet tradition teaches. But as soon as the two-dimensional dispositif starts to flatten the performance, the men enter, and bring volume to the dance by circulating around the women, imitating a horseback ride, and tracing curved gestures as if they are scything the grass. Neither we know from which kibbutzim these folk dancers came, nor do we know if they are kibbutzniks. At the end, the whole group bows, but this is neither tv nor theater, this is the kibbutz, and so the dancers keep clapping and singing and moving around with lighthearted energy. This is the idea of kibbutz and Israel presented as a national byproduct of the French and European audience.

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJ7zuRhzaMg> (last access: October 18, 2018).

In an interview for Carmit Jacobson's documentary on the Kibbutz Dance Company (1993), Yehudit Arnon synthesizes her vision: "Artistically, I demand that dance relates to people, to real issues, both aesthetically and in the message it contains." Differently from the reiterated use of folk dances that emerged from kibbutz culture as a symbol of nation-building, it seems to me that Arnon reframes the task of the kibbutz from catalyst of nationalism to site for the expression of a "breezy utopian universalism" (Bharucha 2000: 31)... An aesthetic able to address the "real issues" of which people? "Le Grand Ensemble des Kibbutzim" is a celebratory troupe that reenacts the enthusiasm of the kibbutzniks in the 1940s and 50s. Arnon has another reality, another narrative in mind.

Most of the accounts on Arnon and the inception of the Kibbutz Dance Company begin with Arnon's story of survival in the Nazi camps. In Birkenau, she refused to dance for the Nazis. Hence, as a punishment she had to stand in bare feet in the snow for hours. There, she promised herself that, if she survived, she would make dance the center of her life. Arnon conceived the possibility of dancing in legitimate conditions as a response to the idea of the precariousness of life impressed on the survivor. Dance was her response to the humiliation and life-threat she experienced. In Israel, Arnon found in modern dance an expressive means to conflate the idea of weakness associated with the Holocaust survivor's body and the glorification of the Sabra's (the native Israeli's) toughness.

In her study on the perception of the Shoah in the Israeli collective memory, Idit Gil (2012) explains how the testimonies and details that emerged during the Eichmann Trial in 1961 shifted the perception of the Holocaust in the public opinion from an experience of "humiliation" to the threat of "extermination" as a "collective trauma."¹⁹⁵ While in the conceptualization of the Shoah

¹⁹⁵ On the Eichmann Trial and the shift in discourse it initiated among the Israeli public opinion, see, among others, Ofer (1993), Weitz (1996), and Yablonka (2003).

as “humiliation” the hero was the ghetto fighter that contrasted the Nazis, in the “extermination” frame the hero is the survivor. In the 1960s and 1970s, the threat of extermination dominated political and military public discourses, and launched the issue of security as the main national problem. From the 1967 war that expanded Israel’s territorial control, through the terror attack against the Israeli athletes at the Olympics in Munich in 1972, to the War of Yom Kippur in 1973, in this period “a parallel was created between the extermination inflicted by the Nazis to a possible extermination by the Arabs” (84).

Yehudit Arnon, from a kibbutz founded in 1949 by Holocaust survivors, grasped this sense of collective trauma and threat that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Her Kibbutz Dance Company responded to the Israeli Zeitgeist, addressing at once the sense of vulnerability of the survivor and the resistive vigor of the kibbutz dancer. When Arnon passed, her protégé and successor Rami Be’er praised her as “a moving force that managed to implant unseen tender roots, gently but decisively, and with an ability and devotion to intertwine root, trunk and branch” (*Haaretz*, August 19, 2013). Indeed, she adapted the corporeal rhetoric of the kibbutz *halutz* to the new national feeling of the Israeli Jewish body as that which is under perpetual threat.

Conceptualizing her dancers as this mixture of resistive vulnerability and strength within the coeval national public discourse, she paralleled the Ga’aton dancer to the Israeli epitome of the hero, the soldier. The kibbutz system, based on agricultural work and Labor Socialist values, was approaching an economic and ideological decline. However, Ga’aton responded to such institutional crisis through its modern dance company and Arnon’s renewed corporeal agenda for

The perception of the Holocaust as humiliating for the Jews was publicly reiterated by the Education Minister Ben Zion Dinur in a speech in front of the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) to introduce the Yad Vashem Law in 1953 (*The Knesset minutes*, Vol. 21, 12.5.53, p. 1).

the kibbutz. Ultimately, dance in Ga'aton not only became a kibbutz service but has redefined Ga'aton as a site of performance of a globalized idea of dance.

Part IV Choreographing the Global Kibbutz

Under the artistic direction of Yehudit Arnon, with the increased circulation of international dance artists in kibbutz Ga'aton and, then, with the progressive intensification of the company's tours abroad (especially since 1988), the scope of the kibbutz and the company's agenda expanded.¹⁹⁶ The Mateh Asher Regional Council's decision, in 1982, to build a specific dance studio in Ga'aton represents more than the recognition of the central role that modern dance was acquiring: it stimulated a re-thinking and a re-planning of the kibbutz.¹⁹⁷ Not conceived anymore as a local company for a local audience, since the early 1980s, the Kibbutz Dance Company internationalized the idea of kibbutz without de-localizing it; on the contrary, it re-stated kibbutz locality as a value per se, in a competing relationship with the Tel Aviv-based dance companies Batsheva and Bat-Dor which represented the cosmopolitan expression of a national identity.

Now that the status of the figure of the modern dancer had been regulated and incorporated in the social fabric of the kibbutz community by recognizing professional modern dancing as a

¹⁹⁶ U.K.-based choreographer Jasmin Vardimon recounts her years as a dancer in the Kibbutz Dance Company, from 1991 to 1995, during the last period of Yehudit Arnon's artistic directorship, in these terms: "She had a very good sense of choosing both established choreographers and those who were young, up and coming. So for instance in the year I joined we performed Mats Ek's *Down North* (created in 1985) then we worked with American choreographer Daniel Ezralow on *Reas my Hips* (created in 1990), Suzanne Linke from Germany revived *Fauenballett* (created in 1981), Gideon Obarzanek from Australia created one of his first works and young choreographers from Holland came to work with us too. This was a really rich experience for a young dancer because we worked with many different choreographic methods and styles." (Worth 2017, 23).

¹⁹⁷ For a study of the Zionist rhetoric and practice of "planning," see Yuval Achouch and Yoann Morvan, "The Kibbutz and 'Development Towns' in Israel: Zionist utopias: Ideals ensnared in a tormented history" (translated from French by Sharon Moren), in *justice spatiale | spatial justice*, n. 5, Dec. 2012 - Dec 2013, <http://www.jssj.org>.

kibbutz occupation (as kibbutz service), the company had to ensure that the kibbutz system comply with kibbutz values (different from the bourgeois values represented by the urban Batsheva and Bat-Dor dance companies), and to enhance the company's productions by maximizing its work for the communal benefit.¹⁹⁸ Since the mid-1980s, the Kibbutz Dance Company worked to accomplish these two tasks, supported by the status that modern dance reached within the kibbutz system and imaginary.

To recap, as an architectural site, the kibbutz is a space whose conceptualization is informed by the Zionist agenda that determined its existence, and whose structure accommodates and orientates the lives and the lifestyle of its population. In general, architecture informs or defines the possibilities and modes of inhabiting a space; it influences and is influenced by social relations (see LeFebvre [1972] 2016, Agamben 1998). The kibbutz is the apparatus of the Jewish settlement process in Palestine. Realized through the performance of equal and communal living (with adjustments in the interpretation of equality and commonality throughout time), the kibbutz represents the system of territorialization of the Zionist project and, thus, constitutes the basis for the realization of the goal of political Zionism (namely, the establishment of a nation-state for the Jewish people). This is the premise that subtends and connects the local and the national frameworks through which I look at the kibbutz as a site of performance. In this way, the two perspectives, even when competing, do not contradict each other. Because of the

¹⁹⁸ With the economic crisis of the mid-1980s, the renown kibbutz motto “from each according to his [*sic*] ability, to each according to his needs,” became obsolete. In order to guarantee its “survival” primarily as an institution, the company had to be in good economic standing and contribute to the sustainment of kibbutz Ga’aton. The kibbutz and other related institutions bet on the dance company and offered their support to enhance the dancers’ working conditions and status by improving their working space. This mirrors, indeed, a foundational kibbutz principle. In her article on the different Zionist declinations that shaped architectural trends in Jewish Palestine in the 1930, Alona Nitzan-Shiftan (1996) specifies how kibbutz architecture aims to create the appropriate life-style for the worker within the framework of the kibbutz conceived as the primary form of Zionist settlement. It is in the function of the kibbutz as colonial settlement that resides the strongest bond between the local and the national.

ideological premises that inform both its local and national value, the kibbutz can be defined as “a vernacular place” that, “even after [its] economic and social decline (...), remains deeply rooted in the Israeli psyche as an example of a uniquely Israeli (and decidedly not Jewish) type of place” (Grumberg 2011, 26).¹⁹⁹ Therefore, the kibbutz works as a necessary structure for the affirmation of an Israeli imaginary.

Israel celebrated the kibbutz as a peculiar national site at the 2010 Architecture Venice Biennial by presenting an exhibition entitled “Kibbutz: Architecture Without Precedents.”²⁰⁰ The curators, Galia Bar Or and Yuval Yasky, indicate the kibbutz structure “as an active partner in the shaping of a society and in contributing to the quality of human relationships within it” (9). While they recognize the role of architecture as a social tool, they do not acknowledge its fundamental role as an instrument for the exercise of biopower (Foucault 2007). Kibbutz architecture has to respond to the basic principle of “egalitarianism” by creating “a shared space for all the functions of life,” so much so that the curators claim that the kibbutz can be conceived as “a single undivided space” (ibid.), able, however, to respond to societal shifts.²⁰¹ In the vision

¹⁹⁹ Amos Oz’s novels allow us to grasp the ideological function and colonizing framework in which kibbutzim were built by romanticizing the kibbutz as a civilizing *dispositif* in a pre-Zionist Palestine conceived as a *midbar*, a desolated desert.

Architecture scholar Zvi Efrat specifies that “From its very first days, the kibbutz was perceived as the vanguard of the Zionist camp, as the supreme realization of the ideal of the new Jew and of the new settlement project in Eretz-Israel while the establishment regarded it as an esoteric current that did not necessarily adhere to the dominant trends in the Zionist movement. The Zionist institutions favored more generic forms of settlement, which would be better able to dedicate themselves to their assigned function as a network of villages creating an agricultural hinterland for the incipient Israeli society, and to do this without having a remonstrative cultural and ideological libido. (...) even within the Zionist and the Israeli context, the kibbutz represents Zionism and at the same time competes with it.” (“The Discreet Charm of the Kibbutz,” in *Kibbutz: Architecture Without Precedents*. The Israeli Pavilion. The 12th International Architecture Exhibition. The Venice Biennale. Ed. by Galia Bar Or. 2010, 124.

²⁰⁰ *Kibbutz: Architecture Without Precedents*. The Israeli Pavilion. The 12th International Architecture Exhibition. The Venice Biennale, edited by Galia Bar Or, 2010.

²⁰¹ A general spatial layout of the kibbutz was collaboratively set in the 1940s. Conventionally, it consists of “a circular ring radial-sector scheme that combined the [initial] radial-sector zoning principle with the concentric rings pattern of growth” (Chyutin and Chyutin 2007, 105). The kibbutz is structurally conceived as a settlement-for-expansion.

For the reasoning behind the planimetry of the kibbutz, see Beerli (2010) and Yasky (2010).

of a founder of Kibbutz Ein Harod and then Knesset member, Yitzhak Tabenkin (1888-1977), the first practical function of the kibbutz was “to build workers’ settlements in Israel,” or, more precisely, in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel (56).²⁰² In the interest of a hegemonic national discourse, the kibbutz remains anchored to its founding, ‘unprecedented’ idea of Zionist settlement.

Following this recap, I consider the tension among the kibbutz’s original function, its reiterations, and its reassessments, reuses, and transformations. I also restate that a site, besides being a space inhabited by a community of people organized around a shared political agenda, is complicated by the tensions of its inhabitants’ desires. Up until this point, I have considered the development of the Kibbutz Dance Company in its diplomatic negotiations for the institutional recognition of dance as a tool for the political realization of the *kibbutznikit* (female of ‘kibbutznik’) beyond the patriarchy-informed modes of “self-realization” and in function of her desire for modern dance. The modern dancers that initiated a systematic practice of modern dance in the kibbutz as “a strategy to set up, sustain and map out sustainable transformations” (Braidotti 2013, 192) in their mode of life within the kibbutz system activated such a transformation, in the first place, in their bodies and organization of everyday life.

Modern dance in the kibbutz worked as an affirmation of the modern dancers’ lives as a site of resistance to an existence otherwise conceived by the biopolitical scheme of the mechanics and logics of the kibbutz (in other words, in the patriarchy-informed structure of kibbutz life, in which women were expected to fulfill the Socialist Zionist principle of self-realization by being

²⁰² Yitzhak Tabenkin, “On the Problems of Kibbutz Building. Address delivered at the opening of the first kibbutz building course,” in *Kibbutz: Architecture Without Precedents*, 51-63. Speaking to the present too, Tabenkin affirmed: “Building is a condition for development in this country” (58).

primarily considered as caregivers).²⁰³ The kibbutz women modern dancers negotiated the affirmation of their status as desiring subjects (desiring beyond the ideologically-oriented desire of realizing the kibbutz utopia, the Jewish state, the New Jew, etc.) within the biopolitical structure of the kibbutz, in which the founding values of “collective life” and “social protection”—Aristotelian expressions borrowed to describe the kibbutz as a project aimed at achieving a generic “good life” (Chyutin and Chyutin 2007, 1)—could not structurally accommodate a desiring subjectivity in its task-oriented labor system. Modern dancers with their desire-to-dance despite the rigid labor structure—where desire can be read, again in Deleuzian terms, as the “drive to become (*potentia*) [that] seduces us into going on living” (Braidotti 2013, 134)—presented the kibbutz with its (bio)political limitations. Resonating with the discontent of other women in the kibbutz, the act of affirming their desire manifested the patriarchal foundation of the kibbutz system.

Furthermore, its specific novelty resides in the institutionalization (within the kibbutz institution itself) of a reality promoted and led by women whose work wriggled out of the given logic. At the same time, the modern dancers did not reject the kibbutz Socialist model *tout court* but provoked it by de-prioritizing the patriarchal orthodoxy of the nation-building agenda. I am not claiming that they interfered with the nation-building agenda, neither I assert they ever intended to do so. In fact, the company’s institutionalization process for the political recognition of women beyond their caregiving roles did not question the very politics of recognition in the kibbutz, meaning that it did not challenge the colonial mechanism rooted in the kibbutz as a territorializing device (in fact, it was not part of their project).²⁰⁴ Notwithstanding, if we consider

²⁰³ On this matter, see Palgi (2003), Shilo (2014).

²⁰⁴ On the politics of recognition and, specifically, on colonial politics of recognition as an instrument that favors colonial power, see Coulthard (2014).

the “masculine-militarist Zionism” (Lentin 2014: 121) on which kibbutz culture was founded, then the political significance of the work of women like Yehudit Arnon can be appreciated.

IV. 1 From Public Service to Enterprise

With the privatization (*hafrata*) of kibbutzim since the mid-1980s (Ben Rafael 1997; Rosner 1986; Sosis and Ruffle 2003; Lanir 2004; Fogiel-Bijau 2007), which implied the statutory assumption of not only capitalist but neoliberal policies throughout the 1990s, leadership roles in the collective decision-making process transformed into managerial functions, so that kibbutzniks became human resources whose labor was meant to secure the kibbutz’s economic autonomy.²⁰⁵ I have claimed that, already in the late 1960s-early 1970s, in order to guarantee the presence of a professional modern dance company within the kibbutz system, Yehudit Arnon adopted an entrepreneurial attitude in the way she organized the company’s work. Now, I argue that the appointment of Rami Be’er as the new artistic director in 1996 directly responded to the new economic requirements of the kibbutz.

Since his designation as house choreographer and assistant director of Arnon in 1987, Rami Be’er (b. 1957) affirmed himself as one of the most prolific Israeli choreographers, able to reach national and international attention with two works in particular, *Reservist Diary* (1987) and *Aide Memoire* (1994), choreographic representations of two major themes in Israeli society and politics: the soldier and the Holocaust (that, at the end of Part III, I claimed to be the elements through whose conjunction Arnon reconceptualized a dance corporeality in the kibbutz). In this

²⁰⁵ On the passage from the Socialist, “cooperative kibbutz” to the “renewed kibbutz,” see Ashkenazi and Katz (2009). This study also reports the increase in suicides among kibbutzniks since the 1970s as a testimony of the radical transformation in the life of the kibbutz, following the social, political, and ideological crisis of the kibbutzim. For a general overview of the ways in which capitalism and capital affect the construction of lived spaces as well as the division of labor, see Lefebvre (2016, *passim*).

way, Be'er decisively shifted the kibbutz's choreographic public discourse from issues of labor and equality to embrace not only national themes but nationally shared ideas. *Reservist Diary* embodies the dilemma of an Israeli soldier serving in the Occupied Territories during the First Intifada; in Be'er's own words: "He has to serve and follow orders, but at the same time he is a human being with a soul and conflicting feelings about his role."²⁰⁶ This corresponds to the popular connotation of the Sabra, the native Israeli, "tough" or "prickly" on the outside, "sweet" or "soft" on the inside.²⁰⁷

Aide Memoire, produced in the midst of the Oslo accords, a period in which different political parts exploited references to the Holocaust, offers a conciliatory reading of genocide as transmitted trauma, finally manifested by the second and third generation of Holocaust survivors (such as Be'er and the dancers) through the ensemble's explosive physicality and the stubborn quality of the stomping bodies at the end of the piece.²⁰⁸ These works, conceived for a general Israeli audience, restate local values by aligning them with a shared national agenda. On the one hand, *Reservist Diary* reaffirms the historical connection between the kibbutz and the national army, and in particular the kibbutz as a traditional site for the recruitment of combat soldiers.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ "Rami Be'er: a Destiny to Choreograph," an interview by Lisa Traiger, May 2018, available at <http://www.danceicons.org/pages/?p=180427135415> (last accessed on May 22, 2018).

²⁰⁷ Oz Almog attributes the first use of "Sabra" as a synonym of native Israeli to the popular journalist Uri Kesari in 1931 (2000, 5 and 92).

²⁰⁸ *Zikhron Devarim* is the original Hebrew title of Rami Be'er's choreography, which is also the title of Yaakov Shabtai's famous novel from 1977, translated in English as *Past Continuous*. Similar to Shabtai's narrative mechanism, the past is not represented but emerges in its unannounced returns in the present. However, in Be'er's choreography, such returns (or "associations" as it is often said in reference to *Aide Memoire*) manifest synchronically in the immediacy of the energetic outburst of the bodies, so that memory becomes fuel for the present's bodies, while in Shabtai the past emerges to reconfigure the present.

²⁰⁹ On this topic, on which I will expand in II. 1, see Almog (2000, 34-35) and Shapira (2012, 253-254).

On the other hand, *Aide Memoire* connects directly to Ga'aton as a kibbutz founded by Holocaust survivors.

Differently from Arnon, whose strategy was to shape a repertoire company of international stature through the import of renowned choreographers from abroad, Rami Be'er rebranded the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company under his own choreographic trademark. In this way, the company paralleled Batsheva, reorganized in 1990 under Ohad Naharin's artistic direction, thus reconfiguring itself as a competing actor in the national dance market.²¹⁰ Such a move, facilitated by the inclusion of non-kibbutzniks in the company in the 1990s, responded to the logic of the privatized kibbutz. This process paved the way for Ga'aton's entrance into the competing logic of the dance market both on the national and international level. In particular, the dismissal of the Labor Socialist norm of the shared income among kibbutzniks, part of a larger strategic plan of the kibbutz federations to improve the economy of the kibbutz system, allowed the introduction of differential salaries and, hence, the principle of economic competition among workers (see Russell, Hanneman and Getz 2011). For the Kibbutz Dance Company, this meant the possibility of attracting and employing foreign dancers, expand its marketability, and investing in the company itself as an enterprise.

IV. 2 "We are Kibbutz": Inglobating Locality

In a kibbutz, the dining hall was the center of the social life but also the site of performance of kibbutz politics, where kibbutzniks would discuss, organize work, dance, and celebrate.²¹¹ The

²¹⁰ While both companies host other choreographers, both Be'er's and Naharin's works are granted privileged visibility and circulation. They both are still the artistic directors of the two companies. I posit that the leadership of male choreographers in Israel is particularly important for the global cultivation of Israeli dance. This connects to the militarism and Zionist culture on which the national image of Israel was built. I will expand on these issues in Chapter 2 on dance and choreography in the Israeli army.

dining hall works as a metonymy of the symbolic role that this specific site represents in kibbutz culture. Its conversion into a dance studio in kibbutz Ga'aton allows us to reflect upon the kibbutz's adaptability as a site of performance. Within the Israeli geopolitical framework, where territoriality is the assumed principle of sovereignty, kibbutzim are under an ongoing process of structural adjustment, both to spatially expand and guarantee their economic and institutional existence.

Ga'aton's current dance studio-dining hall (still called "the dining hall," *heder haochel*) was the fourth dining hall of the kibbutz: the more the kibbutz was expanding its population and wealth, the more the dining hall needed to grow. For the twentieth anniversary of Ga'aton, in 1968, the Jewish Agency contributed to the completion of the first wing of the dining hall building, designed by Menachem Be'er, a founder of Ga'aton and a celebrated kibbutz architect.²¹² Twenty years later, in the midst of the economic crisis of the kibbutz movement, Ga'aton continued to improve the dining hall by adding a rounded wing to the building, aggrandized by an iconic ramp, also built by Be'er and further monumentalized by visual artist Shmuel Katz's engraved sculptures about kibbutz life.²¹³ The building's expansion simultaneously extended and renovated the modernist aesthetic that characterizes the kibbutz, and showed the kibbutz's inherent structural adaptability as a territorializing apparatus.

²¹¹ In time, several kibbutz spaces, once obsolete, have been turned into spaces for the arts. For instance, in kibbutz Eilon, situated one mile south of Lebanon, can be considered, the former chicken hall has been converted into a concert hall, and the kibbutz hosts Keshet Eilon, a music center, with a summer international violin workshop. For an account on the dining hall as a symbol and center of the Socialist kibbutz, see Helman 2014: ch. 7.

²¹² On Menachem Be'er's work, see Beer (2015), and the exhibition "Be'er in the Kibbutz," curated by Michael Jacobson with Omri Talmor at the Beit Uri and Rami Nehushtan Museum, Kibbutz Ashdot Yaacov Meuhad, 2015.

²¹³ Being the center of the political life of the kibbutz, "the dining hall has provided kibbutz architects with a rare opportunity for monumental expression." (*Kibbutz: Architecture Without Precedents*: 206). For an analysis of the economic crisis, and sometimes collapse, of the kibbutzim, see Garmaise (1993). In the mid-1980s, it was revealed to the public that kibbutzim had accumulated a debt of \$4.5 billion. This gives a more concrete sense of how much kibbutz Ga'aton invested in the conversion of the dining hall into a facility for the Kibbutz Dance Company.

In 2000, when artistic director Rami Be'er asked for the conversion of the dining hall into a dance studio, by approving the proposal, the kibbutz Ga'aton's governing bodies bet on the Kibbutz Dance Company as a strategic enterprise able to enhance the economic life of the kibbutz. This event also bolstered Ga'aton's cultural leadership and the dance company's entrepreneurial efficiency within the kibbutz movement, in the region, and at the national and international level. The transformation of Ga'aton's dining hall into the Kibbutz Dance Company's main studio, planned by Manachem Be'er himself in collaboration with his son Rami, represents the work of preservation and conversion of a symbolic building which became obsolete in its original function.²¹⁴ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, in kibbutz Ga'aton, dance functions as a means to activate a shift in the representation and organization of the kibbutz while preserving its core values and function.

In the catalogue of the Israeli Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2010), a picture of the dining hall-dance studio illustrates a large, bright space, built during the 1968 extension, with the semi-circular side constructed of floor-to-ceiling windows that opened to a wide grass area surrounded by grandiose trees. This view does not simply constitute the natural landscape in which the kibbutz is immersed but the natural backdrop of a low stage, originally present in the dining hall for communal dances and entertainment activities. The white, smooth linoleum counterbalances, per color and texture, the series of cherry-wood, trapezoidal, carved blocks that form the ceiling. On the right side of the photograph, off the stage, the company is portrayed during a break from rehearsal with the dancers sitting together in a circle with artistic director Rami Be'er (120). At this point, the representation of the idea of communal life in the kibbutz is delegated to and

²¹⁴ At this point in time, individual apartments were furnished with a kitchenette and entertainment devices, so that kibbutzniks progressively stopped gathering in the central dining hall for socializing purposes.

represented through what is now called the Kibbutz *Contemporary* Dance Company. The change in the name of the company mirrors the architectonic change in the kibbutz. The old Socialist value of community represented by the dining hall as the site in which kibbutzniks met to share meals, discuss, and folk dance has been substituted by the neoliberal structure of a globalized dance company that houses Israeli as well as international dancers and dance students. This neoliberal version of melting-pot represents a new idea of community in kibbutz Ga'aton.

While some kibbutzim privatized the dining halls, turning them into self-service restaurants (Avieli and Wallner 2018), Ga'aton dismissed the dining hall's primary function of public space and site of sustenance. But, while the former turned the kibbutzniks into customers, Ga'aton's conversion avoided what has been called the "mcdonaldization" of the kibbutz and the kibbutznik (Ritzer 1983, Warhurst 1999). In other words, Ga'aton did not overtly embrace a capitalist model rejecting the Socialist idea of kibbutznik and the kibbutz societal project overall, but adopted dance as its marketable currency to adapt to the Israeli neoliberal system while maintaining a sense of locality.²¹⁵

As political theorist Wendy Brown claims, "neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves *extending and*

²¹⁵ On the domestic articulations of neoliberalism in Israel, see Maron and Shalev (2017), and on its ideological foundations as a "successful" and stabilizing model, see Avigur-Eshel (2014). See also, Svirski (2004).

In relation to neoliberalism and the politics of privatization (which involved also the kibbutz system), in particular in the Occupied Territories, Neve Gordon and Erez Tzfadia (2007) talk about the 'privatization of Zionism'. Indeed, considering kibbutzim as a colonial settling project, the structural and political works of adaptation and renovation, are primarily works of adaptation and renovation of the *modi operandi* of Zionism. (This contradicts scholars who, although also critical of Zionism, claim its permanence in "a nineteenth-century mentality") I will expand on this in II. 3.

For an overview of how neoliberal policies have changed the organization of labor, labor activism, and unions in Israel, see Preminger (2018, and in particular chapter 5 on the reorganization of the Histadrut). Ultimately, the neoliberal model and neoliberal rationality help nation-states craft a "neoliberal democracy" identity, a "global," universalized/universalizing identity that often conceals domestic and regional inequalities and injustice. Dance has been employed for this purpose in several global contexts (for instance, in India, see Chatterjea 2013, Kedhar 2014; in China, see Kwan 2013).

disseminating market values to all institutions and social action, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player” (2005, 39).²¹⁶ The Kibbutz *Contemporary* Dance Company exemplifies such a neoliberal rationality, both institutionally and in its dance and choreographic practice.²¹⁷ In 2006, the KCDC and Ga’aton announced the establishment of the International Dance Village, also indicated, but only on the Hebrew version of the company’s website, with its regional toponymy as the Galilee Dance Village. The Dance Village offers several educational programs (with different duration and intensity), and hosts the main company, KCDC II (formed by Rami Be’er in 1994 to produce work for a young audience), several dance studios, a theater, and a series of social and cultural events for Israeli and international dance students. The institutionalization of such a dance apparatus, that provides sources for dance education, production, and distribution, further intervened in the spatial cohesiveness of kibbutz Ga’aton.

On the English version of the website, one can read that “The International Dance Village offers a world of inspiration, love, fulfillment, artistic creation and excellence. It represents a dream that has become a reality. It’s a place of unity, of giving, of original creation, emotion, social responsibility and just so happens to be located in one of the most beautiful landscapes of Israel.”²¹⁸ While scholars, governmental bodies, economic theories, the kibbutzniks themselves declared the failure of the kibbutz as a site for the realization of the Socialist “utopia,” the KCDC’s website presents the Dance Village as the site for/of the realization of a utopia where “dancers are able to love, live, and breath dance.” They advertise this Socialist utopia in a

²¹⁶ Brown continues: “Neoliberalism does not simply assume that all aspects of social, cultural, and political life can be reduced to such a calculus; rather, it develops institutional practices and rewards for enacting this vision” (ibid.).

²¹⁷ In the 2000s the Kibbutz Dance Company included the adjective “contemporary” in its name. For an overview of the several articulations of “contemporary” in dance and, in particular, in relation to the colonial mindset that governs the usage of such a label for dance, refer to Kwan (2017).

²¹⁸ <http://www.kcdc.co.il/en/international-dance-village/> (Last access: May 28, 2018).

neoliberal age through neoliberal values of self-fulfillment (which substitute the Labor-Zionist precept of self-realization) such as inspiration and excellence, and through oft-commodified communitarian values such as love, unity, social responsibility.²¹⁹

During the Summer Intensives, students from “North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australasia,” as the website informs, train in ballet, modern, contemporary, improvisation, occasionally hip-hop, learn the KCDC repertory, and study body-work practices. Pictures of programs show dancers at the barre in a ballet class wearing “contemporary dance” clothes—sport shorts, T-shirts or tops—or rehearsing as an ensemble in a contemporary choreography. In order to participate, the students need to have “prior training in classical ballet or contemporary dance. Familiarity with classic modern dance techniques is helpful.” The program differentiates the participants according to five different levels of technical ability. The Western frame around which the program is organized makes the educational offer of Ga’aton just as “global” as any other contemporary dance program that shapes dance students for a career in the concert dance system. The “contemporary dance” umbrella under which the KCDC and its dance educational programs are framed works as the neoliberal, universalized, de-politicized platform able to recast a kibbutz locality in the utopia of the “global market.” In this twenty-first century rearticulation of a kibbutz utopia, the production, employment, and circulation of the

²¹⁹ Testimonies of the international students participating in the summer intensives, in particular from the United States, reflect the appeal of such values. Some examples: “It was amazing to see how universal dance is, people from all across the world (United States, Turkey, Cyprus, Poland, Germany, Holland, and China) came to Israel because they loved dance”; “I not only got better as a dancer, but also as an overall performer and person. The love the teachers and my fellow students had for dance and life made the experience so incredible”; “I truly felt like they have helped me push through that learning curve to think more selfishly about my intentions in movement and how to be emerged with the energy of other dancers, the music, and the audience.” These and more are available at <http://www.kcdc.co.il/en/summer-intensive-dance-program/testimonials/> (Last access: May 28, 2018).

dance “hired body” (Foster 1997) replaces the paradigm of the New Jewish body (similar to the way the neoliberal program has replaced the Labor Zionist agenda).²²⁰

More specifically, I employ Susan Foster’s articulation of the “hired body” to claim that in kibbutz Ga’aton it articulates as the “industrial body” in the industrialized, neoliberal era of kibbutz culture.²²¹ Foster’s “hired body” like the kibbutz’s “industrial body” is characterized by a Western technical background, able to satisfy both the national and global concert dance standards and market. Ga’aton’s contemporary dance “industrial body” simultaneously integrates the Zionist-Israeli corporeal ideal and adapts it to the global market. Foster notices that “the industrial body’s center of gravity is located in the pelvis and close to the ground.” This is perfectly visible in Be’er’s choreography and in the work of other renowned Israeli contemporary choreographers such as Ohad Naharin and Yasmine Godder. The “grounded” quality of the body given by the proximity of the pubic bone to the ground is usually performed through a very wide fourth position of the legs or a very deep squat (often with the knees dangerously unaligned with the feet). These “grounded” positions have become a trademark of “Israeli dance” along with the energetic intensity of the dancing. By responding to the “appeal of work and sweat,” the kibbutz industrialized body preserves the stereotype of the kibbutz pioneer, the energy of the Sabra/soldier, and the technical features of the global body-for-hire.

In *Infrared* (2009) by Rami Be’er, distributed on a stage that is covered with a bright red fabric, the female members of the main company, wearing long, front-slit, black dresses, are folded inwards in a deep squat, facing the audience. On a musical accent, their bodies suddenly

²²⁰ Students in the summer intensives, the website reports, study “ballet, contemporary dance, company repertoire, and Gaga technique.” (<http://www.kcdc.co.il/en/summer-intensive-dance-program/>)

²²¹ Looking at the hired body in the context of the global dance scene, Foster differentiates the balletic body, the industrial body, and the released body, indicating the second as the body that “emphasizes its labor and its sexiness while selling itself” (Foster-Čičigoi 2011, 141-142).

open up and, bending to the left, they fling the right leg up in an attitude *à la seconde* and, like a pendulum, the left one. A deep launch forward gives the momentum for a tilted half turn and a quick change of direction to stretch the right leg in front, downstage right, with the pelvis pushed forth in the manner of Balanchine/Forsythe. This quick spinning sequence that gives a dramatic sense of uncertainty, if not disorientation, resolves into the recuperation of control and a deeper sense of gravity with a *penché* in *attitude* with the supporting leg bent, in the style of Graham or Cunningham. What differentiates the aesthetic pathos of this dynamic sequence from that of contemporary dance pieces for youth competitions, for instance, is the scenographic apparatus, which gives a dramaturgical identity to the choreography. The technical references to the twentieth-century Western theatrical tradition make the piece aesthetically relatable and familiar to various contemporary dance audiences within the global market.

In response to this choreography, in 2009, the Israeli newspaper *The Jerusalem Post*, in an article entitled “Kibbutz Movement,” claimed that “as the kibbutz movement becomes obsolete, Rami Be'er and the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company (KCDC) are giving new meaning to the concept of a ‘kibbutz’ and the range of possibilities within it.”²²² The dancing bodies of Ga’aton are described by the authors as stepping “outside the box with a vigorous upbeat kick, spinning freely in dexterous choreographed speed.” Susan Foster utilizes similar words to describe contemporary competition dance in the U.S. (2017: 59). In fact, dance in Ga’aton shares with competition dance performed on the Western stage the rhetoric of promoting self-awareness and a sense of self through the mirroring function of a global live and digital audience.²²³

²²² Lilach Gavish and Michelle Shabtai, “Kibbutz Movement,” *The Jerusalem Post*, February 5, 2009.

²²³ More specifically, Foster talks about the live audience as “witness” (Foster 2016, 61). I underline the presence of a digital audience because excerpts from training, performance, behind the scenes, etc. that dancers share on their social media platforms work as promotional tools for the dancers themselves as well as for the dance organizations to which they are affiliated and they tagged. It’s often the dance institution itself that asks professional and training dancers to share excerpts of their dance life by launching or suggesting hashtags. For instance, on Twitter and

Similarly to competition dancers, KCDC dancers and graduates of the International Dance Village programs are launched into a global contemporary dance market organized around neoliberal principles.

However, in Ga'aton, the neoliberal rhetoric of the global market—and, thus, the marketability of its dancing bodies—is mitigated or concealed by a kibbutz rhetoric that re-romanticizes and idealizes the kibbutz as a site of exception in the global economy (as the advertising language on the website shows). The International Dance Village offers an idea of dance that is both and simultaneously globally encompassing and locally exceptional—the same image that Israel promotes for itself as a nation state.²²⁴ Indeed, the company's website asserts that “the village's mission is to promote dance in Israel.” The phrasing is (willingly?) ambiguous: while it could be read as ‘to promote dance culture in Israel,’ the goal is ‘to promote the Israeli dance scene [on the global stage]’ and, consequently, Israel through the exported values of its contemporary dance.

In conclusion, between the 1990s and the 2000s, Ga'aton had to reconceptualize equality as a key-concept of both kibbutz culture and neoliberalism by adjusting its Socialist articulation to its

Instagram, the Kibbutz Dance Company utilizes the hashtag #dancejourney, which is not only a global trending hashtag for dance practitioners from around the world and from a variety of technical backgrounds but also the name of Ga'aton's study-abroad program through which selected international students can train in the Dance Village for 5 to 10 months while also taking Hebrew classes and volunteering in the kibbutz. In relation to the self-awareness and self-realization rhetoric that accompanies the industrialized contemporary dance body-for-hire, notice the Israeli Vertigo Dance Company's hashtag #beyourself. Connected to the global obsession with the “present” as the site of neoliberal risk-taking (‘just do it, don't think’), an Instagram caption of the KCDC reads “Dance like there's no tomorrow,” which also intimates the anxious rhetoric of Israel as a nation-state under ongoing existential threat.

²²⁴ The mainstream and more fashionable example of this relates to the branding of Israel as the “start-up nation.” In their best-seller *Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*, Dan Senor and Saul Singer (2003) write: “The kibbutz became an incubator, and the farmer a scientist. High-tech in Israel began with agriculture. Even with little land and less water, Israel became an agricultural leader. (...) technology was 95 percent of the secret of Israel's prodigious agricultural productivity” (1). While this example reiterates the orientalist idea of pre-Zionist Palestine as a desert land with no *techne*, it also assumes an Israeli exceptionalism, decontextualizing global industrial and technological developments and avoiding comparisons with other areas that performed similar innovations with similar economic effects. On exceptionalism as a Zionist discourse, see Alam (2009). For a different take on the topic, see Adler (2013).

projection in the global economy. The institution of the Dance Village in Ga'aton reconfigures equality as the accessibility to and the performance of a contemporary dance marketability that constitutes the desire of the kibbutz contemporary dancer. Without neglecting the enjoyment that the individual feels in the act of dancing, dance in Ga'aton aspires to forge a globally marketable dancing body. The present romanticized image of the kibbutz (as “a world of inspiration, love,” etc.) is not what makes the Dance Village appealing to an international audience. Instead, what appeals is the Dance Village’s promise to produce “excellence” for the dancer’s projection and circulation in “the international dance community.” This allows the kibbutz to revive Socialist Zionist ideals such as “fulfillment,” “unity,” “social responsibility,” etc. within the frame of the neoliberal democratic rhetoric of self-investment and participation. As the homepage of the KCDC announces, “WE ARE KIBBUTZ”: we the dancers, we the website visitors, we the Dance Village customers and tourists.²²⁵

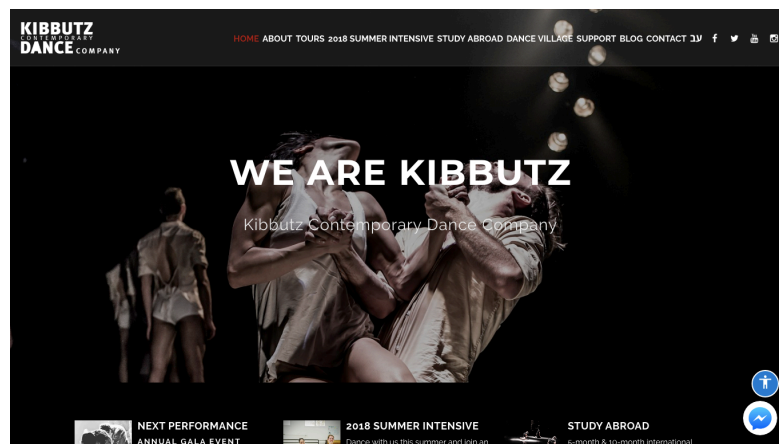


Figure 1 Home Page of the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company website (June 2018)

²²⁵ The International Dance Village offers specific “package deals for tourists.” Kibbutz tourism has been a relevant part of the kibbutz economy since the 1970s. However, in recent years, the government directly promotes kibbutz tourism as part of a strategy to promote Israeli uniqueness. On tourism as a strategy to “save” kibbutz economy, see Van Putten (2003). On state-promoted tourism in Israel as “a body of both spatial and representational practices” (3), in particular in the 1993-2000 period, see Stein (2008).

Chapter 2

Dance in the Israel Defense Forces

For many soldiers the years of their army service provide their first encounter with the performing arts – music, theater and dance. The IDF's cultural activity is, therefore, important in encouraging Israeli society to be a cultured society.
— Standing Orders of the IDF Education Corps²²⁶

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Israel's national army, was established on May 31, 1948, a couple of weeks after the State's declaration of independence (May 15, 1948).²²⁷ The Security or Defense Service Law (September 8, 1949) indicates that compulsory military service is applied to men (age 18-29) and women (age 18-26) who have passed the medical fitness tests.²²⁸ After one year of basic training, a soldier that does not join a combat unit, the Air Force, or the Navy, will do one year of agricultural training. Arab citizens, except the Druze, are exempt. Religious Jews can decide whether to join the army or not. Married women and religious women are exempt.

Even in the IDF's proto-State articulations as separated Jewish militias during the Mandate era—from the extreme right-wing Irgun to the Labor Zionist, kibbutz-oriented Palmach—dance has constantly been part of Zionist military culture. While both the kibbutz and the army are state apparatuses that respond to a centralized infrastructural organization, and to corporeal ideas and

²²⁶ Quoted in Williams (2000, 355).

²²⁷ In his *War Diary*, David Ben-Gurion reported, on May 14, 1948, that “the fate [of the State] lies in the hands of the security forces” (in Shapira 1992, 354).

²²⁸ This is one of Israel's “Basic Laws.” Israel does not have a Constitution (see Shapira 2012, 182-184) and has maintained a “state of emergency” since its declaration of independence. The text of the law is available at <http://www.geocities.ws/savepalestinenow/israelaws/fulltext/defenceservicelaw.htm> (Last accessed, November 10, 2018). Revisions occurred in 1959 and 1986.

movement practices informed by the Zionist ideology, the Israel Defense Forces differs from the kibbutz in two ways. First, it plays an emblematic role as a governmentally-designated site of production of a Sabra masculinity clearly distinguished from ideas of femininity and womanhood. As such, the IDF works as a metonymy of a “national corporeal history” (Sharim 2016, 133) articulated in terms of heroism.²²⁹ While the Labor Zionist ideology that oriented kibbutz culture promoted general ideas of equality between women and men, and celebrated women soldiers fighting in the pre-State Jewish militias, the IDF became the site of performance of a regulated gender distinction modeled on the Western patriarchal, heteronormative division of labor, which accords that men are action-oriented and women suitable for static and domestic (hence administrative) roles.²³⁰ The second element of distinction is the IDF’s regulated exercise of violence it assumes as a military apparatus.²³¹ This form of power can be defined as

²²⁹ IDF commander Yitzhak Sadeh framed heroism not as a military value or feature but as a “positive human quality (...) inseparable from a humane goal and from humanitarianism” (1985, 10). As I will later explain, “heroism” is a constructed feature of the Israeli soldier, and Sadeh’s words alight the idea of the IDF as a “moral army.”

²³⁰ As suggested, the institutional normalization of gender roles is inherent in the nation-state apparatus. At the same time, it also lies at the very core of the idea of Zionist corporeality, which implies the creation of a strong and tough New Jewish body in opposition to the Diaspora Jewish body as weak and effeminate. Some liberal feminists, in Israel and similarly in the U.S., have called for equal military roles for men and women as a sign of equal citizenship status (see Sasson-Levy 2011). In the IDF, women have been assigned “action” roles (such as border-patrol or pilot) since 1995, after a campaign of women members of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) and a ratification from the Supreme Court. Since 2000, the IDF instituted the role of “Chief of Staff Consultant on Women’s Issues.” The introduction of women to combat roles has raised the opposition of religious leaders. On feminist debates in favor of and against women’s access to combat roles for the achievement of gender equality, see, at least, Enloe (1988), Feinman (2000), Weiss (2002: 94-117), and Sasson-Levy (2011). In regard to women in pre-IDF militias, Ephrat Ben-Ze’ev writes that “the recruitment of women was not on the agenda when the Palmach [the Labor Zionist militia] was first established as a guerrilla force, in May 1941” (2011: 146; and see, specifically, ch. 8). Uri Ben-Eliezer claims that women in the Palmach found pride and social recognition in becoming fighters and contributing to military operations during the 1948 war (1995, 83-84).

²³¹ Here, I assume the legalized and protected exercise of violence as a prerogative of a State army and its soldiers. In this way, a soldier acts, at the same time, as an extension of the State (its armed wing) and as its metonymy (Israeli soldiers are often defined as the nation’s children). Because of this attachment to the State’s body as a whole, national armies—the IDF included—underline not only their defensive (rather than offensive) task but also their humanitarian commitment. On the ambiguity of “military humanitarianism” and how it reinforces colonial and imperial projects, see, for instance, Atanasoski (2013), Orford (2003), and Weizman (2011).

necropower, meaning the legalized power of inducing death, producing spaces of death, and organizing the training of personnel in charge of the exercise of those tasks (see Mbembe 2003). The IDF mitigates the perception of its necropower in two ways. First, it presents itself as a “moral” army (see Hardan and Zehavi 1985, Eastwood 2017) committed to humanitarian causes, to the protection of civilians from terrorism, and to the defense of the very existence of Israel through the rhetoric of the soldier’s sacrifice. It also specifies that it adheres not only to the laws of the state but to “norms of human dignity.”²³² Second, it transcends the perception of its necropower by reframing it in terms of scientific excellence, meaning that the technologies it elaborates to better exercise its necropower serve the general idea of Israel as an advanced—read, civilized—country. I do not discuss the military excellence of the IDF, which has been indicated, by both its supporters and enemies, as one of the best trained and technologically advanced armies in the world. Instead, I underline how discourses that praise technological progress or humanitarianism can conceal other ways in which military power acts and the consequences it generates.

The IDF is the emblem of the State and of Jewish territorial sovereignty in the region.¹ With the establishment of the State, as historian Anita Shapira claims, “the use of physical might to achieve political goals became one of the accepted means in the arsenal of the Zionist movement” (1992: 354). The Israeli soldier is the most symbolic and globally recognizable embodiment of the Sabra corporeality. “Sabra” generally indicates the Israeli born in Palestine, but its definition goes beyond the biological data (Almog 2000). Differently from the “pioneers” of the Yishuv that moved to Palestine from abroad, the Sabra grew up with Zionist values and within Zionist institutions in the territory of Zionist settlement. Sabra is also an ideal

²³² See www.idf.il/en/who-we-are/

construction, a corporeal and aesthetic ideal which, similarly to the New Jew, primarily refers to the male body. In my discourse, I focus on the constructed corporeal articulation of Sabra in both aesthetic and kinesthetic terms. The Sabra body is athletic, dexterous, practical, brave, and conceived to extrude eroticism. Ideally and ideologically, “the Hebrew-speaking ‘Sabra’ Jew,” Todd Presner synthesizes, “is always prepared to fend off would-be attackers and secure the perimeters of his land” (2007, xvii). Similarly to the early Zionist New Jewish body, the Sabra body shares an idealized Ashkenazi heteronormative masculinity; however, since the 1970s, in order to mitigate the competition among masculinities, the Sabra body has accommodated and absorbed also the Mizrahi (Jewish Arab) body into the hegemonic Ashkenazi norm (see Yosef 2004). Furthermore, the Sabra body is inherently conceptualized as connected to military skills and heroism (see Shapira 1992). The military Sabra body is always ready for action, so much so that it does not exhibit the extreme disciplinary control that other soldiers’ bodies perform through uptightness and verticality. The ready-for-action soldier’s body is simultaneously ready to die for the State, the land, its people: sacrifice is, indeed, another value of the Sabra soldier (see Gal 1986, and Yosef 2012).

My discourse on livability through the lens of dancing military bodies in Israel challenges the rhetoric of life that the IDF promoted through its “mission statement,” based on decontextualized “universal moral values,” and on the generic “value and dignity of human life.”²³³ By outlining the modes in which dance manifests through the Israeli soldiers’ bodies, and tracing a genealogy of its different institutional articulations in the military structure, I debunk a limited, romanticized, and apolitical reading of dance in the Israeli army as a practice of social integration (Roginsky 2004) and manifestation of universal humanity (Ingber 1985, 106-107).

²³³ <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/code-of-ethics-and-mission/>

Through the lens of livability, in fact, I will show how dance practice in military life, the value attributed to the dancing soldiers' labor, and the impact of dance within and beyond the IDF frame are strictly dependent on the domestic and international political and military agenda, namely the historical shifts in the Zionist discourse, and the radical changes caused by decades of armed conflict among Israel, Palestine, and the Arab neighbors. Whether dancing within the frame of an official IDF event or dancing against the military rule, the IDF dancing bodies, in their sexualized, gendered, racialized manifestations, operate not only as a mitigating *dispositif* of state-informed control and violence, but also as a tool for the critical interrogation of the military subject. The nation-state's self-affirmation and the soldier's self-affirmation are indeed interdependent and co-informing.

Furthermore, and in relation to such interdependency, through my epistemic assessment of the development of dance culture in the IDF, I aim to expand the understanding of discourses around the so-called civil-military relations in Israel—a traditional dominion of Political Science and Security Studies. These disciplinary realms rarely engage with gender in critical terms. For instance, when dealing with issues of gender inequality in the army, studies on women soldiers and by women authors do not develop in parallel with a problematization of masculinity and macho culture in the military. Such deconstruction of gender normativity, in fact, can challenge the very patriarchal foundations of army culture, nation-state, and hegemonic ideology. In my dance discourse, I extensively engage with the gendered construction of the basic principles of army culture and the military body, also unveiling the colonial and ethnonationalist assumptions embedded in the Zionist project.

My second point of contestation concerns, indeed, the excessive rhetoric of “security” that promotes ethno-racial profiling, and, ultimately, legitimizes the IDF actions overall before the

public opinion. In existing scholarship, the dismissal of ethnonationalism as a foundational criterion for the formation of the Israeli civil society, state, and army (and also their academic discourses) favors the sectorial separation between “civil” and “military.” In mainstream discourses and traditional visual representations, the Israeli soldier corresponds to the Zionist, Ashkenazi, muscular, regenerated, Jewish, male body. However, the IDF body is deeply rooted in the history of Zionist settler colonialism and cultural appropriation. Indeed, in the first half of the twentieth century, Zionist militias combined the European muscular model adopted by Nordau (1903) with the essentialized corporeality of indigenous Arab populations (Sharim 2016).

On the one hand, my livability framework takes into account such a history of corporeal dispossession, and assesses the sectorialization of civil and public spheres as a convenient strategy that deresponsibilizes state institutions (whether governmental, military, etc.) in front of the corporeal impact they generate (on soldiers or civilians, Israeli or Palestinians, etc.).²³⁴ In their different engagements with dance, whether reaffirming the military norm or trying to escape it, soldiers do not cease to embody and re-present the military institution. On the other hand, through dance, soldiers can potentially find a strategy to question the military and nationalistic “system of truth” that informs their own soldierhood, and explore a different way to conceive their livability as civilians whose citizenship is legally bound to military obligations.

This chapter proceeds chronologically in order to highlight emblematic epistemic shifts in the way dance operates through the bodies of the IDF soldiers in different historical and political circumstances. Part I covers the development of dance culture in the IDF between the 1940s and

²³⁴ When political scientist Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer (2010) recognize the limits of the existing approaches and contend that what is still missing is a study of “policy networks” able to illuminate the ways in which different sectors influence each other, they seem to recognize the hegemonic force of the State as policy-maker but do not propose a new perspective able to interrogate the very foundations of the academic civil-military discourse.

the 1950s. I introduce the original concept of “choreocracy” to illustrate how, in the 1950s, folk dance becomes part of the basic army training as an institutionalized practice for the disciplining of the Israeli soldier’s body, and as a method to administrate the soldier’s life according to the foundational Israeli principle of “state consciousness.” The stakes of dancing in this realm depend upon the consolidation of the national(ist) apparatus and the nation-state agenda. The use of dance as a non-armed activity to create a cohesive state army reinforces the idea of the construction of the civil-military paradigm as a hegemonic strategy to bind the soldier’s livability to the Israel’s *raison d’état* (see Foucault 2008). This means that the only possibility of being in the State as a full citizen is to advance the state polity. As I will show, within this framework, even the non-armed practice of dance can contribute to the exercise of the army’s necropolitical power. Part II follows the development of the IDF entertainment troupes, and in particular the experience of the Pahad dance troupe, established in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war and disbanded, along with the other entertainment bands, with the rise to government of the conservative right. This case study is exemplary to analyze the way in which normative masculinity in the IDF, especially when threatened by military defeat, is reinforced through the domestication of female dancing subjects. As a paradigmatic extension and metonymy of the State, the male and female soldiers’ bodies become representative of the normative sexuality that helps Israel rehabilitate its image in the contingent political scenario. Part III explores the significance of dances performed by soldiers on duty in the Occupied Territories outside the institutionalized practice of dance in the army, and circulated at the global level through social media in the 2000s. Here, I argue that the soldiers, through the parodic or non-institutional character of their performances, utilize dance as a practice that sheds light on the experience of a civilian-military disconnect, in which an activity like dancing perceived as “civil” can either

mitigate their sense of corporeal and ethical belonging to the military institution or reinforce it (depending on the specifics of the choreography). Nevertheless, despite their intention, I claim that their dancing ultimately does not undermine the prestige or authority of the IDF. On the contrary, by utilizing dance as a humanizing strategy, soldiers overall reaffirm on the global digital stage the army's necropower over the Palestinian population.

Part I “Choreocracy”: Introducing Dance in The Army

In this section, I will trace the history of the inception of dance practice in the newly-established Israel Defense Forces. In particular, I emphasize the role of Gurit Kadman as the driving force and political agent at the core of the institutionalization of folk dance in the soldiers' corporeal education. I theorize the implementation of a specific dance knowledge in the soldiers' training and culture as “choreocracy.” I define “choreocracy” the dance apparatus that contributes to the administration of military life and the implementation of ideology-informed values and norms in the army, through the employment, selection, and training of dance practitioners, whose expertise is able to shape a sense of *mamlakhti'ut* (“state consciousness”) associated with the IDF as the nation-state's army.²³⁵ The idea of service to the state and to the Zionist cause through dance in the military context clearly developed before the establishment of the State and the IDF, as the following account demonstrates.

²³⁵ Sociologist Baruch Kimmerling defines *mamlakhti'ut* more simply as “a highly centralized statist system” (2001, 12), then translates it as “statism” or “kingdomship” in reference to Ben-Gurion's “dogma of state autonomy and supremacy” (69). I suggest that the word indicates the development of an internalized awareness of a sense of state as a bureaucratic apparatus aimed at organizing and managing life.

...In 1946, we were about to have the second festival in Dalia. However, two weeks beforehand happened what is known as ‘the Black Shabbat’ and the whole plan failed. I remember that Saturday evening: in Beit HaShita, we worked hard until one in the morning, rehearsing dances for the festival. At three, the kibbutz was surrounded with British tanks. At seven in the morning, I found all the dancers, the most tall and handsome men, trapped behind the barbed wire fence [as captives of the British troops]. In the afternoon, they were in Latrun or Rafiach. It is known that our men continued dancing and instructing there, and contributed through cultural activities and by teaching various dance courses. Many dances were *debka* created behind the barbed wire fences and that there received their unique character. One of them was *Debka Rafiach* – a dance with a rebellious character and daring expression.” (Kadman 1969, par. 14).

In this anecdote, Gurit Kadman recounts the historical incursion of the British troops in kibbutz Beit Hashita, on June 29, 1946. In the first part, she positions herself as a witness that chronicles the offensive of the British troops against the kibbutzniks during what the British army named “Operation Agatha.” In that circumstance, Kadman was leading a rehearsal in preparation for the Dalia folk dance festival.²³⁶ Then, with the transfer of the kibbutznikim from kibbutz Beit Hashita to the British prisons, the narrative takes the solemn tone of a legend: despite their state of captivity, the kibbutznikim—“tall and handsome”—seamlessly dance, transmit dances, and create dances. Kadman’s narrative alludes to dance as a symbol of and means for Jewish resistance during the British Mandate.

The goal of “Operation Agatha” was to dismantle the military arsenals and intelligence of the Yishuv, acquiring documents about the military operations of the Palmach and about the alliance

²³⁶ As explained in Chapter 1, the Dalia festival was a national folk dance festival initiated in 1944 by Gurit Kadman with the purpose of promoting Israeli folk dances as a Zionist cultural marker in Palestine. The last edition took place in 1968. See also Spiegel (2013, 133-173).

between the Haganah and the more violent, extreme right-wing militias Lechi and Irgun.²³⁷

Before the establishment of the Israel Defense Forces in 1948, these were all independent, often antagonistic paramilitary formations, organized by kibbutz members. In the 1940s, years of ongoing fights with both the indigenous Arab population and the British rulers, leaders from different factions of the Zionist movement engaged in an internal debate about the legitimate exercise of violence as a Zionist principle: would the use of force enhance the Zionist cause and lead to the establishment of a Jewish State? (see Shapira 1992: 293).²³⁸ It was evident to the British government that the Zionist movement was preparing for a territorial takeover.²³⁹ This fueled an animated political dispute within Hashomer Hatzair and the Labor Zionist circles: to

²³⁷ The Irgun was affiliated to the Zionist Revisionist wing led by Jabotinsky. Because of his belief in the necessity of allowing unlimited Jewish immigration to Palestine (to reach a Jewish majority in Palestine), the Irgun's main target was the British authority. Jabotinsky was, in fact, a defendant of the so-called "revolutionary method" (vs. the quieter Labor Zionist "evolutionary" one), which implied the use of organized military power. For the mission of the Irgun, see Troy 2018: 77-79.

The Lechi was another right-wing paramilitary group, indicated also as a terrorist group. The Lechi had more extremist visions and goals than the Irgun. For a commentary on the Lechi's actions and political goal from an insider, which also testifies the radical aversion to Labor Zionism, see Cohen, 1966.

²³⁸ Towards the end of WWII, Labor Zionist leaders, including Ben-Gurion, and members of the Haganah (the Jewish paramilitary group in Palestine during the Mandate era) enlisted in the Jewish Legion in support of the British troops. In 1944, they created a special combat unit, the Jewish Brigade, represented by the future flag of the State of Israel. The Jewish Brigade, during its European campaigns, also had an instrumental role in promoting the image of the New Jew among Holocaust survivors and Jewish refugees.

The internal debate among Zionist factions about the use of violence was of a strategic nature. Labor Zionist leader Katznelson thought that to minimize armed conflict with the Arabs would have guaranteed a more stable diplomatic relationship with Britain, thus increasing the Zionists' negotiating force for the establishment of the State.

Differently, Jabotinski conceived the establishment of the State as the priority, subordinating the methods. The British release of the "White Paper" in 1939, which restricted the possibility for Jews to migrate to Palestine and purchase land, and the international geopolitical readjustments of the WWII, persuaded also the Labor Zionist leadership to accelerate the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine while maintaining a cautious attitude.

²³⁹ Two major political initiatives accelerated the Zionist process of territorial sovereignty in Palestine: the British partition plan (1936) and the Baltimore Program (1942). In order to quell the ongoing clashes in Palestine, in 1936 the British instituted a special committee, the Peel Commission, led by Lord Peel, which recommended, among several points, the establishment of two states and a British mandate for the holy sites. Although neither of the two parts was satisfied, the Zionist leadership read the Peel Commission's conclusions as the legitimization of the establishment of a Jewish State. The Baltimore Program is a document, from 1942 endorsed by the American Jewry, that indicates the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine as the main "war goal" (Shapira 1992, 281) of the Jewish people, and as the home of world Jewry.

accelerate the establishment of the State through force or to minimize conflict through political pressure?

The strongest opponent of a military politics of intervention was the leader of Hashomer Hatzair Meir Ya'ari (1897-1987), a founder of Kibbutz Artzi, communist, and pro-Soviet Union (except for the Russian position on Zionism). Instead, Ya'ari promoted an idea of Jewish Zionist affirmation through corporeal regeneration. While violent means encourage a culture of annihilation, he advocated for the corporeal and erotic foundations of kibbutz culture (Nur 2014; Biale 1997, 176-203) as the ultimate revolt against bourgeois values (in particular against sexuality as a tool for reproduction and perpetuation of the family scheme).²⁴⁰ Ya'ari's ideas, before applying them to HaShomer HaTzair and kibbutz culture, stemmed from his experience of military comradeship as a WWI veteran (Biale 1997: 185). In his career as a Zionist leader, he explicitly promoted the political role of male erotics and the idea of "brotherly love" for the pursue of the Labor Zionist cause.²⁴¹ According to Ya'ari, the display of male sexual force and naked bodies was necessary for the representation of a regenerated Jewish male virility. He conceptualized an ecology of the New Jew as a man that does not pollute his original instincts and pleasures.²⁴² Even though his emphasis on virility as a key for Jewish corporeal regeneration reiterates the anti-Semitic and homophobic stereotype of the weak, feminine Diaspora Jew, in his view, athleticism, physical beauty, and toughness constitute aesthetic identitarian markers of

²⁴⁰ While in the Labor Zionist system this scheme had been subverted through the rupture of traditional parenthood, women remained framed in their normative role of caregivers as those in charge of the kibbutz's communal childcare. On the false propaganda of gender equality in Labor Zionism, see Fuchs 2014. Notice also that Ya'ari's idea of avoiding interventionism does not support pacifism; on the contrary, Ya'ari supported the enlisting of kibbutz members for defense purposes and the autonomy of a Jewish military organization, discouraging cooperation with the British troops (see Halamish 2017, 127).

²⁴¹ See Meir Yaari, "Letter from Palestine," 1920, in Nur (2014, 176).

²⁴² See 32. Meir Yaari, "Within the Ferment" (in Hebrew), in Biale (1997, 188).

political autonomy. To employ them for violent, annihilating purposes would undermine their regenerative force.²⁴³ As a pragmatic leader, Ya'ari appreciated artistic endeavors that could manifest and put into action his corporeal-political agenda (see Halamish 2017, 94-99).

Kadman's conceptualization of dance as an ideological tool for the "soft" affirmation of a strong and resistive Yishuv body (as seen in Chapter 1) complies with Ya'ari's idea that art should not manifest "a clenched fist" but allude "to the human" (Halamish 2017, 98).²⁴⁴ Indeed, Kadman's narrative at the beginning of this section is more than an anecdote. Through her rhetorical construction, in fact, she ties the figure of the dancing kibbutznik to the fighting kibbutznik, promoting an idea of dance as a practice of resistance and resilience.

Kadman's account is initially set in Beit HaShita, a kibbutz renowned for its kibbutzniks' dedication to army service. The British troops did not indiscriminately arrest Jewish men; they looked for military leaders who were participating in the organization of actions against the Mandate authorities. For Kadman, those "behind the barbed wire" are "dancers," dancing military leaders. Here, dance becomes a surrogate for military action, a way to territorialize Jewish presence, and, most of all, a performance of self-determination.

Kadman strengthens this concept by reiterating it in another "behind-the-barbed-wire" space, namely the British prisons set in the Arab villages of Latrun or Rafiach, nowadays respectively in the occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. By rechoreographing a *dabkeh*—an Arab folk

²⁴³ Ya'ari did not want violence to become the identitarian marker of Socialist action in Palestine. For this, during the war against the Arabs, at the end of 1948, Ya'ari openly criticized fellow member of the Mapam party Yigal Allon, also a chief of the IDF, for the expulsion of Palestinian civilians as a necessary and definitive strategy. On this matter, see Morris 2003, and Halamish (2017, 225).

²⁴⁴ The historian Aviva Halamish writes that after the Nakba "Ya'ari was sunk in melancholy because of the events of the war. One reason was his concern about the loss of humanity in the storm of the battle." She quotes Ya'ari's words: "How easy it is for them to say that it is possible and permitted to take women, children, and old people and fill the roads with them, because this is what strategy calls for" (2017, 225).

dance performed by men and practiced by indigenous Palestinians—while under British captivity in Rafiach, the kibbutznikim utilize dance simultaneously in at least two ways: as a mocking device towards the British troops (Kadman writes about their dancing as a gesture of rebellion and challenge), and as a settler colonial method.²⁴⁵ When Kadman affirms the “unique character” of the “Debka Rafiach” choreographed by the kibbutznikim without contextualizing the Arab *dabkaat* as sources, she not only invisibilizes but also strategically de-politicizes the Zionist use of an indigenous dance form. Here, the *dabkeh* works as a tool for the manifestation of Jewish resistance against the British colonial ruler, considered as a competitor for territorial sovereignty. By addressing the dancing Zionist military leaders in captivity only as “dancers,” thus emphasizing their civilian status, Kadman deliberately overlooks the use of “Debka Rafiach” as a military tool. Here, presenting a re-choreographed Arab folk dance as a Yishuv cultural product, Kadman adopts dance as a “civilianizing” tool aimed at humanizing the Zionist colonial enterprise. At the same time, in line with Meir Ya’ari’s precepts, Kadman shows that, differently from the violent means of the British imperial power, the Zionist forces can affirm their territorial presence through non-violent means. In the context of military conflict in which Kadman situates her narrative, dance performs the “civilian” and, thus, humanizing character of the soldiers, casting a shadow over their mission as military subjects.

Therefore, I claim that the “Debka Rafiach” acts as an emblematic settler colonial dance. “Behind the barbed wire,” the men stand in a line, either with their hands on each other’s shoulders or holding each other’s forearms behind their backs. As in several other dances of affirmation, the distinguished *dabkeh* step is a stomp. In the “Debka Rafiach,” the practitioners stomp—either with the ball of the foot, the heel, or with the whole sole—while executing light

²⁴⁵ For an analysis of the political uses of *dabkeh* by Zionism, pan-Arabism, and Palestinian Nationalism to shape their communities and cultural identities, see Rowe (2011).

jumps that allow the line to shift its position in space, and the energy of the dance to uplift. The lyrics that accompany the choreography support the energy of the dance, grounded and proud, and clarify its political function: “My day is mine, and my night / And my morning is mine / My yesterday and my evening are mine.” While the stomping bodies spatially affirm the dancers’ territorial presence, the song contextualizes it temporally by recalling the Zionist argument of “Eretz Yisrael” as the ancient Land of Israel. Here, dance spatially positions what the lyrics claim (the temporal ideological diktat). This is exactly why, in Kadman’s anecdote, it is plausible to envision captives tirelessly dancing and choreographing for hours: dance gives spatial realness to an ideological imaginary that, for the dancing subjects, trespasses the circumstantial restriction of the barbed wire, which works as a symbol of control and dominion over the Jewish bodies.²⁴⁶ With this dance, the kibbutznikim want to affirm their “original” right of sovereignty on the land in front of all their competing forces (either British or Arab).

In its archeological and genealogical quest for the formation of dance epistemes in Israel, this dissertation highlights elements of continuity and shifts in the employment of dance in Israeli culture. Such elements can either be consciously deployed or unconsciously internalized in the practice of choreographers and dancers. To assess the intentionality of such reiterations is not among the aims of this research. Instead, by analyzing the formation of dance as a source of knowledge in Israel and the stakes implied in specific dance experiences, this study facilitates the recognition of certain choreographic residues, with their possibly multifarious variations, in their corporeal and political articulation. A contemporary rearticulation of the “Debka Rafiach” allows us to observe which choreographic aspects return and why they regain relevance in the present.

²⁴⁶ It can be also speculated that Kadman utilizes the barbed wire as an emblematic visual symbol of control over the Jewish bodies, largely present in photographic testimonies of the concentration camps.

Choreographic Residues and Pop Reiterations of Settler Colonialism

Nowadays, the settler-colonial legacy of the “Debka Rafiach” is perpetuated through a variety of performance practices of which the videoclip of Israeli pop singer MAGI (Maggie Hikri)’s is exemplary.²⁴⁷ She performs her version of the song originally composed with the dance with Israeli singer, and former Inbal dancer and deputy director of the company Lea Avraham.²⁴⁸ I will examine it in detail as an example of how the colonial use of folk dance, through its historiographical systematization and glorification, became part of a shared, national, unquestioned system of knowledge, perceived as ‘naturally cultural,’ and as such reiterated in mainstream popular culture without historical and cultural problematization. I claim that this is the mechanism that produces and conceals cultural appropriation.

In the videoclip, a group of Israeli women wears costumes that attempt to reproduce Native American clothing, but with sexy/sexualizing variations (bare shoulder, exposed navel, mini-skirt) and combat boots. In some frames, they shake their hips and rotate their shoulders with MAGI singing at the center. In other frames, they sit in a meditative pose in front of an attempted reproduction of a tipi, at whose center sits Lea Avraham. Wearing a more layered and covering

²⁴⁷ The Debka Rafiach is still practiced in Israeli folk dance gatherings and workshops. Nowadays, it is often danced in a circle and with hands down rather than in a line and with the left hand behind the back like in the 1946 version and in traditional *dabkaat*.

²⁴⁸ The videoclip can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1STT_Aff9A> (last access: September 12, 2018). Video Credits: Director, cinematographer & editor: Dror 'Habrnash' Paz; Lights: Shachar & Lee Alfie; Costume designer, Art director and styling: Lina Tsivian; Choreography: Miry Rubinov; Hair & Makeup: Linoy Akala; Jewelry: May fifteen, Anandevika by Yulia Orlev; Assistant: Ido Maler; Photography: Mor Shauli & Ido Maler; Dancers: Amit Gueta, Tamar Kabugo Ronen, Sharon Bar Lev, Lian Ben Porat; Produced by Maggie Hikri & Dror Paz video production. Music Credits: Lyrics and music. Imanuel Zamir. Produced and Arranged by Ron Bunker; Recorded by Ron Bunker (BZ Studio) & by Kobi Vitman (Iscream Studio); Vocals: Maggie Hikri & Lea Avraham; Guitars, Bass, Keyboards, Samplers and Programming: Ron Bunker; Drums: Hagai Shlezinger; Saz: Aviv Bachar; Mixed by Ronen Roth (Pluto Studios); Mastering by Shmulik Daniel @ Hook & High; Mastering; Digital Media: Avi Kasuto Pelaozen.

costume, she sings the initial lines of “Debka Rafiach,” marking the rhythm and the vowels with a hand choreography that references her Yemenite dance heritage. In front of her lies a pink skull with a white feather on the top. Then, in front of the “tipi,” the two singers sit in front of each other with three decorated and feathered skulls at their knees. This commercial operation of cultural appropriation not only commodifies the history of genocide perpetrated against Native Americans, but also restates the idea and practice of dominion over indigenous culture already embedded in the history of “Debka Rafiach.” The choreography by Miryam Rubinov in the videoclip utilizes tropes of contemporary and hip-hop dance as techniques that appeal to the coeval consumer so to smoothly filter the cultural and political ideas present in the 1946 dance. The stomping quality of the folk dance “Debka Rafiach” remains in the style of the krump stomps, orientalized with sinuous movements of the hips and shoulders,²⁴⁹ which the dancers perform while staring at the camera. As Krump choreographer Jarrieth JP Patterson states, the stomping is a way to establish your “foundation,” to say “hey, I’m here, look, I’m here.”²⁵⁰ Deprived of the challenging energy and affirmative spirit in which Krump culture emerged (Batiste 2014), the videoclip utilizes hip-hop as a strategy to reference, while modernizing, the original folk dance step and make it more apt for consumption.

In order to appeal to the Israeli pop market, the videoclip, besides pleasing the heteronormative male gaze, engages with political tropes such as land, indigeneity, and military without providing historical contextualization or commentary, as is often the case with products of popular culture. In fact, in the videoclip, dance works as a vehicle for the soft-reiteration of colonialism as a normative procedure. It works as a spectacular device on which history slips

²⁴⁹ On the African-American, socio-economic, and political origins of Krump, refer to Frazier and Koslow (2013).

²⁵⁰ Patterson explains how to execute a krumping stomp at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd-WS8EawB4>.

away.²⁵¹ To refurther reiterate this maneuver, the dance's setting in a dry land with rocks in the background reproduces the Zionist colonial imaginary of Arab Palestine as an empty, sterile, uncivilized territory. In this twenty-first-century version of "Debka Rafiach," the dance technique changes but the politics at the core of the 1946 choreographic project are reinforced.

A structural choreographic element in both the folk dance and in the videoclip "Debka Rafiach" becomes the sexualization of the performers as strictly connected to the erotics of the military body. In the videoclip, visual references to soldiering, the aggressive energy produced by the choreography, the corporeal relationship to the land (Weiss 2002: 43; Roumani 1980: 99) are all enhanced and fused through the sexualization of the female performers. This fusion not only conforms to the male-dominated visual economy of screen culture (Mulvey 1989) but directly adheres to the mainstream representation of female Israeli soldiers as objects of sexual desire, their structural mistreatment in the workplace, and their objectification on social media (Sasson-Levy 2003, Harris 2017).²⁵²

²⁵¹ With the adjective "spectacular," I refer to Guy Debord's notion of spectacle ([1967] 2016) as the typical visual system of capitalist society that unifies aspects of life (and history) that are experienced as separate or get deliberately separated. In this case, the videoclip reproduces a nationally iconic folk dance song with sexy women performers. Some might claim that this video is an operation of female empowerment, for in the videoclip there are only women, while the original "Debka Rafiach" is only for men. Not only are the young women's bodies sexualized in accordance with the videoclip industry. The fact that they appropriate Native American costumes revised for commercial purposes dismisses and undermines the specific history of violence perpetrated against Native American women (see Bennett 2018). The videoclip's operation of modernization and capitalist female empowerment detaches performers, producers, and viewers from Israel's colonial history and present.

²⁵² A recent study of the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reports that 60% of conscripted female IDF soldiers are victims of sexual harassment (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1-in-6-women-suffer-sexual-harassment-in-israeli-army-survey-finds-1.5449526>). On the "trivialization of sexual harassment" in the IDF, see Sasson-Levy 2003: 453-455.

Forging the Eroticism and Homosociality of the Israeli Soldier

In the 1946 performance of “*Debka Rafiach*,” the dancing men are differently sexualized. Kadman finds “all the dancers, the most tall and handsome men, trapped behind the barbed wire fence.” These men symbolize the “chosen” bodies (Weiss 2002), and represent one of the ways in which Sabra manhood articulates. Kadman does not insist on the trope of the muscular New Jew but on beauty. She does not inscribe dancing bodies in a hyper-masculinizing project but in a Western fairytale fantasy. Beauty confers upon these selected bodies a degree of accessibility and expendability. This is not the early twentieth-century muscular Jew theorized by Herzl and Nordau. In fact, the conceptualization of the Jewish male body has to adjust according to the modified task of the Zionist man in Palestine in the 1940s. Before this point, the Jewish male body had to respond to the need of “reentering history” (Myers 1995), while the Yishuv/Sabra body needed to find his specific way of writing his own history. By fighting against the British colonial-imperial ruler while rechoreographing an indigenous Arab dance, the Jewish dancers wanted to simultaneously affirm their status as subaltern in the territory and as competitors for sovereignty (see Presner 2007, 156).²⁵³ Beauty offers a paradigm of corporeal representation that simultaneously expresses exceptionalism (were they really *all* the most tall and handsome?) and physical reliability. Here, physical exceptionalism through beauty is presented as the corporeal norm (*all* of them) for the dancing-fighting Yishuv man—the fighting-through-dance man. His body is strong and resistive: even in captivity, he keeps dancing, channeling aggressiveness

²⁵³ In a critical analysis of Said’s position on Zionism, Todd Presner highlights the differences between the European imperial project and the Zionist colonial project. His argument is that the traditional postcolonial paradigm cannot be fully applied to early Zionist history, when Zionist ideologues conceived Jewish regeneration as a chance for a regeneration of the native Arab according to a “Europeanizing” scheme. Imperial expansion was not the Zionist goal, and there was not a Jewish state that could organize such an enterprise. This said, Presner recognizes the existence of a colonial imaginary, of a colonial national consciousness, and of practices of territorialization and “self-legitimization,” modeled on European intellectual, cultural, and colonial history (158-159).

through movement, and disseminating his dances, thereby manifesting beauty and focus. Indeed, he does not forget that by utilizing dance as a territorializing device he keeps contributing to the accomplishment of the mission; by employing dance as a tool for *defense*, he manifests and protects his and his fellow kibbutzniks' existence within that space. In a territory disputed with the British ruler and the native Arabs, the dancing-fighters of kibbutz Beit-HaShita rely on dance to defend their presence as threatened exceptional subjects.²⁵⁴

Furthermore, Kadman's anecdote presents dance as a homosocial practice within military life in a way that configures itself as an alternative form of "aestheticized machismo in a homosocial world defined by the male workers [soldiers] who inhabit it" (DeFrantz 2005, 663). On the one hand, the image of the military kibbutz leaders who react to captivity through dancing aims at humanizing them as subaltern. On the other hand, their homosociality reinforces the ideological apparatus that informs the construction of the Sabra man.²⁵⁵ Differently from the early Zionist conceptualizations of the New Jew as muscular and heroic, which did not offer frames or strategies for the actualization of such a corporeal project, Meir Ya'ari indicates physical male-

²⁵⁴ The issue of Jewish exceptionalism is central to the logic of Zionist affirmation in Palestine. Critical analysis of this matter can be found in Judith Butler's *Parting Ways* (2012) and in Rebecca Stein's review of Butler's book (2014). The critique of Jewish exceptionalism resides in the use of the Jewish framework as the predominant perspective to read Israel/Palestine, thus reproducing what Butler calls "the Zionist effect" (3). Admittedly, this research itself is tangled in this problem. Butler's proposed solution is, as Stein acutely synthesizes, to "rethink 'Jewish' as an iterative term—not unlike her rereading of 'queer' in much earlier work. To render it iterative is to understand its capacity to be remarked and refigured—more pointedly, to be disarticulated from 'Zionism,' from the fictive isomorphism (Jewish=Zionism) that both the Israeli state and normative Jewish American imaginations demand" (263).

This is how, in 1942, Cultural Zionist leader Martin Buber exemplifies the foundational discourse about exceptionalism and survival: "According to the ideas current among Zionists today, all that is needed is to establish the conditions for a normal national life, and everything will come of itself. This is a fatal error. We do, of course, need the conditions of normal national life, but these are not enough—not enough for us, at any rate. We cannot enthrone 'normalcy' in place of the eternal premise of our survival. If we want to be nothing but normal, we shall soon cease to be at all" (Buber in Troy 2018, 121).

²⁵⁵ Homosociality is one of the strategies of production of modern nationalism; see, for instance, Mosse, 1985. The exaltation of machoism in Sabra culture connects to the orientalized, predominantly Ashkenazi mindset that undermines the "East" as feminine (Said 1979).

bonding as a criterion for the manifestation of comradeship, brotherhood, and patriotic unity. Homosexuality regulates the public identity of the Zionist man, even more so when representing the nation-state as a soldier. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick demonstrates, homosocial institutions (such as the army) and homoerotic desires move in parallel and often intertwine, with the former also working as a shield for the manifestation of the latter (Sedgwick 1992; Belkin 2012). Surely, the physical beauty of the male dancers-fighters that Kadman recounts metonymically works as the beauty of the State-in-the-making. At the same time, the homoeroticism inherent in her account as well as in Ya'ari's discourse politically reflects the nation-state's anxiety and fear of border penetration, which the enforcement of homosocial control can prevent.²⁵⁶ Any behavior that threatens the protection of the borders, that compromises defense will be considered a perversion of the military and state mission. The non-deviant, non-pervert bodies are "the most tall and handsome." Dancing bodies represent "the best" bodies of the Yishuv. Through dance, Zionist bodies cope with and move through captivity. *These* Jewish bodies survive and are even able to increase their energy "behind the barbed wire" (with an unfortunate implicit, although perhaps unintentional, allusion to the non-Zionist Jewish bodies that perished behind the camps' barbed wire). *These* are the fortified, beautiful, Ashkenazi bodies represented in the Zionist propaganda (see Raz 2004).²⁵⁷ Such representations reproduce the aesthetic mechanism of Western nation-state nationalism rooted in the classicist exaltation of the athletic, young body (Peleg 2006: 34), as in Meir Ya'ari's discourses.

²⁵⁶ Similarly, Yosef Raz, in his analysis of the Israeli film *Repeat Dive* (Dotan 1982), argues that "The homoerotic relation between the two men is perceived as threatening and thus, in order to secure the sexual "normality" of the male protagonists, the film must fix it within a homophobic homosociality" (2004, 64).

²⁵⁷ Kadman does not specify the ethnicity of the dancers but this point is easily arguable since she draws from the Eurocentric Zionist imagery based on the glorification of the white, Ashkenazi body as the prototype of the regenerated New Jew. On the production and affirmation of the Zionist "New Jewish" body through whiteness, see Raz (2004, 40 and 177-178n40), which draws from Kaplan (1998, 451-484).

Finally, when Kadman in her book cites Labor Zionist leader A. D. Gordon's famous claim "If the whole world is hitting and attacking me, I'll *davka* go dancing" (1969. par. 11), she suggests how dance contributes to the shaping of the Zionist nation-state by preparing bodies to react in highly critical circumstances. Through her account of the creation of "Debka Rafiach," Kadman certainly included dance in the Yishuv/Israeli soldier's armory. But, more importantly, she showed that dance training can support the State's defense needs while fostering a non-aggressive and appealing image of the Israeli soldier. According to Kadman's account, the ultimate outcome of the Zionist dancing leaders' captivity was that they found new venues to transfer, reterritorialize, and disseminate folk dance practice through teaching. Kadman strategically shows how the national(ist) dance system she helped promote adheres to the Israel Defense Forces' mission. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, in his public speeches, underlined several times the educational task of the army: "The IDF must educate a pioneering generation, healthy in body and spirit, brave and faithful" (Ben-Gurion 1971: 81). In the following pages, I will show how Kadman led the integration of folk dance practice in the IDF soldiers' trainings, aiming to shape folk dance soldier-experts.

I. 1 Folk Dance and Cultural Militarism

While this study unveils the ways in which folk dance among the Yishuv operated as a hegemonizing tool, it also acknowledges the fact that folk dance was perceived among a large part of the Jewish population as a practice of affirmation that challenged British control.²⁵⁸ This

²⁵⁸ In June 1946, the Black Sabbath/Operation Agatha proved the high level of hostility between the Yishuv and the British leadership and both parts' military investment in territorial control. Their national and imperial stakes manifested in the violence exercised despite the operation's brevity. Besides the chaos generated by air strikes and roadblocks, witnesses reported the British soldiers' verbal and visual violence praising gas chambers and drawing swastikas in kibbutzim, and the torture Irgun and Lehi members practiced on British soldiers. In particular, references to Nazi brutality against the Jews not only were a reiteration of violence against the recently immigrated

section shows how the dissemination of folk dance among the Yishuv as a joyful and affirmative practice, even when practiced by soldiers and/or in war contexts, contributes to its political effectiveness as a technique for the production of hegemonic control in the territory and for the realization of the Zionist settler colonial project. It is in light of such a generalized perception that folk dance can work, I argue, as a practice of “cultural militarism,” meaning the use of cultural practices for the transmission of military values. I also show how cultural militarism, by favoring the incorporation of the army’s agenda, contributes to the production of necropower.

Kadman’s anecdote about the creation of *Debka Rafiach* manifests the strategic role dance played in conjunction with militarism in the affirmation of the New Jew/Sabra’s male body as a metonymy of the Yishuv as a collective territorializing body. As scholar Elke Kaschl states:

The New Jews were men: strong, muscular, defiant, the qualities associated with the Arab *dabkeh* as a ‘men’s dance.’ As such, *dabkeh-as-debkah* symbolized the emancipation of the masculine New Jew from the image of his emasculated counterpart, the Ghetto Jews of the *galut* [Diaspora], passive and vulnerable victims of anti-Semitism who, as “symbolic women” had been subject to constant humiliation by the ‘true’ Aryan men of European society (Katz 1996: 87). Dancing *debkah*, the New Jewish Man in Mandatory Palestine and later in Israel shed his effeminate image. He was a worker, a builder and a soldier (2003, 68).

Perfectly corresponding to the portrait of the ideal Israeli man, and thus suitable to become a cultural ambassador of the State, was Shalom Hermon (1920-1992). A student of Kadman who also emigrated from Germany and grew up in Zionist circles imbued with muscular ideology, Hermon perfectly embodied the New Jew as “a worker, a builder and a soldier,” and as a

Holocaust survivors but, alluding to the long history of European anti-Semitism, were superimposed on the Yishuv those traits that Zionist corporeal culture was dismantling.

“dancer, athlete and fighter, who had shed the effeminate characteristics of the *yehudi galuti*” (ibid.).²⁵⁹ Hermon was an officer in the British army and, later, a decorated soldier in the 1948, 1967, and 1973 wars.²⁶⁰ As a practitioner and folk dance choreographer, he forged for himself a popularly expendable image as a masculine dancing soldier. Giving an account of a dance he choreographed for the celebration of the first anniversary of Israel's independence, Hermon explains a comparison he established between himself and the Biblical figure of Jephthah.²⁶¹ "My identification with Yeftah [*sic*] as a warrior was strong because I myself had just returned from war. [...] I took some liberties [from the Biblical story] and changed the gruesome end and made my first dance for girls greeting the men returning from battle. The second dance was for the warriors, and at the end I had the girls and warriors dancing together in a couple dance" (in Ingber 2011, 148). In this way, Hermon choreographically configured the principles of

²⁵⁹ Born as Fritz Oiskoff in Germany, in Upper Silesia, Shalom Hermon is remembered in several biographical accounts as an excellent athlete and gymnast, and as an enthusiastic member of the Zionist youth movement Blau Weiss. In 1941, he enlisted in the British army, serving in Cyprus in the Jewish brigade. In 1946, he took part in the Yishuv's second course for physical education teachers (in what is today known as the Wingate Institute, Israel's National Center for Physical Education and Sport), where he met his future wife Devorah Blum, who was a member of the Palmach (1942-1945). He fought in the 1948 war in the artillery corps and, after, was appointed supervisor of physical education for Israel's Northern District. In 1947, he helped Gurit Kadman organize the Dalia festival. In Haifa, he studied with Yardena Cohen, and started to choreograph pageants. In 1953, he organized the first public folk dance celebration for the Israeli Independence Day, establishing a tradition that extended to other cities. In 1961, Hermon became Director of the Training Section of the Ministry of Sports and Physical Education. In 1968, he got an MA in Physical Education from Columbia University. In his years in the U.S., Hermon trained several influential teachers of folk dance. In the 1970s and 1980s, he contributed to the institutionalization of national certifications for folk dance instructors.

²⁶⁰ Fred Berk recounts that Hermon “did not intend to create folk dances, but mainly choreography for pageants” (1978, 23).

²⁶¹ Jephthah appears in the *Book of Judges*. Chosen to lead the Israelites against the Ammonites, he made a vow to God, according to which, in case of victory, he would have sacrificed “whatever or whoever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace” (*Judges* 11: 31). The first person that appeared to him after his success was his daughter—his only child, whom he eventually sacrificed. Jephthah, a judge and a warrior, is portrayed as a character of strong will, a tough fighter, dedicated to the larger cause of the Israelites, whose suffering for the loss of his daughter was inevitable.

toughness, exemplified in the figure of the warrior, and the heteronormative order that characterize the ideal New Jewish male.

In November 1946, Hermon exported the practice of folk dance festivals and community celebrations from the context of the kibbutz to the city of Tel Aviv. His particular initiative was a politically-charged and complex operation that revealed something more than the expansion of folk dance practice beyond the kibbutz and into other sites of performance as a symbol of nation-building (as already seen, from another perspective, in Chapter 1). Hermon's endeavor, in fact, synthesizes the political-cultural work produced in three different sites of performance. More specifically, he actively contributed to the installation of a shared idea of militarism that utilized the kibbutz as a site of production for a peculiar soldier corporeality, the city of Tel Aviv as the site of production of a centralized institutional legitimacy, and the Palmach as the site of performance of the combination of traditional militarism (the exercise of the right to kill) and of what I call cultural militarism (the transmission of military values through cultural practices). I am going to unpack and explain in detail the profound mechanisms and circumstances that allow me to attribute such a crucial significance to Hermon's work and intervention.

Masculinizing Folk Dance

Folk dances had been practiced in Tel Aviv before Hermon's intervention—Kadman had taught folk dance there since the late 1920s and trained folk dance instructors since the early 1940s (Roginsky 2007). However, it was Hermon, a symbol of successful Zionist soldier, who instituted in Tel Aviv regular folk dance public gatherings one evening per month—called “Evening of Community Folk Dancing”—at Beit Hapoel on Nachmani Street. The building hosted cultural activities organized by Hapoel Hatzair, the first Jewish labor party in Palestine

(which instituted the Histadrut in 1920 and was led by Aaron David Gordon). In 1930, Hapoel Hatzair merged with the other Labor party Ahdut Ha'avoda, thus forming the Mapai, the Labor Zionist party led by David Ben-Gurion. The building kept hosting cultural initiatives connected to the Mapai. Between 1936 and 1948, Beit Hapoel also worked at the headquarters of the Haganah, the Jewish army established by the Mapai and recognized by the British governorate, and to a certain extent rival to the Palmach. The Palmach was the larger Jewish military formation, affiliated with the Kibbutz Movement and to the more left-leaning parties united under the name Mapam. The Mapam was the result of a fracture started in 1944 within the Mapai, caused by the incompatibility between Ben-Gurion's agenda and the pro-Soviet, Marxist, leftist militants.

Hermon's initiative in Tel Aviv, with his image of 'worker, builder, soldier' and 'dancer, athlete and fighter' that encompassed all the ideal traits of the Zionist New Jew, not only expanded the participatory audience of folk dance to the Yishuv's main urban center, but also demonstrated coherence with the Labor Zionist agenda. By centralizing these dance gatherings in that location, Hermon showed proximity to Ben-Gurion's party and support of the political leader's intent to entrust the wide array of activities to the state (what the future Prime Minister of Israel called *mamlakhti'ut*). While the establishment of the Folk Dance Committee of the Histadrut in 1953 confirmed its institutionalization at the governmental level, its centralization process was already in place in the pre-State years, and needed to be accelerated in order to conform to the Mapai's urge to establish the state.²⁶² To obtain this, it was important to "de-kibbutzize" folk dance, and expand its scope and cultural value in order to align it with the larger

²⁶² While the Mapai wanted to establish an independent welfare state for the Jewish people as soon as possible, Mapam was originally against the partition (the main reason for the separation from the Mapai) and in favor of delaying the statehood process in order to avoid a re-exacerbation of the conflict with the Arab population.

liberal agenda of the Mapai by making folk dance parades not a mere occasional practice in urban centers but a regular activity able to attract a growing number of participants and not only kibbutzniks. Hermon's figure could combine the values of kibbutz culture with the "dogma of state autonomy and supremacy, accompanied by a large degree of militarism" (Kimmerling 2001, 69), predicated by Ben-Gurion and his Mapai party. In other words, by organizing public folk dance gatherings in Beit Hapoel, Shalom Hermon enlarged the scope of folk dance as a practice able to support a fundamental sector of Jewish public life in Palestine, namely the military.²⁶³ Thus, in order to scrutinize how folk dance politically served the construction of a State consciousness in the months prior and after the establishment of the State by becoming a practice within the Jewish military formations and then the IDF, I invite serious consideration of the folk dance practitioners' modes of affiliation to military culture and their relations to the agenda of the Mapai "as the party that lead the independence struggle prior to the establishment of the state" (Medding 1972, 1).

In the midst of the War of Independence, the collective folk dance course Hermon organized was suspended. However, he personally found a way to perpetuate his initiative while enlisted. Biographical accounts (many of which were compiled as obituaries in 1992), in fact, report that Hermon, who was a battalion commander, organized a folk dance evening for his regiment.²⁶⁴ By transferring his folk dance practice from Tel Aviv to his battalion during the war, Hermon utilized folk dance to trace a continuum between civilian and military life. Because of its capacity to function as a symbol of national belonging in both realms, folk dance in this

²⁶³ Nowadays, the House "Hapoel" on Nachmani St. is a performance space.

²⁶⁴ The personal archive of letters and papers of Shalom Hermon has been recently donated to and catalogued by the Dance Library of Israel at Beit Ariela (Tel Aviv). In the future, I hope to find details about Hermon's use of dance while on duty. Moreover, the records show personal communications between Shalom Hermon and the Israel Air Force Museum that I will research.

context works as a practice that anticipates, substitutes, and also announces the imminent institutionalization of the nation-state. The possibility for folk dance to work as choreocracy lies, indeed, in its historical capability to bridge the civilian and the military.

Reorganizing the Politics of Folk Dance for the IDF

It is after the establishment of the State that dance starts to become a more structured practice in military formations, even though it was already working as a tool for the projection of military culture in the civil realm. By 1949, the Israel Defense Forces had already been established by Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion, who privileged members of the Haganah, the militia affiliated to his party, the Mapai (and which also included extremist formations such as the Irgun). What matters in my discourse is that, after the establishment of the State, Ben-Gurion and his appointed high ranks excluded or marginalized the Palmach soldiers, politically affiliated to the Mapam.²⁶⁵ Already in the Fall of 1948, both Gurit Kadman and Rivka Sturman were asked to establish a long-term folk dance practice in the army: Kadman was invited to initiate a training system (Roginsky 2005), and Sturman to form a dance troupe within a Palmach battalion (in Ingber 2011, 120). In a book she published in 1969, Kadman writes that, upon the establishment of the State, "the most urgent thing was to take advantage of our dances for the new military" (1969, 26). Kadman, in line with her institutional attitude and political leadership (explored in Chapter 1), declares a strong affiliation to Israel's militarism, conceived as a trajectory toward statehood, as indicated in the Mapai's agenda.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Internal divisions in the IDF based on the pre-State military formations persisted for some years.

²⁶⁶ It is renown that Kadman's husband, Leo Kaufman was first active in Hapoel Hatzair and covered the position of head of the housing department of the Histadrut, for which the couple moved to Tel Aviv, and in 1945 Gurit Kadman herself established the dance department of the Histadrut, organizing ambassadorial activities abroad through dance (see Chapter 1). Shalom Hermon was also a member of the folk dance committee of the Histadrut, and in 1953 he institutionalized annual folk dance parades in the city of Haifa to celebrate the Israeli Independence

By the beginning of 1949, Sturman had instituted a folk dance performance group through intensive training across different IDF military bases (Roginsky 2005 and Ingber 2011). This system of training and transmission achieved two main objectives. First, the dissemination of a folk dance corporeality superimposed over the combatants' bodies, which were already undergoing a process of military-Zionist-“Sabrazing” regimentation through physical education and soldiers' manuals.²⁶⁷ Secondly, such an organized channel of circulation fostered a synchronic repertorization of folk dances choreographed among the Yishuv, especially folk dances that utilize non-Ashkenazi choreographic elements, such as dances based on the *dabkeh* and on the “Yemenite step.”

In their accounts of those years, both Sturman and Kadman underline how folk dance training programs in the army were particularly addressed to the Circassian and Druze minorities—who had their own units in the IDF—in the name of integration, cooperation, and “social spirit” (Sturman, in Roginsky 2005).²⁶⁸ Larger, general dance meetings for the soldiers, such as the one from June 1949 recounted by Sturman and Kadman, were organized to celebrate

Day (Berk 1978). Zvi Friedhaber adds that “this dancing procession, in which dozens of dance groups participate, has become a permanent feature of the annual Hag Ha'atzmaut festival in Haifa. Other communities in Israel have emulated this example and organized similar events” (1987-1988, 37).

A Histadrut report reminds Ben Gurion's words on the function of the Histadrut: “[It] is an alliance of the pioneers of a homeland, founders of a sovereign state, creators of a nation, builders of an economy, disseminators of a culture and reformers of society. This alliance has not been based on possession of a membership card nor on legislation but on one common fate and mission—on one common purpose for life and for death” (in Becker 1964: 30). Evidently, Ben Gurion attributes to the Histadrut a fundamental role in structuring the new nation-state logistically, politically, culturally, militarily, and also indicates who are the agents within the nation-state, namely the Yishuv and the Sabra.

²⁶⁷ On the principles that shaped the idea of the Israeli soldier's body through an analysis of training manuals and theoretical treatises, see Sharim (2016).

²⁶⁸ The Druze and Circassian communities in Israel are classified, respectively, as Christian and Sunni-Muslim Arab minorities. For the Druzes, military service is compulsory since 1956, and for the Circassians since 1958. See also Rothman (1972). For the acknowledgement of Druze and Circassian folk dances in the IDF, see Roginsky (2004, Ch. 2, sec. A).

an idea of diversity in the Israeli army.²⁶⁹ Soldiers, in fact, were not performing in uniform. By performing with “traditional” clothing and accessories, their attire also underlined their non-Western, non-Ashkenazi presence while satisfying the Ashkenazi leadership’s “melting pot” agenda.²⁷⁰ Kadman reports that “the Circassians excelled in their dancing with their picturesque black attire, and the Druze, who danced with long swords, were very enthusiastic” (1969, 27). Folk dances in the army worked as a tool to grant official and public visibility to those non-Jewish communities in Israel that could find social recognition inasmuch as they were part of the military apparatus, and manifested belonging to the national project by performing national dances. At the same time, the orientalized frame in which Ashkenazi dance leaders inscribed the Circassian and Druze soldiers’ corporeal presence and performance reveals the reiteration of ethnicity and religion as discriminating factors.

Although many scholars have argued that folk dance in the IDF primarily worked as a vehicle for the integration of minorities in the predominantly Ashkenazi army or for the integration of Jewish soldiers that did not speak Hebrew fluently, I claim that the role of dance is more complex and ideologically charged. Integration into the larger military scheme was a function that folk dances performed but, now, it is important to understand who the Ashkenazi leadership wanted to integrate and why. Dina Roginsky (2004, ch. 7) recognizes that to import elements of Arab dance in Israeli folk dances performed by the Druze Arab minority in the army served the purpose of integrating those Arabs who were supportive of the Ashkenazi-Israeli hegemony (such as the Christian Druze community), while positioning them as antagonist to “hostile Arabs” (namely, Muslim, non-Circassian Arabs). Thus, in Roginsky’s observation,

²⁶⁹ Intense dance trainings in the army started in Summer 1948, as indicated in the minority units’ reports (in IDF Archive, File 859/721/1972).

²⁷⁰ For an explanation of Israel’s melting-pot agenda, see *supra*, 115n144.

integration means assimilation in the hegemonic Ashkenazi scheme, and production of a 'friendly other' to oppose a 'hostile other.' In other words, integration works as a means for marking exclusion. In this way, folk dance practice within the army contributes to the fabrication and identification of a specific biopolitical *nomos* as a legal basis for the newly established nation-state.²⁷¹ Therefore, integration as exclusionary practice cannot grant livability to the whole community subject to that *nomos*.²⁷² In other words, folk dance practice in the army participates in the creation of the space of the *nomos* and in its performance, which is to say that the soldiers who are allowed to dance Israeli folk dances are granted protection and rights (and obedience in return) within the space of the *nomos* (and, for this, can be celebrated while being orientalized). In this way, folk dance, improperly framed as a mode of “integration,” works as one of the strategies of settler-colonial assimilation (see Veracini 2011).

In particular, it was the more left-leaning components of the Labor Zionist spectrum that pushed for assimilation policies in order to limit the Mapai’s initiatives of segregation. In relation to the Jewish military formations and the IDF, the Mapai had already forbidden the possibility of including Palestinian Muslims. Members of Mapam, within their Marxist-Zionist commitment, believed in the sustainability of Zionist settlement through the consent and assimilation of Arab workers. Rivka Sturman, who was close to Mapam, sincerely believed in the need for the integration of all Arabs—with the naïveté that such a perspective assumes, and

²⁷¹ By conceiving integration as a means of exclusion in this context, I refer to Hannah Arendt’s critique of Carl Schmitt’s conceptualization of *nomos* as simply rooted in territorial conquest and control. As political science scholar Anna Jurkevics synthesizes, Arendt counterproposed that “the legitimacy of the *nomos* should be founded upon principles and institutions that emerge from intersubjective processes of contract-making” (2017: 347).

²⁷² In her intellectual diary, *Danktagebuch*, Arendt writes: “Poor Schmitt: The Nazis said blood and soil—he understood soil. The Nazis meant *blood*” (marginalia: 211, cited in Jurkevics 2017: 345). Arendt criticizes that “the source of law” in Schmitt is the soil rather than intersubjectivity, thus activating a critique of Schmitt’s idea of politics as detached from human beings. Moreover, Arendt finds a fundamental contradiction in Schmitt by pointing out how in colonial regimes law does not emerge from the soil but is imported.

that abundantly emerges in her interviews.²⁷³ She recalls how her husband, born in Palestine, and his family “grew up with intimate knowledge of Arab life and traditions, and they were very respectful and loving of their neighbors” (in Ingber 2011, 121-122). In the 1930s, she used to go with her brother-in-law, an Arabic speaker and negotiator, to Arab festivities to learn dances practiced among the Arab community. Nonetheless, such feelings of respect and lovingness suspend in times of active conflict. The settler-colonial gaze appropriates the *dabkeh*, deactivates its existing agenda, and inscribes the Zionist one in it when Sturman, in 1947, choreographs *Debka Gilboa* in order to celebrate and restage the energy and the “triumph” of the Yishuv soldiers—“our sons” (in Ingber 2011, 120)—fighting on mount Gilboa, close to Ein Harod. Recounting the creative process of this dance, Sturman narrates that she “felt an urgency to express [the soldiers’] fight in a folk dance,” thus claiming the folk dance genre and the *dabkeh* style to be appropriate for the rendering of the corporeal experience of the Yishuv soldier as victorious fighter.

More specifically, Sturman explains she utilized the *dabkeh* for choreographic reasons: she needed a dance that could allow her to represent bodies “advancing and retreating and then again advancing, as if running to the peak of the Gilboa hills” (in Ingber 2011, 120). Kadman utilized a similar choreographic scheme to stage a dance for soldiers entitled *Yes, They Were Defeated* on the first anniversary of the State's independence: “It was danced by rows and rows of soldiers, holding hands and raising them up above, against the setting sun, and it was spectacular” (1969, 27)—a massive *debka*, performed at Beit Hapoel. Israeli scholar Dan Ronen (2009) reports that, for *Debka Gilboa*, Sturman drew on movements from self-defense courses that she used to teach in kibbutz Ein Harod, thus importing into dance movements learned in the

²⁷³ When, in 1952, her kibbutz Ein HaRod split in two because of ideological incompatibilities, Sturman joined the Mapam faction (Ein Harod Meuhad), as the kibbutz’s records show.

context of the Palmach's military training. The aestheticization of military vocabulary also reinforces the secular ethos of kibbutz Ein Harod: "To skip over the Diaspora, continue the old tradition, and distance ourselves from all religious expression. To renew, without neglecting the old; to revive what is most ancient and to feel the present experience—to find the right way among all these contradictions" (ibid.). At the same time, the title of the dance invokes the Bible as a source for territorial claim and construction of a military lineage²⁷⁴; in fact, Ein Harod is also called "Gideon's Spring," as it is said to be the place where Gideon, Biblical prophet and military leader, selected the three hundred men with whom he fought the Midianites (Judges 7: 17-22). In this way, the army is conceptualized as a site for the performance of Zionism as a territorialized legacy to reclaim in the present.

The choice of the *dabkeh* serves purposes similar to those of the dancing-fighting kibbutznikim in Rafiach the previous year. However, while the latter were claiming territorial presence through dance, Sturman seals the appropriation of *debka* as a dance of Zionist celebration; as a confirmation of its practice as a form of territorialization of Zionist nationalism, in terms of military triumph and physical primacy against the indigenous Palestinians; and as a mode of violence that, through the means of representation, celebrates the "ultimate erasure of the Palestinian presence around the area of the Gilboa Mountain" (Kaschl 2003, 57).²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Anita Shapira, addressing the use Zionism made of the Bible, defines the text as "a guidebook to the country's fauna and flora and to ancient settlement sites" and a source of "historical memory," citing Ahad Ha'am's definition as a "book memory" (2012: 59). According to Shapira, the Bible was also "a guide book for its history and geography" for the Palmach soldiers (2015, 12).

²⁷⁵ On this dance Nicholas Rowe writes: "Appropriated dabkeh steps were even used in an antagonistic context against the indigenous population. Rivkah Sturman's dance piece *Debkeh Gilboa* glorified the Gilboa Settlement's conquest of a new hill after expelling the indigenous population, and her *Yes, They Will Lose*, performed by hundreds of Israeli soldiers at the first Independence Day in 1949, used dabkeh patterns to mimic acts of attack and final triumph over the local indigenous population. [...] Dabkeh was not learnt so as to embody a set of meanings that would help new immigrants in Palestine integrate more effectively into the indigenous population, but appropriated to express a new political ideal" (2011, 370).

Connecting the dance to a Biblical past, Sturman also claims Zionist ownership not only on the land but on the dance style itself. The connection between land and practice also constitutes the basic Zionist argument against accusations of appropriation: we cannot appropriate something emerged on a land that belongs to us, especially if we agree in assimilating these emerged forms in our restored structure. From the Zionist standpoint, the military framework in which the *dabkeh* got appropriated works as a guarantor of past and present ownership.²⁷⁶ The army and military discourses are central in the Zionist temporal rationale, and instrumental in the Zionist effort of presentification. According to philosopher Edmund Husserl, from whom I borrow the concept of presentification (*Vergegenwärtigung*), to presentify is the act that a secondary conscience exercises to make present the content of a primary conscience, which can never be a presentification but is an “impressional consciousness,” a *Urimpression*, something that has the faculty of impressing itself in future reiterations and recollections. Sources from the past—either historically proved or selected and fabricated *ad hoc*—are instrumental for the present affirmation of the Zionist logic. The present is the priority.²⁷⁷ Within this frame, I conceive *Debka Gilboa* as a Zionist act of presentification, and its dancing bodies as presentifying tools that, through the *dabkeh*'s stomping and their energetic assertiveness, try to impress a military legacy and affirm a military presence in the

²⁷⁶ Consider Brenda Dixon Gottschild's syllogism “APPROPRIATION leads to APPROXIMATION leads to ASSIMILATION.” “What it means,” she continues, “is that [...] *tropes* from a given cultural real are appropriated by another culture but are obliged to go through a transformation process. They must be made to approximate a look and texture, feel and shape, that will meet with the aesthetic approval of the appropriating culture before they can be assimilated. This is a natural process. Cultural arenas manage to keep themselves alive and well by frequent injections of new blood from Other cultural arenas. However, those outsider injections must measure up to the reigning aesthetic in the host culture in order to be recognized as ‘one of us’; they must tally with the host comfort zone, if even at its outer limits. (2003, 21-23 and 52-53). In settler colonial societies where sovereignty is based on the settler's polity, assimilation leads to “coercive assimilation,” which works “as a powerful weapon in the denial of indigenous entitlement” (Veracini 2011, 6).

²⁷⁷ Husserl also mentions that recollections of the past “could be mistaken, and in a variety of ways.” (2001: 114-116).

present—which also aligns with the Zionist ideology of revival and corporeal regeneration. This dance not only celebrates the Palmachim but, more importantly, ideologically presentifies militarism as a national Zionist ethos—a national ethos inherently represented by and in the service of men.²⁷⁸

The military culture in which Sturman operates is that of the "Palmach generation," a Sabra army, which historian Anita Shapira describes in a book dedicated to Palmach commander and Mapam leader Yigal Allon. Shapira gives an account of the Palmach in the 1940s as imbued with "youthful romanticism, with its yearning for purity and justice and its belief in individual duty to live by one's principles"; she also describes "the group's everyday social culture [as made of] campfire circle, the coffee *finjan*, the songs and dances" (2015: 244). When Mapam officially formed in 1948 to oppose the immediate partition of Palestine without mediation with the Arab population, it combined Meir Ya'ari's Hashomer Hatzair and the left wing of LeAhdut Ha'avoda as "a brotherhood-in-arms" (Shapira 2015: 320). Militarism is the cohesive element at the basis of political maneuvering and culture making. Therefore, it is also the compass that generally orientates the relationship with the Arab population. Sturman's choreographic practice embodies the irreconcilable aporia of the Zionist left, which makes livability unachievable. Shapira asserts that "Mapam was born under false assumptions," such as its initial belief in the Soviet Union's support of Zionism, for instance (2015, 321). But the main problem, within my larger framework of livability, is how appropriating practices, as a tool of hegemonic power, invisibilize the Arab subjects that the Mapam claimed to integrate or at least consider in their political process towards statehood. Therefore, the aporia is that it is impossible for the hegemonic power to

²⁷⁸ Kaschl notes that both *Debka Rafiach* and *Debka Gilboa* "were choreographed by women, but were presented by large groups of soldier-men. Debkah, the epitome of the Sabra style, excluded women in the public presentations that mattered. The most perfect performance of New Jewish identity could only be given by men" (2003, 71).

integrate or acknowledge subjects that it invisibilizes. This further suggests: Zionism, even in its more left-leaning, "revolutionary" articulations, remains an inherent settler-colonial project rooted not only in a militarism able to provoke physical death (like all armies in the world and history) but in a cultural militarism that produces the social death of its subaltern 'others' by incorporating them "as the permanent enemy on the inside" (see Patterson 1982, 41).

In the light of this reasoning, I argue that the role of what I call cultural militarism is to downplay its radical agenda (which includes the production of social death) and, at the same time, filter it to the civil society through corporeal practices and the construction of collective behaviors. Because of its *modus operandi*, cultural militarism manifests also in its agents. Therefore, downplaying is a teaching strategy, a performance modality, a discursive mode of Israeli folk dance. This is why Sturman's accounts highly depoliticize dance and overlook the implication of her dance-making. It is through this generalized downplaying tone that folk dance could become—and still work as—a bureaucratic tool for the strengthening and dissemination of a cultural militarism.²⁷⁹

In the following section, I will show how Kadman, with her prominent institutional profile and favorable political affiliations, took the lead in this process, paving the way for the successive circulation of an Israeli military culture abroad.

²⁷⁹ Renown folk dancer and Sturman's dancer in the Palmach Yonatan Karmon declared: "I think that what Gurit [Kadman] and Rivka [Sturman] tried to do was give the Israeli people a time to be happy, just as they had a time to work. It was as if they thought of ways to fill up the spare time we began to have" (in Ingber 2011, 155). I consider this an exemplary case of downplaying from within (meaning as a folk dance practitioner and choreographer).

I.2 “...Now we’re just doing Israeli dances”

When, in 1946, Shalom Hermon returned from England where he attended an officer’s course, he proposed Gurit Kadman to introduce ballroom dances like the ones he saw in British dance halls.²⁸⁰ As the architect of a choreocratic system in the army, she assertively responded: “No. You should keep them for yourself, in your pocket, because now we are just doing Israeli dances” (in Ingber 2011, 149). As a matter of fact, Kadman’s reply contests the traditional (downplayed) perception of dance in the army as a mere entertainment, leisure, or activity of relief for the soldiers.²⁸¹

Indeed, the exercise of a choreocracy in the army strictly connects to military bureaucracy. A common conceptualization of bureaucracy as applied to governmental and public administration indicates it as an efficient form of organization of human affairs practiced by individuals (Weber [1947] 2009). According to its foundational theorizations in political economy, bureaucracy includes six main features: hierarchy of authority, specialization, impersonality, system of rules, procedures, and technical competence (the latter has been often disregarded). Bureaucracy is measurable (usually through scales), produces data and taxonomies, and utilizes technology to perfect its functioning. Michel Foucault (2007) has demonstrated how bureaucracy is the administrative pillar of the modern nation-state and its essential system for the exercise of sovereignty. We are all accustomed to bureaucracy and we all rely on it; it is, in fact, a relief that not all parts of our lives are bureaucratized and unfold through regulated procedures. Writing in the light of Foucault’s biopolitical reflections, Giorgio Agamben (2011) looks at the performative

²⁸⁰ In a letter addressed to Kadman from Cyprus dated August 28, 1994, he explains the kind of physical training he offers to fellow soldiers on the beach (sports and gymnastics) and adds that he also offers performances of cabaret and acrobatics. He concludes writing, “You see, there are many possibilities for a discharged soldier after the war,” which seems a request for collaboration with Kadman. In England, he served as a sport trainer and also taught folk dances from “Eretz Yisrael” to British folk dance groups. The letter is reported in Maroz (1996, 15).

²⁸¹ I will expand on this in the following section on the IDF dance bands in the 1960s and 1970s.

mode of bureaucracy, namely at its ceremonial and liturgical aspects, noticing how the language and organization of the public administration that emerged in Western modernity relies on the model of classification of angels in the Christian doctrine.²⁸² It is only through the effectiveness of their hierarchical organization that angels can exercise the functions that the divine power assigned to them. Such a vertical model for the arrangement of a bureaucratic apparatus shows that there are administrators and assistants, and that the higher number of functionaries corresponds to the higher number of citizens to be administered.²⁸³

Even if bureaucracy is part of everybody's everyday life, it is not a neutral concept and practice, although it often appears that way, serving as a tool of *Realpolitik* without explicit moral or ethical guidelines. The goals at the basis of its application change its conceptualization. For instance, in her study of the Eichmann trial, Hannah Arendt claimed that "perhaps the nature of every bureaucracy is to make functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of men," arguing for bureaucracy as an apparatus of dehumanization (1976: 289). Arendt produced this reasoning in relation to the extreme case of the Nazi regime. Nevertheless, her point is to underline the coerciveness of the bureaucratic system, and how the presence of those who let the bureaucratic machine run is function-oriented. The bureaucratic functionaries, she posits, are relevant only if their specific function is performed. When the function is criticized or questioned, the bureaucrat is not trustable. And this is the coercive power of bureaucracy: the investment it requires is limited to the completion of the task, without further implications. Hence, the bureaucratic functionary implicitly accepts his/her depersonalization or, at least,

²⁸² For his archeology of bureaucracy, see, specifically, Agamben (2011, chapter 6).

²⁸³ The word "hierarchy," Agamben specifies, citing Aquinas, means "sacred power" and not "sacred order" (2011: 153). The reiteration of sacralization order allows the sacralization of power. More specifically, "hierarchy is essentially the activity of government, which as such implies an 'operation' (*energeia*), a 'knowledge' (*epistēmē*), and an 'order' (*taxis*) (ibid.).

accepts it to *literally* suspend his/her integrity, meaning his/her wholeness as a person with moral and ethical agency.²⁸⁴

Gurit Kadman's Choreocratic Leadership

I concluded the previous section affirming that cultural militarism, the way I conceptualize it, relies on the downplaying of militarism itself and on the depoliticization of cultural practices.²⁸⁵ Throughout the 1940s and their subsequent narratives and interviews, folk dance leaders have publicly depoliticized folk dance practice or smoothed over its political implications through the harmonizing rhetoric of integration and joy—legitimate and real functions, but ones that do not exhaust the role dance played in that context. In her dance descriptions (see Chapter 1. II), Gurit Kadman overemphasizes the need for precision in execution, and indicates, with a certain orthodoxy, what can and cannot be an Israeli folk dance. The discipline she requires from folk dance practitioners is proportional to the feeling of joy that folk dance has to perform and project. In fact, in her conceptualization, folk dance is a joyous practice that uplifts the spirits of the workers, and a form that manifests the joy of nation-building without further, explicit implications. Nonetheless, considering Kadman's exchange of correspondence with IDF cultural officers (*katsinim tarbut*), started in early January 1949, we can infer the kind of knowledge folk

²⁸⁴ Foucault explains how fascism and its bureaucratic machine were facilitated by the theatricalized depiction of Mussolini as a buffoon (2007, 36n22).

²⁸⁵ In military studies, cultural militarism in the context of Israel is often conceived as a militarism “that ignores the division between right and left” (Ben-Eliezer 1998, 107), and as a set of “methods and practices [stemmed from various militias that] acquired legitimacy with the help of major party-political organs” (110). Differently, I framed cultural militarism as a set of bureaucratic, procedural interventions aimed at endorsing the army as, at the same time, an extension and part of the civilian realm. Cultural practices are not depoliticized because political differences are ignored for the sake of a bipartisan unity or an assumed *super partes* nature of culture. Instead, depoliticization is an inherent bureaucratic tool and assumption for the affirmation and conservation of sovereignty, whether its governmental structure leans alternatively towards the right or the left.

dance produces and how it is disseminated for the consolidation of the army as a pillar of the nation-state.²⁸⁶

In 1948-1949, Kadman had already held several courses for new folk dance instructors in military units, as she explains to Dr. Virshubsky in a letter from March 23, 1949 (IDF Archive, File 532-4944-1949).²⁸⁷ But the extended preparation, the expectations, and the officiality that characterize the three-day course in April 1949 are due to the fact that, as Kadman emphasizes, it is the first course held in Jerusalem, now capital of the newly established State. Therefore, this course acquires a special symbolic value. In March 1949 (after some delays in the organization), Kadman writes to culture officer Chaim Navon, urging him to accelerate their communication since “the Jerusalem district is the only district in the country that still has not received such a course” (emphasis in the original).²⁸⁸ In this note, she claims her structural role in the army as “the coordinator of the field of folk dancing in the army within its Culture Department.” Finally, she assertively addresses Navon with an imperative: “Do understand the importance of this enterprise and assist its realization!” According to the letters from and to culture officers (such as

²⁸⁶ Cultural units and divisions have always been of primary importance in the Yishuv military formations as a means for the dissemination of a national and ideological education, the production of loyalty, and the forging of a “warrior’s spirit.” The IDF cultural organization mainly resides in the Palmach’s tradition. Moreover, in the Palmach, there was a political commissioner, the *politruk*, a figure borrowed from the Soviet Red Army, responsible for the ideological formation of the soldier. Of greater interest is that the *politruk* was granted a higher status than the military commanders, which meant that he could monitor the military commands’ ideological orthodoxy and, in case, intervene.

²⁸⁷ During the war, as Shalom Hermon reports, Kadman was teaching folk dances in several army camps (Hermon n.d.) but in 1949 folk dance acquires institutionalized status within the army. Moreover, during this time, Kadman kept leading the folk dance activities of the Histadrut, thus simultaneously coordinating the dissemination of folk dance through both civilian and military channels. Notice that all the communications and notes of Kadman and IDF officers cited here are from the File 532-4944-1949, consulted at the IDF Archive at the Tel-Hashomer basis. At the time, Kadman was still utilizing her non-Hebrew name Gert Kaufman.

²⁸⁸ According to Kadman, the course had been delayed twice. Once, it was planned for February 6-8, but a series of changes among commanders delayed the communication with Kadman and the organization. Kadman politely shows disappointment by referring to previous (unanswered) communications. Indeed, there were flaws in the bureaucratic administration in the army, at least in the culture office.

Dr. Virshubsky, Shmuel Shroitman, and Moshe Levin), it was Kadman herself who conceived, structured, and proposed the three-day course. Writing to commander Virshubsky, she instructs him about whom to contact and what to do in order to make the course happen. In other words, Kadman displays her own authority among military officers through clarity in her purpose and assertiveness in her tone. By claiming her position and performing her leadership, Kadman also shows the need to convince the army officers of the urgency of initiating the folk dance course in Jerusalem.

For the course, Kadman advises the participation of 30-35 soldiers (possibly half men, half women), a suitable room which needs to be “neat and tidy” (underlined in an official note), the presence of live musicians, and a coordinator for the logistics. Once instructed, these soldiers will become folk dance instructors for their units. In this way, Kadman designs a hierarchical, branching model for the transmission of “Israeli folk dance” and its integration in the military apparatus.

In their first years as a unified state army, soldiers generally kept performing a certain relaxed sense of discipline, which constituted an acceptable behavior in the pre-State Jewish militias, particularly in the Palmach. The Palmach has always been a highly romanticized army (Ben-Eliezer 1998). Its soldiers did not have official uniforms, they always carried weapons, also during parades. It was a professional, effective, action-oriented army that did not aim to perform the professionalism of the British army (its first antagonist in the territory). As sociologist Oz Almog specifies, the Palmach was characterized by “the absence of hierarchical status symbols of decorations and rank, [by] the equal salaries of officers and soldiers, [by] the common mess halls for officers and soldiers, [by] the minimization of such ‘military nonsense’ as ceremonies and parades, and [by] the simple uniforms,” which the soldiers used to provide for themselves

(Almog 2002, 218). The undisciplined “sloppiness” of the pre-State Jewish militias survived in the IDF: “Moderated military exhibitionism became an IDF trademark. This was an army that minimized ceremony, formal symbols, and military ostentation, and there was a definite antibureaucratic milieu” (Almog 2002: 218).²⁸⁹ The cohesive element in the Palmach was not a centralized and hierarchical power structure as in the British and other nation-state armies. Instead, it was communal (Ben-Eliezer 1998: 84), exemplified in the *kumsitz*, the practice of gathering together around a camp-fire as *chaverim*, friends/comrades, and not as military functionaries of a government responding to the Ministry of Defense.

By instituting folk dance practice in the IDF, Kadman actively contributed to the disciplining of bodies that had to be “Israeli”—not only “Palmach” or “Sabra,”—namely, nation-state bodies. Through its public “downplaying” and rhetoric of togetherness, folk dance could work as a suitable technique for the professionalization of the new IDF bodies. With the establishment of the State, folk dance instantiates a hierarchical organization in the army—necessary for the affirmation of State sovereignty—through a practice whose cultural capital is associated with national (not necessarily state) belonging, public participation, regeneration, and joy. How could folk dance, with its “nonsense” of jumps and choreographed footwork, interest or be accepted as a training method by soldiers such as former Palmach fighters that “with their feet planted firmly in the soil, [...] stand erect”? (*Palmach Bulletin*, n. 40, March 1946, cited in Ben-Eliezer 1998: 84).

What “Israeli folk dance” and Jewish, fight-oriented militias share is the affect: an uplifting and “uplifted spirit” (ibid.). On the one hand, folk dance, with its public rhetoric of communal values and energy, reinforces the nonchalant, strong but non-strict, in-charge, tough image of the

²⁸⁹ On this aspect, see also Dickson (2003).

Sabra. Hence, folk dance does not threaten or betray the Palmach cultural value of “sloppiness” as a traditionally “glorified military way of life” (Ben-Eliezer 1998, 82) among Sabra fighters. On the other hand, folk dance operates as a bureaucratizing apparatus towards the performance and full realization of a *mamlakhtiut* in the army thanks to its hierarchical, educational structure, to the specificity of the choreographic score, to its investment in a unitary Labor Zionist ideology, and to its progressive institutionalizing force. In this way, choreocracy does not appear as a regular, administrative, bureaucratic, statist machine.²⁹⁰ Folk dance manifests its value as cultural-militarist capital in its capacity to fulfill both the State’s needs and the soldiers’ affect. In fact, as Mark Franko points out, similarly to other dances produced in Socialist contexts (Franko 2002, Graff 1999, Giersdorf 2013, Wilcox 2019), folk dance, with its choreographic and corporeal rationale and “practical consciousness” (Franko 2002: 40), conceptualizes an idea of peoplehood as structure and emotion, which can be expended both in terms of communitarian-communalism and national-statehood.

In her notes to the IDF officers, Kadman recommends the involvement of Shabtai Ariei Petrushka (1903-1997), today a celebrated Israeli composer, then director of the music program of the national radio *Kol Yisrael* (IDF archive, File: 532-4944-1949). An “Official Note” addressed to the “Unit Commander” and the “Culture Officer” of each unit announces that on April 24, 25, and 26, 1949 there will be a course for folk dance instructors held by Gert Kaufman (with the name underlined in the original document). It specifies that the soldiers suitable to participate “are those who are able to encourage and instruct the unit’s public to dance. This

²⁹⁰ There is an obvious contradiction between Socialist anti-statism (*à la* Gramsci) and Zionist nationalism with its statehood project. Indeed, Socialism espoused statism in its German articulations (where Zionist ideology formed), as Gramsci explains: “Many of our comrades are still imbued with doctrines of the State which were popular in socialist writings twenty years ago. These doctrines were created in Germany, and perhaps in Germany they will be proven correct, although we have little belief in their justification from a socialist viewpoint in any country” (*La Città Futura*: 118). On Socialist anti-statism in Israel, see Stanislawski (2001, 46-49).

means that they shouldn't be good dancers only, they should have authority, will, and influence.” A charismatic presence, able to persuade and publicly disseminate the idea of corporeality performed through folk dance is what matters. In a writing published in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, Kadman herself reminds how, in general, folk dance bodies, following Socialist egalitarian principles, have “equal value, regardless of sex or of dancing ability” (1968, 3). In fact, the goal is the performance of “togetherness”—together as Israeli Sabras.

An official letter issued by the Culture Base of the IDF, addressed to the Culture Headquarters in Jerusalem and Gert Kaufman, specifies that the April folk dance intensive course is conceived “within the framework of inserting folk dancing into a permanent structure throughout IDF units” (IDF archive, File: 532-4944-1949). The participants of the course will become the folk dance leaders of the army. Contradicting Kadman's predicated principle of folk dance for everyone despite their dancing ability, this same note, signed by the commander of the Culture Basis, maintains that “in order for this enterprise to succeed, the people [soldiers] who are chosen must be, besides relatively good dancers, with some ability to lead, organize, and teach dance.” Indeed, for the choreocratic enterprise to succeed, a selection based on both technical ability and leadership was necessary.

The official note continues specifying that on April 25 there will be “the first national attempt to make the audience dance through the radio,”²⁹¹ in particular through *Kol HaMagen* (a military radio station). The broadcast will last 30 minutes, after regular working hours, 7-7.30 P.M.. This national audio folk dance course will obviously be led by Kadman. Hence, the three-day intensive course has a double objective: to install folk dance as part of military practice, and to utilize the radio system to disseminate folk dance practice to previously unreachable areas and

²⁹¹ Underlined in the primary source.

units, especially those in the recently conquered territories.²⁹² The broadcast will take place in the course location, Ein Karem, an Arab village in the Jerusalem area, occupied by the Israeli army in July 1948. On that day, all unit commanders are required to bring together a group of dancing people, provide a location and a device to follow the broadcast, and musicians to continue the dance course after the broadcast. In her notes to the officers, Kadman recommends “to contact all the units with formal invitations and to explain (to Officers and Commanders!) that the radio broadcast is happening and that they must prepare everything for the realization of the dancing evening that will take place in their units” (emphasis in the original). Once again it is Kadman as the institutional leader of the folk dance movement that not only indicates the procedure but shows the importance of distributing the work and branching out. To teach folk dances and entertain a larger public via radio was a common practice in the U.S., U.K., and Europe, which often started thanks to the technological radio knowledge that practitioners acquired during army service or as volunteers in the World Wars.²⁹³

Kadman strategically (and successfully) imports this established model, on the one hand, modernizing and accelerating the mode of dissemination of *doing Israeli dances*, and on the other hand, upgrading the official Israeli army’s outreach and image as “the people’s army.”²⁹⁴ In

²⁹² With the establishment of the State, there was a need to rehabilitate the degenerated image of the city (especially Tel Aviv), that the kibbutznikim considered as a bourgeois “salon society” with “salon dances” (such as waltz, foxtrot, polka). See Almog 2000, ch. 6.

²⁹³ On the practice of dance radio broadcast in the U.S. since the 1920s, see Erica M. Nielsen, *Folk Dancing*. (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2011), in particular 61 et seq. See also Michael Broken, *The British Folk Revival: 1944-2002* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2003).

²⁹⁴ As scholar of the Israeli army Orna Sasson-Levy synthesizes, “the Israeli army is conceived as a ‘people’s army’ that serves the universalistic and egalitarian ideology of the modern nation-state, through general mandatory conscription of both men and women since the inception of the state (1948). Military service (...) is perceived as the fundamental expression of the individual’s commitment to the state, and civic virtue is constructed in terms of military virtue” (2002, 359-360). See also Helman (1997). I would add that the notion of “people’s army” serves to bind the very idea of Israel and Israeliness to that of militarism and warfare, meaning that the “army” belongs to the “people” not only because it is made of citizens but because their existence relies on it.

other (Hebrew) words, we could say *rikud ha'am letsava ha'am*—the people's dance (as folk dance is called in Hebrew) for the people's army. The generic concept of “of the people” implies a contrast with ideas of professionalism and specialization. Kadman's call for soldiers with charisma and leadership skills (“authority, will, and influence”) works to compensate for the feeling of “sloppiness” while maintaining the fundamental Zionist concept of peoplehood and confer it truthfulness through enactment. In other words, in the act of bringing people together to dance— despite their talent, experience, and background—the subjective realization of peoplehood materializes. Kadman conceptualizes folk dance as a discourse able to realize the very necessary task of Zionism: to move and bring (its) people together. In an army still ideologically heterogeneous, *Rikud Ha'Am* could strengthen the corporeal feeling of togetherness that the newly established nation-state army needed. With her branching system of folk dance transmission through combined live-and-radio broadcast, able to reach hundreds of soldiers throughout the country at once, Kadman envisions an on-site and dislocated synchronized mass dance. Such a highly coordinated and spatially extended operation reaffirms folk dance as a territorializing practice able to expand in spite of the soldiers' technical inadequacy or inexperience.²⁹⁵

While the practical success of the folk dance radio broadcast—meaning, its ability to actually teach steps—has been disputed, the success in popularity of Kadman's operation and its ability to reach a vast audience encouraged the implementation of folk dance instruction and practice in the official structure of the army training structure, and increased its value as political-cultural capital. Perhaps, by contrast, the incorporeal yet omniscient radiophonic broadcast strengthened the force of the corporeal message. In fact, before television, radio was the primary mode of

²⁹⁵ For a synthesis on some principles of mass dance, see Franko (2002, 24-28).

mass outreach, inherently homogenizing its audience as a one. With folk dance, the soldiers' physical labor conveys not only the idea of fight and struggle but that of State through the choreography's affect and repertorized scores.²⁹⁶ In this experimental national radio broadcast, Kadman utilizes the consolidated role of folk dance as a national practice to produce an embodied knowledge of peoplehood in the national army that overcomes the pre-State fragmentations of the Jewish militias. Furthermore, it transcends the idea of national army merely as military, and incorporates a civilian order in the military one.²⁹⁷

The integration of "Israeli folk dance" (...*Now we're just doing Israeli dances*) as an institutionalized practice in the army contributed to the passage from militias' fighters to the independent country's soldiers.²⁹⁸ Folk dance, becoming itself structured in the army apparatus, performed the *mamlachtiut*'s principle of centralization by implementing the "Israeli" peoplehood's corporeality in the army's identity, through a dance genre that, in its technical accessibility, required precision and energy. In so doing, folk dance training transmitted to soldiers' bodies knowledge about how to perform and project their national sense of peoplehood downplaying their military traits. Furthermore, folk dance in the army served the production of a specific Israeli *oikonomia*, of a mode of government and administration of bodies that wanted to be and be perceived as Israeli. Over time, with the strengthening of the organizational and

²⁹⁶ *Bama'ahak*, "struggle" was a principle of the Palmach and the title of one of its magazines.

²⁹⁷ The fusion of civilian and military in the army will result evident in the IDF bands in the 1960s and 1970s, as I will later detail.

²⁹⁸ I borrow the title of Jacob Goldstein's monograph *From Fighters to Soldiers: How the Israeli Defense Forces began* (1998). The idea of independency in this context becomes synonym of nation-state. In a notorious speak known as "The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution" (1944), Ben-Gurion insisted on the connection between sense of peoplehood and independent statehood. "Independence [...] means more than political and economic freedom; it involves also the spiritual, moral, and intellectual realms, and, in essence, it is independence in the heart, in sentiment, and in will... [...] The second indispensable imperative of the Jewish revolution [besides independence] is the unity of its protagonists" (in Troy 2018, 149).

military training apparatus of the IDF, the choreocratic function of folk dance—with its contribution to the embodiment of the IDF’s bodily and political values—became obsolete. Moreover, the training system Kadman and other instructors of the folk dance assemblage organized did not find continuity within the army structure and male-dominated hierarchy. For instance, in a handwritten report of a folk dance course from 1952, an instructor, Mira Bezfrozbeni, teaching “mostly lonely immigrant soldiers, with low education level in dance as well as in anything else,” presumably from the Naḥal, lamented the impossibility of reaching her goal in an eight-day course (IDF Archive, File number: 25/302/1954).²⁹⁹ Despite the soldiers’ enthusiasm, the officers were not able to select soldiers according to Kadman’s criteria and did not offer the proper environment for a dance workshop.³⁰⁰ Finally, Bezfrozbeni complained about the lack of recognition and respect that folk dance instructors received, proposing that “after two years in this job, we can ask for some kind of a representative status, maybe even a special rank for the courses” (ibid.). This would have meant a radical 'civilianization' of the military. Nevertheless, its importance relies on the education and transmission of a soldier corporeality, able to perform a civilian competence and persona while simultaneously representing not only a national body but the State. The following section illustrates the evolution of choreocracy in the IDF from apparatus focused on the implementation of national cohesiveness through folk dance to system that enhanced a more international image of the IDF

²⁹⁹ Bezfrozbeni’s report is archived along with documents related to the Naḥal command and Naḥal Arts Officer. The Naḥal is a military program that combines army service, where soldiers are trained as paratroopers, and service in agricultural settlements. It was one of the first units established in the IDF. Because of this and its mixed role of military and settlement force, it is particularly well-regarded in the Israeli collective memory. For a history of the Naḥal, see *Naḥal* (1963), Gidon (1967), and Peters (2008).

³⁰⁰ Bezfrozbeni also complained about the excess of heat and the lack of water. She even reported the abusive behavior that “soldiers in the base” had towards “the participants in the course,” and the sergeants’ humiliating behavior towards soldiers in basic training.

as a globalized “people’s army,” able to represent and influence the nation while expanding the cultural breath of its performance activities in the years of Israel’s military expansionism.

Part II Choreographing a Sabra Soldierhood in IDF Dance Troupes

In the 1960s, the intensification of the military hostility between Israel and the neighboring Arab countries, in particular Egypt for the control of the Suez Canal, the technological improvements within the IDF, and the progressive Westernization of popular culture in Israel affected changes in the military agenda and in the presence of dance in the IDF. By then, folk dance was considered, for a new-born state, a practice of the Yishuv, an emblem of a national tradition but not appropriate for the young, native Israeli—the Sabra. At the same time, the development of new military training systems, and the consolidation of a more organized hierarchy in the army revealed the obsolescence of Kadman’s choreocratic structure. Moreover, the dispatch of soldiers along the borders to confront possible attacks generated new ways of organizing the life of the Israeli soldier.

It is in this context that the IDF introduced dance and entertainment troupes comprised of male and female conscripted soldiers. With their shows primarily organized for an audience of fellow soldiers, the army troupes became a symbol of Israel military and popular culture for two decades, until 1978, when, with the installment of the new conservative government, the army troupes were disbanded. In this section, I will argue that the army entertainment troupes (*lehaqot tzvayiot*) promoted and exemplified peculiar shifts in the conceptualization of the Sabra body as Israeli and Western at the same time, reiterating, however, the system of patriarchal oppression on which the army as an institution lies.

Spectacle is a constitutive part of the army apparatus in general. Military historian Scott Hughes Myerly identifies “military spectacle” as a specific genre of entertainment aimed at impressing military values on the civil society or at connecting civil society to the army beyond major military events like wars (see Myerly 1996, ch. 8). In this genre, Myerly includes mass parades during military or national celebrations but also the simple spectacle of off-duty soldiers “walking in the street with the correct manner and ‘military air’” (139), generating in the civilians a desire to imitate the soldiers or, at least, a sense of respect. As Marcel Mauss reminds us writing about marching as a culturally constructed technique of the body, “each society has its own special habits” (71-72). Israeli soldiers had to cultivate and project a specific idea of Sabra body, simultaneously conveying specific values associated with the IDF. In contrast to military parades, military entertainment troupes perform artistic activities officially organized for the entertainment of soldiers under conscription, on duty, or during missions. Music, theater, and dance ensembles within a military apparatus are presented as recreational structures, meaning as services for the well-being of the soldiers. Implicitly, the well-being of the soldiers enhances their efficiency and strengthens their affiliation to the military apparatus and its values.³⁰¹

Army bands are a common phenomenon in several armies around the world, but in Israel they had a particular impact on the incorporation of military values, nationalist ideology, and military-civil continuity in Israeli popular culture and public life. In general, entertainment groups in the IDF (*lehaqot tzvayiot*) were made up of conscripted male and female soldiers from different units, performing for their fellows, touring from unit to unit. Of particular relevance in scholarship and in the popular Israeli imaginary is the legacy of music military bands, due to the

³⁰¹ Such a logic is reproduced in the contemporary corporate world, especially in high-tech company that manage sensitive data, where workers are provided free food, games, relax areas, etc. to keep the workers productive, well-inclined, and ideologically and affectively affiliated to the organization’s mission and labor system.

fact that the songs and the singers of the music troupes were able to reach a larger popular resonance and notoriety beyond the audience of soldiers through radio broadcasts.³⁰² Differently, dance troupes have rarely been investigated as an autonomous and relevant phenomenon in the shaping of Israel's pop culture and dance culture (briefly in Roginsky 2004).

Indeed, some of the soldiers who danced in the *lehaqot tzvayiot* have become influential personalities in the Israeli concert dance scene. Moreover, modern dance companies such as Batsheva and Bat-Dor increased their social prestige and cultural relevance by sharing their labor force with the IDF dance bands. These military dancing bodies contributed to the legitimization of specific, yet shifting, ideas of Israeli body. In the following pages, I will show how the *lehaqot tzvayot* contributed to the definition of Sabra body and its adjustment in light of specific historical and political circumstances. In Chapter 1 (Part II), I showed how dances emerged in kibbutz culture contributed to Israel's alignment to the Western bloc during the Cold War. Similarly, the *lehaqot tzvayot* contributed to the Westernization—or better, the Americanization—of Israeli popular culture. On the one hand, the introduction of genres such as rock 'n' roll or Broadway musicals in Israeli culture in the 1960s and 1970s worked as an “updating” strategy for the Zionist conceptualization of the Sabra body as young and vital. On the other hand, while restating hegemonic Western values such as heteronormative masculinity, Israeli soldiers's performance of concert dance styles proposed an idea of Israeli masculinity different from that of the tough combat soldier. As I will show, this alternative masculinity emerged to serve contingent political purposes and, ultimately, restated the core military, patriarchal values.

³⁰² On the impact of the IDF music troupes on the Israeli popular culture, see Regev and Seroussi (2004), Stein Kokin (2018).

II. 1 Soldiers on Stage: Negotiating Toughness, Affirming Heteronormativity

Military entertainment groups emerged during the war in 1948 in pre-IDF military formations such as the Palmach, with the *Chizbatron* troupe probably being the most renowned. Even after the official constitution of the IDF in May 1948, the previously independent military formations maintained a certain degree of autonomy—a cultural autonomy. It is known that in 1949 Rivka Sturman “was invited to form a performance group from soldiers of the Portzim division of the Palmach” (Sturman in Ingber 2011, 121), called Lehakat Harel. In the immediate years following the declaration of independence, the Palmach and its soldiers kept representing the fighting kibbutznik, the essential Sabra, and functioned as an authoritative machine for the appropriation and assimilation of Arab cultural behaviors in a Sabra ethos.³⁰³ For Lehakat Harel, Sturman conceived and choreographed *Dodi Li* (“My Beloved”), still one of the most commonly performed “Israeli folk dances,” and *Iti MeLevanon* (“With Me from Lebanon”), which together constituted a program called *Machol HaShnatayim* (“Dance for Two”), which aesthetically and politically established the agenda of Israeli folk dance: the appropriation of the Yemenite step and its rebranding as Israeli, and the celebration of Israel's territorialization in the region.

The model for the military entertainment troupes in the IDF came from the British army and in particular from its Jewish units. During World War II, Jewish Zionists performers, some of whom were internationally renowned, established groups that combined theater, music, and dance, which they performed in Hebrew while exhibiting the flag of the not-yet established State of Israel. For instance, in 1942, the acting instructor of Sarah Levi-Tanai at the Habima Theater,

³⁰³ On this last point, see Mendel and Ranta (2016). The name of the above mentioned Palmach troupe “Chizbatron” comes from *chizbat*, “a word adopted from Arabic into Hebrew, [which indicates] a category of oral story telling tradition that brings together myth, reality, and humor. It comes from the Arabic word for lie, ‘*kidhb*’, and is based on the local Arab culture of telling ‘tall tales’” (Mendel and Ranta 2016, 122n15).

Zvi Friedland (1898-1967), established a *lehaqat tzavayit* with the renown Viennese actor and dancer Menachem Rudin (1905-2001) as choreographer (Tessler 2007: 15). With the rise of the Nazi regime, Rudin, born Rudolf Schmidt, illegally migrated to Palestine and changed his name into a Hebrew one. In 1930, the New York Times praised him as “a genial and vigorous actor.”³⁰⁴ Artistic prestige, combined with military commitment to anti-Fascism and the Allies (United Kingdom and United States in particular), clearly served as a propaganda machine for the promotion and international affirmation of the Zionist project. At the same time, Zionist performers became a model for the re-import in Israel of artistic “heroes.”

With the establishment of the State, of the IDF, its Culture Division, and the development of its Education Program, in the 1950s and 1960s, several units formed entertainment groups. Music, and in particular singing, have always been the dominant disciplines. The troupes formed in the Navy corps unsuccessfully tried to implement dance, but the commanders generally did not approve of artistic activities as entertainment practices. In those decades, the leading corps for the legitimation of entertainment—as an appropriate, engaging, and properly Sabra practice among the military and civil society—was the Naḥal Brigade.³⁰⁵ Photographs of the *Lehaqat HaNaḥal* are part of Israel’s collective memory. Iconic images commonly show men and some women in everyday uniforms (without combat boots), with smiling faces and eyes open in

³⁰⁴ During the war, like the folk dancer Shalom Hermon, Rudin served in the Jewish units of the British army. In Israel, he worked as an actor and mostly as a dancer, probably for difficulties with the Hebrew language. In 1956 he returned to Vienna, where he resumed his acting career, maintaining Rudin as his last name but adopting the more German Werner as first name¹. For biographical notes on Rudin, see the documentary by Derschmidt and Schneider (1999).

In the same year 1942, the Yiddish and Hebrew actor and committed Zionist Eliyahu Goldenberg (1909-1976) established another entertainment troupe, *lehaqat “me’eyin ze,”* within the prestigious Jewish Brigade of the British army. Eliyahu was born in Ukraine and migrated to Mandate Palestine in 1938. In Europe, he had already staged plays of Zionist subject matter in Hebrew language, and in the 1950s and 1960s, he represented Israel in international theater festivals. “Me’eyin Ze” performed also in the liberated camp of Bergen-Belsen.

³⁰⁵ See, *supra*, n. 299. Naḥal is the abbreviated term for *Noar Halutzi Lohem* (Pioneering Fighting Youth).

cheerful surprise, and with their hands wide open and palms in display (what we commonly indicate as “jazz hands”). *Lehaqat HaNaḥal* was established in 1950 as a continuation of the (disbanded) Palmach’s *Chizbatron* group. As a voluntary military corps, the Naḥal had the two main tasks of engaging young soldiers in military training and having them engage in agricultural work—in other words, settlement building, since its units were strategically located along the borders.³⁰⁶ These were the main principles celebrated in the Naḥal: Sabra youth, risk-taking in border defense, service to the larger community, and comradeship as a horizontal, democratic value. As the historian of the Naḥal Gidon Levitas reports, in his instructional lectures to the officers, the first head of the Naḥal department within the Ministry of Defense Eliyahu Shomroni (1953) addressed the “psychological dangers involved in military training,” which included the possibility of “destroy[ing] [the soldier’s] dignity as a man” (Levitas 1967: 21). At the official level, on the one hand, Kadman’s program for folk dance instruction, implemented in the Naḥal too, worked more as a corporeal disciplining practice. On the other hand, the Naḥal entertainment band worked as a soldier-centered community project for the soldiers’ emotional and physical release, both as performers and as audience members.

Sociologist Motti Regev and musicologist Edwin Seroussi indicate that the input for the establishment of *Lehaqat HaNaḥal* came from sergeant Giora Manor (1926-2005), who was then an actor and, since the 1970s, one of the first professional dance critics and dance historians in Israel (2004: 99).³⁰⁷ The first productions of the troupes were original, small-scale musicals.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ In the Naḥal, each unit settled in and corresponded to a *garin* (lit. “nucleus”), an agricultural settlement structured similarly to a small-scale kibbutz but its stability relies on the stability of the unit.

³⁰⁷ For a biographical account of Giora Manor, see Eshel (2005). The troupe used to rehearse in a movie theater in Ramat HaSharon.

³⁰⁸ See also the website www.army-bands.co.il (Hebrew), a collection of personal stories about the army entertainment troupes, curated by Yoram Siman-Tov.

Conscripted soldiers that joined the troupe possessed artistic talent and sought artistic fulfillment. Their—in particular, Manor's—conceptualization of entertainment did not necessarily correspond to the idea of entertainment as recreational spectacle or *vaudeville* that the audience of soldiers and commanders had in mind. In the following programs, the soldiers-authors expanded the comedic sketches and reserved visibility to female singers and actors such as Yona Atari, one of the four women in the first troupe along with seven men. The large majority of male conscripted soldiers and officers, indeed, conceived the female presence on stage as more "rewarding" than funny kits or impressions of politicians. Later on, as I will show, the establishment of dance-only troupes will favor the emphasis of the sexualization of the female soldiers.

Since 1955, pantomime became a signature feature of the army bands. In that year, troupe members Yossi Banai (1932-2006), a future celebrated actor and singer, and Uri Zohar (b.1935), a future movie star, required the presence of a stable choreographer to organize movement, especially for singers. Gestures usually mimicked the lyrics and emphasized emotional passages in the narrative; thus, the presence of a dance expert was limited to the need to make the performance more accessible to a generic audience of soldiers. The most relevant aspect is that dance is the first of the performing arts in the troupe for which the army hired professional instructors from outside (for music, it would happen only later in 1966). In particular, in 1959—when among the troupe's performers was a young Gabi Aldor, today an established dance critic and dance writer—the choreographer of *Lehaqat HaNaḥal* was Naomi Polani (1927-), a former member of the Palmach's *Chitzbatron*, and a dancer in Noa Eshkol's newly-established,

experimental, modern dance company The Chamber Dance Group.³⁰⁹ The troupe did not look for professional folk dancers but for a professional figure who would be aware of the rules of the concert stage and also able to implement a form of expressive dance that could support the narrative scheme of the productions.³¹⁰ Why was a stage and movement expertise necessary if, in the end, the goal of the army troupe was to make the soldiers laugh? Evidently, there was more at stake. Besides her previous knowledge of army life, Polani had the necessary expertise for enhancing the professional level of the troupe. Both the troupe members and the commands supported the advancement of the ensemble's artistic quality. More importantly, between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the entertainment troupe model established itself as the most effective, bottom-up vehicle for the dissemination of a specific idea of "Israeliness" in popular culture.

In this regard, the work of the army troupes and their dance figures differed from that of the folk dance assemblage. On the one hand, folk dance celebrations aimed to establish an official national culture in which the individual was conceived as a responsible and participative part of a collective ethos. On the other hand, the performances of the army troupes were openly articulated as entertainment whose commodity value for the emergence of an Israeli entertainment industry did not need to be concealed. In fact, by being a structural part of the national military apparatus, the entertainment troupes did not need to claim and reclaim national belonging. Like all Western, modern states, Israel needed an entertainment system in order to clearly define from the top down hierarchies of power and sexuality. While, initially, the shows

³⁰⁹ During an official celebration, the President of Israel Reuven Rivlin called Polani "the mother of the entertainment units." ("Palmach Veteran Naomi Polani Honored by President Rivlin," *Jerusalem Post*, April 19, 2018).

³¹⁰ In the 1950s, dance was still a marginal component in the spectacular apparatus of the troupe, but the modern dance corporeal culture introduced during this decade would come to determine the development of the future only-dance troupes in the IDF.

of the army troupes were conceived only for an audience of soldiers (conscripted, officials, and in reserve duty), they progressively expanded to the civilian public through tours, official events, and television broadcast. First, the army troupes helped to disseminate an idea of “national” as military in the (only apparently oxymoronic) combination of combat and recreation, attack and release. Second, they introduced an official idea of national masculinity able to mitigate the toughness of the combat soldier for the Israeli popular and international perception of the IDF as “a people’s army.”

An example of this dual function is the way in which the performance of musicals, which functioned as a genre that combines music, theater, and dance, favored the display of skillfulness and multi-tasking to counterbalance the removal of toughness—a removal authorized within the temporary framework of entertainment. The performance of entertainment granted the male soldiers a release from the work of military normative toughness as an identifier of masculine soldierhood, a release that only portended its reinstatement and reaffirmation. In fact, the army’s stage worked as a mirroring projection of normative values. Indeed, the presence of narrative allowed the ad hoc introduction of heterosexual plots as the norm in the army. Women in *Lehaqat HaNaḥal* served as the heteronormative object of love, like in the fourth program of the troupe (1953), where a love story performed by Yona Atari and Yossi Banai was expressly introduced in a piece about the life of a Naḥal soldier seen through the eyes of his American uncle (*Ta’aot Le’Olam Chozeret*, “A mistake to never repeat”). While toughness, generally associated to combat or army duty, had to be mitigated in order to offer an entertaining and recreational spectacle, heteronormativity had to be affirmed as the official, public, nationally and internationally-exportable sexual ethos of the Israeli soldier.³¹¹

³¹¹ Writing about homosexuality in contemporary IDF, Danny Kaplan affirms that “since heterosexuality is assumed to be the only possible option for (masculinary) soldiers, gays have no *public* existence in this setting, other

II. 2 Recentralizing Military Control over the Bodies

Even though the first military entertainment troupes were formed in the 1950s, it was in the 1960s that they reached the highest social recognition, and some of their members obtained the status of national icons. Their performers combined a Sabra sense of national pride and manifested a sense of physical easiness—a characteristic Sabra “coolness”—as the epilogue of the process of secular ‘NewJewization.’³¹² In the Israeli public opinion, male performing-soldiers combined all the most desirable dichotomies: committed soldier and regular guy, protective citizen and funny pal, national hero and boy-next-door. The music of the military entertainment troupes easily and successfully reached the civil audience through vinyl records and radio broadcasts. Dance and movement from the *lehaqot* permeated the civil realm in a different way from music entertainment.³¹³

than as cultural emblems. [...] Soldiers ‘need’ the figure of the homosexual to stress boundaries of acceptable (heterosexual) norms.” He also adds that in the heteronormative military environment, not surprisingly, jokes place women and homosexuals as the objects of fun (2003, 120-121).

Regev and Seroussi report that a hit of *Lehaqat HaNahal* was “a love song to a female soldier, sung by a group of male soldiers. It expresses the collective adoration of the young soldiers for a girl who is a clerk in the lieutenant’s office. During their lunch break, they look through her file and sing about the color of her eyes, her height, and other details noted there. The song stands out as a light, male-chauvinist look at the presence of women in the military” (2004: 101). The two authors call lightness something that they associate to a sense of “innocence” they detect in the first years of the troupe, and that I rather call strategic naïveté. The “early simplicity” (100) of the first productions, with plots about life in the army and the soldier’s longing for ‘love,’ remained a vehicle for the affirmation of patriarchal and heteronormative values.

³¹² Lalin Anik (2018) generally defines “coolness” through three fundamental principles: autonomy, authenticity, and attitude. They can differently articulate culturally and in time. On the performance of coolness as a military Sabra feature, see Avneri (1972).

³¹³ What I am interested in assessing is not how military and civil define themselves when their boundaries blur; conversely, such dichotomies exist because of the foundational reciprocity of the two elements. Thus, it was logical and necessary for the civil realm to be permeated by military culture and vice versa.

In June 1958, the Chief Education Officer of the IDF A. Zeev granted permission to the entertainment troupes to perform at the fourth Dalia festival in July.³¹⁴ Even though there were not specific or official dance ensembles in the IDF at that time, in his letter to the Histadrut and the Hapoel board (the board of the folk dance company run by Kadman), Zeev mentioned the “Nachal dance, the Tzanhanim dance, and the Shirion dance” groups. He added that their performances would be “revised by a representative of the chief education officer before the public performance” (IDF Archive, File number: 50/640/1963). In a subsequent communication from June 25, Major Lieberman, head of the “Havai” entertainment division, asked to add “the IDF dancing teams,” explaining that “these teams are working in the field of folk dance inside the IDF and we think that it is crucial that they participate in such an event as [the Dalia festival]” (IDF Archive, File number: 50/640/1963).³¹⁵ I read this initiative as strictly associated to Kadman’s project of expansion of “the [folk dance] instruction network in 1945-1955” (Kadman 1969: par. 43) within the most important institution of the State and the Israeli youth. The disciplined practice of folk dancing in the IDF ultimately benefited the civil folk dance assemblage and offered a further certification of the dances’ “Israeliness.”³¹⁶

However, the experience of dance in the entertainment troupes progressively evaded the folk dance realm. More specifically, the entertainment groups constitute a project different from

³¹⁴ This edition of the Dalia festival was particularly important because it coincided with the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the State. The Histadrut, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Tourism sponsored the event. Dance groups auditioned to participate and had to learn mandatory dances. For the first time, they hired a professional to organize the opening of the festival, Shulamit Bat-Dori (1904-1985), who studied dance with Laban and specialized in mass performances before making *alyiah* in 1934. The Dalia festival of 1958 featured 1,500-2,000 dancers, and an audience of 50,000 people (see Kadman 1969, par. 49, and Carmel-Hakim 2009).

³¹⁵ Major Lieberman lists the following as part of the dance team “personnel”: Ilana Greenberg, Adina Levi, Rivka Nahusi, Albert Bachar, Reuven Shmuelovitz, Hava Sheri, Rene Frank, Rachel Ben-Zvi.

³¹⁶ Kadman wrote: “Nowhere in the world is there such an encompassing instruction movement and practical curriculum like ours, since the ‘normal’ nations do not need it. Only us, due to our special condition, are commanded to teach the dances to our people (...)” (1969: par. 44).

Kadman's. For instance, the folk dance training program was meant to teach folk dance steps but not to develop artistic competence and produce entertainment classifiable as "recreational" for the male soldier. Also, as mentioned at the end of Part I, the training system were ultimately unsuccessful, for the dissemination of folk dance practice among soldiers, and the instructors of the folk dance assemblage demanded an organizational control that the military rank were not willing to grant. With the consolidation of *lehaqot hatsavayiot*, the IDF regained control of the organization of performance activities in the army, while guaranteeing a higher quality of performance with semi-professional soldiers who could dedicate their service only to performance, and with the externalization of expert labor by hiring professionals like Naomi Polani.

With the military recentralization of control over the organization of performance activities in the IDF in the 1960s and 1970s, the influence of civil institutions such as the Folk Dance Department within the Histadrut, established by Kadman in 1952, diminished, and the IDF Headquarters of Education took the lead. In this way, the IDF could decide—without negotiating with civilian bodies how and when the soldiers-performers would dance in a uniform—how to manage military and non-military training, etc. Not only was the IDF directly exercising its own choreocratic power by managing the army entertainment troupes, but their model got exported from the military to the civil realm. An exemplary case is that of Naomi Polani, who in 1960 established a non-military troupe formed by discharged Nahal performers, called *HaTarnegolim* (“The Roosters”). Even though *HaTarnegolim* was a civilian pop group, organizationally, it replicated the model of the *lehaqot*. *HaTarnegolim* was primarily a music band organized per programs like the army troupes, with the first program/formation made of men only, performing the repertory of the *Lehaqat HaNahal*. Although the ensemble was not an IDF one, it was

perceived as such because of its members, structure, and performances. Polani herself embodied the blur of civil and military spheres. In sum, the IDF succeeded in producing a political-cultural model of military strength associated with an idea of human light-heartedness that the *lehaqot tzvayiot* specifically crafted.

It is important not to lose sight of the larger context of the military activities of the IDF throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In general, I support a reading of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in terms of a continuum in which different strategies, agendas, alliances follow, and new traumas, new questions, new divisions emerge alongside new solidarities and forms of resistance. The 1947-49 war set Israel/Palestine under the spotlight within a terrain of contention of political hegemony in the Cold War years. The realignment of Egypt with the Soviet Union in 1955 and the consequent United States' fear of Moscow's control over the Middle East provoked the 1956 war for the Western conquest of the Suez Canal. In October-November 1956, "after seven days of fighting," during which Israel took military control over Gaza and Egypt's Sinai, "several thousand Egyptians, 500 Palestinians (mostly civilians in the Gaza Strip), and 190 Israelis had been killed; 800 Israelis were wounded, and about 4000 Egyptians taken prisoner" (Caplan 2010, 142). Israel withdrew its troops in March 1957, under the pressure of a United Nations Emergency Force that established its outposts along the Israeli-Egyptian border. IDF operations to control *feday'un* border infiltrations were ongoing. Between the 1950s and 60s, Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) form, under the support of the Arab League. The first military fight between Fatah and Israel in the West-Bank in 1965-66 escalated in the Six-Day war in which Israel occupied the Sinai, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights (Fig. 2). After 1967, most of the *lehaqot tzavayot's* performances happened, in fact, in the units located in the desert and in the Golan. While the U. N. was pressing for an

Israeli withdrawal, larger and smaller scale attacks continued: the “war of attrition” between Israel and Egypt in 1969-1970, hijackings, guerrillas between supposed allies, the 1972 terror attacks at the Tel Aviv airport and at the Munich Olympics, and the 1973 war of Egypt and Syria against Israel.

The latter, known in Israel as the Yom Kippur war (October 6, 1973) and called Ramadan war in Palestine, started as an unexpected attack of the Arab allies in the Sinai and the Golan, reconquering parts of the land occupied in 1967. The Yom Kippur war lasted twenty days and caused the highest Israeli death toll in the history of the IDF. In Israel, it symbolizes the precariousness of Israel’s borders and Israeli lives. It also indicated the fact that the Israeli army was not invincible. Before the Yom Kippur war, the Israeli population and the soldiers themselves believed the IDF was unbeatable (Boyne 2002). This war represented a shock not only for the Israeli public opinion but for the IDF commands themselves, which at the time responded to the “tough” and iconic Minister of Defense and former Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan.³¹⁷ It also left ineffable shocks for the soldiers (Lomsky-Feder 2004), as well as a sense of threatened masculinity in need to be reaffirmed.

In light of the military and cultural-military shifts of these decades, I argue that the ultimate goal of the *lehaqot tzvayot* was to craft and strategically readjust ideas of “Israeliness” and Israeli corporeality in service of the military-political goals of the nation-state. In particular, in the 1960s and 1970s, and more importantly after the 1967 war, dance in *lehaqot tzvayot* became particularly important for the process of public mitigation of the Israeli soldier’s toughness as a form of recognition of trauma, and as a strategy for the readjustment, even the correction, of an

³¹⁷ For a psychological analysis of the performance of Israeli institutional figures during the Yom Kippur war, see Bar-Joseph and McDermott (2008). Moshe Dayan’s image of toughness was emphasized by his distinctive eyepatch, the consequence of an injury he got during World War II while fighting the Vichy troops (see Lee 2012).

idea of Israeliness previously associated with ideas of the ethnic melting-pot. In other words, I will show how the IDF through the *lehaqot tzvayiot* and in particular its dance troupes reclaimed itself as the site for the reaffirmation of a Sabra masculinity as Western, Ashkenazi, and predominantly secular.

It is in reference to the tumultuous context I described above that I conceive the IDF's implementation of dance entertainment in the life of the soldier as a strategy of domestication through lightheartedness and momentary relief from a normative idea of tough soldierhood, without renouncing normative masculinity. In the following paragraphs, I will show how the disciplining of the soldier body works in relation to the dance entertainment troupes both for the soldier-audience and for the soldier-dancer. While the audience was predominantly comprised of male soldiers trained for combat and located in the high-risk areas of the Occupied Sinai and Golan, the dance troupes were formed by men and, progressively, an increasing number of women.

II. 3 Sabra and Desire: Western Gender Normativity in the Pahad Dance Troupe

Historian Anita Shapira defines the years between the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War as the Israeli “age of euphoria” (2012, 307). After the occupation of the Sinai, “suddenly Israel was a world celebrity,” with journalists, tourists, and new migrants “excited by the military feats of this small country against all its aggressors” (ibid.). In the public imaginary, IDF soldiers replaced the ‘rougher’ heroes of the Yishuv, mostly through publications and media materials sponsored by the IDF itself. At the same time, exponents of State institutions such as Ben-Gurion or the then-Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin manifested a more cautious attitude, talking about negotiations for peace and acknowledging the cost of lives in war—discourses that reinstated

rebalanced the idea of the IDF as a moral army. After the 1967 war, and even more so after the Yom Kippur one in 1973, the IDF expanded its psychology department, transferring it from the Manpower Branch to the Ground Forces (Ben-Shalom and Fox 2009: 109), and initiated investigations among veterans.³¹⁸ The quadruplication of the territory under Israeli control corresponded to the establishment of stable outposts in the Sinai and Northern Galilee, and complicated the organization of responsibilities and departments in the IDF. While the former chief psychologist of the IDF Reuven Gal wrote that, after 1967, “standing forces in the Sinai and Golan Heights were quite relaxed and overtly self-confident” (1986: 21), after the Yom Kippur war and the end of the “euphoria,” ground soldiers dispatched in the Sinai felt particularly isolated, lonely, and under constant and concrete threat.

Written communication among the IDF Education Office, the Central Command, the Man Power branch, and the Entertainment Division, between 1968 and 1978 (the year in which the entertainment troupes will be dismissed), show the need for entertainment groups in the newly occupied territories and the modes of regularization of their practices (IDF Archive, File 25/1040/1970).³¹⁹ Several units had their own entertainment groups. Each group had to respond to its unit’s commands, which could have the troupe at their complete disposal for one month per year; for the rest of the year, the troupes would be at the disposal (*sic*) of the entertainment division, to be sent on tour to other units.

³¹⁸ In general, psychology in an army aims to guarantee the soldiers’ best performance according to the commands’ objectives. Psychology departments function as “human resources” that assess where to place a soldier according to her/his psychological profile. The so-called “military psychology” relies on resilience as the principle according to which a soldier, whether s/he overcomes or live with trauma and, is able to recuperate the condition to return militarily operative. On the topic, see Bowles and Bartone (2017); on the development of psychology within the IDF, see Ben-Shalom and Fox (2009).

³¹⁹ For instance, because of the expansion of the military troupe model in the civil realm, a communication prescribes that only soldiers on active duty were allowed to wear the IDF uniform while performing.

The *Piqud HaHadracha* (Training Command) was a special IDF command formed in 1951 within the Training Department, directly connected to the General Staff (the leading group of senior commanders), and in charge of the ground soldiers' training system, of the training of instructors, and of the sport branches, among others.³²⁰ In 1972, the Training Command established a band, the *Tzavat Havai Piqud HaHadracha* under the initiative and command of Yoni Nimri (1952), who later became an appreciated singer in Israel. The first program and its accompanying album were very successful, while the second was affected by the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, and the group disbanded.

In 1974, folk dancer Gavri Levy (1937-2018) proposed the Training Command to create the first troupe for dance only within the IDF. Levy had a strong institutional curriculum. As a young dancer, he was in the Histadrut's Hapoel folk dance group of Petach Tikva, and, after his military service, in the 1960s, joined the group of Yonatan Karmon (1930), a folk dance choreographer, musical choreographer and director, defined on the website of the National Library of Israel as "the choreographer who defined Israeliness" and whose company was "a hallmark of all the good in Israeliness."³²¹ "Everything I know I learned from Karmon," Gavri Levy declared (Oren 2018). Breaking with the 1950s ideal of Sabra, still rooted in the "rougher" Yishuv aesthetic, Karmon promoted a more "modern" idea of "Israeliness," meaning one that was more aligned

³²⁰ The Training Command was dismantled in 1977 and its duties and personnel were rearranged and redistributed.

³²¹ https://blog.nli.org.il/yonatan_carmon (Last accessed: November 29, 2018). Upon his arrival to Palestine in 1943, Karmon trained in modern dance, joining Getrud Kraus's modern dance group, danced in Rivka Sturman's Palmach troupe, and started to train in ballet after Jerome Robbins' restructuring of dance training in Israel. With his own folk dance group, in 1958, Karmon performed at Ed Sullivan's tv show and toured in the States in the 1960s. In an interview with Judith Brin Ingber (Ingber 2011: 154-157), Karmon explains his interest in defining "an Israeli style" and adds that, for this purpose, his dancers "are all Israelis" (155). For a reference to Karmon's *querelle* with Sara Levi-Tanai about Inbal's mono-ethnic status (thus not representative of the Israeli melting pot or the Ashkenazi hegemony), see Roginsky (2006: 183 and 195n62). Ayala Goren-Kadman (the daughter of Gurit Kadman) identified Karmon as "the ideal Sabra male dancer as well as the choreographer who truly defined the aesthetic of the Eretz Israeli dancer overall" (Neuman 2011, 89).

with the Western coeval aesthetic. Twenty-five years after the so-called “1948 generation” in which the Sabra distinctive features had been canonized and then glorified in the image of the IDF soldier as the “gray soldier” (an image popularized by poet Ayin Hillel) (1926-1990) (Weiss 1994: 23), in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war, Gavri Levy launched a more “colorful” image of the Israeli soldier and, by extension of Israeliness, drawing from mainstream American pop and dance culture.³²²

Karmon’s teachings on the aesthetic ways of “modernizing” an idea of Israeliness through dance reiterated the patriarchal order in which Sabra culture is inscribed. The posters and programs of Yonatan Karmon’s dance groups show light, athletic, good-looking, and Western-looking Israeli men jumping high with their fluttering hair, while the women, sitting on the floor, watch them with admiration (London, March 3, 1962; Birmingham, March 18, 1963). The women have fashionable high ponytails, and wear above-the-knee poodle skirts that reveal their bare legs when spinning (Tel Aviv, June 11, 1966). An idea of beauty able to combine fashion trends and ideas of Sabra is part of the Karmon’s aesthetic that Gavri Levy extended to the dance troupe he directed in the IDF, *Lehaqat HaMachol shel Piqud HaHadracha – Pahad* (The Dance Troupe of the Training Command).³²³ Former female company members confirm that “Gavri only chose very beautiful girls. He treated us like models. He used to put us on a scale, and asked us to lose weight if needed.” Any aesthetic changes such as a haircut had to be approved by

³²² After a tour in the U. S. with Karmon’s company, in the early 1960s, Gavri Levy spent about five years in the States to study modern, jazz, and ballet.

³²³ Pahad is the abbreviation of Piqud HaHadracha. Former dancers in the troupe simply refer to it as “Pahad.”

Levy.³²⁴ For the first time, an army troupe featured more women than man (eight women to six men).

Besides having the required physical features, in order to join, new recruits had to audition.³²⁵ Young women who auditioned usually had studio training in ballet or modern. Among the men in the first Pahad dance ensemble, only two had a professional or semi-professional dance training, while one had a background in gymnastics; the others practiced folk dances in their home kibbutz like any other kibbutznik. Gavri Levy tackled the dancers-recruits through intensive training. Before the first performance, the group took dance classes in ballet, modern, and jazz for about five months. The teachers usually were professional dancers from the main Israeli concert dance companies of the time, Batsheva and Bat-Dor. While the director of the troupe Gavri Levy was externally hired, teachers like Gaby Bar and Yacov Sharir were young dancers that performed their mandatory army service by teaching in the Pahad while keeping dancing professionally outside the IDF.

After the training phase, begun in December 1974, choreographers started to create pieces for the first program. Gavri Levy choreographed folk dances. Batsheva's dancer Yacov Sharir, trained in the techniques and repertory of Martha Graham and Jerome Robbins, choreographed two modern pieces and a man-woman duet.³²⁶ Former Sokolow and Batsheva dancer and member of the highly popular Israeli company "Jazz Plus," Galia Gat choreographed a jazz

³²⁴ For a possible comparison between this completely secular aesthetic normativity and pre-state rabbinic-informed physical standards for women, see Spiegel (2013, 21-56) on the Queen Esther beauty competition, 1926-1929.

³²⁵ Usually, the women-soldiers selected were students of the choreographers involved in the creation of the troupe's programs.

³²⁶ Unfortunately, videos of these performances are not currently available. I am in touch with former Pahad dancers who are trying to find video and photographic testimonies of the dances. Hopefully, in the future, I will be able to offer a contextualized choreographic analysis of the pieces.

piece.³²⁷ Indeed, the Pahad troupe was not a *rikudei 'am* troupe, it was not folk dancing: it was *machol*, it was primarily concert dance. Similarly to *Lehaqat Machol Bat-Sheva* and *Lehaqat Maḥol Bat-Dor*, the IDF sponsored a dance group that sought to overcome the idea of “Israeliness” associated with folk dance and the Yishuv, in order to update the idea of Sabra linked to the IDF bodies in more “modern,” more “international” (read more American) terms. The IDF was offering its audience of young soldiers entertainment products in line with the popular trends while keeping its institutional authority. Folk dance as a genre remained part of the troupe’s program but the troupe’s “hits” were the modern and jazz pieces. Furthermore, the implementation of dance genres of the Western tradition worked as a visual, aesthetic intensifier for bodies that needed to be read as Western and Sabra at once, not exclusively Ashkenazi (European) but suitable to be inscribed in the Israeli, yet Western, tradition.

After learning the choreography, the troupe started a five-month tour across the units distributed in the territories controlled by the IDF. The length of a program was about one hour. The dance troupe toured with one singer who would perform in between the dance pieces to allow changes of costume. The troupe usually performed more than once a day for the same unit or for different units, with the exception of the shows for the troops in the Sinai. The Pahad performed in the desert once a week—it could take more than half a day to reach the units in the Sinai by bus from the troupe’s central location in Tel Aviv. The dancers were also in charge of the logistics. For each program, Gavri Levy appointed a troupe member as “artistic director.” Levy, in fact, rarely toured with the Pahad. The appointed dancer, usually the one with the strongest

³²⁷ The role of jazz dance in Israel has not been extensively explored. “Jazz Plus” was established in 1969 by Shimon Brown (1938-)—also a former Batsheva dancer—within an artistic environment that took American pop art as its model. In various oral testimonies, some remember Jazz Plus as the most popular dance company at the time (more than Batsheva and Bat-Dor), appearing on television and in films. For a reference, see Fuhrer (1998, 127), and for a deeper account Artzi (1971).

leadership skills and ability to control the stage (the same features Kadman prescribed), was in charge of all technical and artistic aspects of performance on tour—from bus rides to costumes, from arrangements with the different units' commanders to the dancers' safety. For instance, the troupe was not touring with a staff of electricians or carpenters, thus, especially in the Sinai, where amenities and sources were limited, dancers had to build their own stage and set dynamos. While in a civil dance company this would be considered labor exploitation, in the context of mandatory army service, all the activities the dancers-soldiers were demanded to perform were accepted as indisputable duties. Former Pahad dancers also recount that to perform for fellow soldiers in difficult locations such as the Sinai and Northern Galilee was a moral duty. Comparing themselves to soldiers trained and ready for combat, Pahad dancers did not feel like soldiers at all [interviews with the author].

Pahad dancers did not go through basic training, some never even held a weapon. On the one hand, one might think of this as an unequal hierarchization of lives within the IDF, where some conscripted soldiers risk their lives in combat and others dance. Comparable in terms of physical labor, the military hierarchy equalizes the soldiers' lives and compensates for risk by granting higher social prestige to active fighters. On the other hand, how such prestige materializes in the lives of reservists or former soldiers is not in the army's sphere of interest or activity of outreach. The point is that the army issued a system of distribution, rewards, benefits, and compensations functional to the institution itself, not tailored to fulfill the lives that inhabited it. The validity of such a system is rarely questioned, since it has been absorbed in what Gramsci called "common sense," which is the concept that allows the IDF to maintain the support of the majority of the

Israeli civil society.³²⁸ Even more so, the introduction of dance as an expression of the civil realm in the military realm of the occupied territories worked as a normalizing strategy for colonial consent, especially in the aftermath of the Israeli defeat in the Yom Kippur war, in which the high ranks and the government were heavily attacked and questioned.

The second program (1975-1976) expanded in duration and scope. Yakov Kalusky, a dancer of the Israeli Opera Ballet and choreographer of the Broadway musical *From Israel with Love* (1972), rechoreographed famous numbers from Broadway musicals like *West Side Story* and *Hair*, performed for the first time in Israel in 1970 with great success.³²⁹ Gavri Levy choreographed new folk dances, while his assistant Shlomo “Rosa” Rozmarin (1938-) choreographed two jazz pieces, one of which was only for women dancers and became part of the troupe’s repertory.³³⁰

In 1977, Rozmarin’s choreography only for women was part of a public military celebration broadcast on national television. In front of a large audience predominantly of men in uniform, a woman introduces the piece with a narrative that, in synthesis, recounts that there is no “magic recipe” to craft a “tanned and tough man” and a “tank commander” out of “a father’s and a mother’s 18-year-old boy,” but he will soon learn the hard life of the new recruit. Then, the woman narrator wonders what a new recruit might think of when he goes to bed at night after a long day of training. The mother thinks he dreams of her, same for his girlfriend, the sergeant thinks the soldier dreams of his voice, the teachers think he dreams of Herzl, and the religious

³²⁸ Gramsci defined “common sense” as “the traditional popular conception of the world – what is unimaginatively called ‘instinct’, although it too is in fact a primitive and elementary historical acquisition” (1971, 199). See also Crehan (2011).

³²⁹ Musicals’ hits became also the most popular numbers in the music *lehaqot tzavayiot* (see Regev and Seroussi 2004: 92). Notice also that the dancers were performing on recorded music and were not singing.

³³⁰ While, on the concert stage, women had a prominent role in artistic and administrative positions, in the context of dance in the army, men ruled in both domains, not surprisingly reiterating the military patriarchal order.

officer thinks he dreams of the Bible; but only the young soldier knows exactly what he dreams. At this point, the camera visualizes the allusion, showing the cast of nine female dancers from the Pahad dance troupe, standing with their hands on their hips.

In unison, they slowly step forward, swinging their hips, swiping their bare feet through first position, and smiling, with a slight *épaulement*. At a certain moment, half of the group turns; the dancers cross their arms above the head, hands lightly touching the elbows, and continue to swing while showing their backs. The pulled-up hair allows them to exhibit their bare backs. Now, the group turns and faces the audience again. With their arms long in front of the body and their hands below the belly, the dancers lift the right knee slightly bending forward, shifting to the right, and then to the left, while the other group turns to face the back. The canon between the two groups increases the sinuous feeling generated by the ongoing hip swinging and oscillations of the dresses. Progressively, the ensemble takes up more space with larger steps—thus, exaggerating the hip movements—and light yet low *chassés*, which keep the dance sinuous without athleticism. Now, in unison again, all facing the audience, with their arms once again crossed above their head, they move forward stepping into a second position; then they open their arms in second and slowly approach the audience, sensually stepping one ball of the foot in front of the other exactly on the beat. At this point, the intensity of the dance increases with the whole ensemble swiping across the stage with expansive *chassés*, their arms suddenly opening to the second and softly lowering during each lateral slide. The dance escalates with a typical jazz sequence of *grand battements à la second*, followed by some soft *chainés* across the stage, back and forth, up to the dramatic, choreographic climax, when the dancers, now displaying their left side and gazing at the audience, slowly move their right arm in a full circle, and freeze in a back *cambré*. At this point, the audience claps, male screams distinctively emerge, but the dance is not

over: the music resumes and the dancers return to the initial position—swinging with the hands on their hips, and facing the back. Then, with a series of soft *pas de bourré*, they move closer to one another, and suddenly turn upstage left and, with long and low steps, perpetually swinging their hips, they exit.

Former Pahad dancers recount that, at first, it was “weird” (*sic*) for soldiers to see dance as a form of entertainment in their units. I conceive of such a “weirdness” as the feeling of unfamiliarity with concert dance forms that the audience of soldiers experienced. While the majority was generically familiar with folk dance, theatrical dance techniques were not part of the Sabra popular culture. The experience of the army dance troupes contributed to the expansion of the popular conceptualization of dance as expression of national culture beyond folk dances associated to the Yishuv and the early-State years. Surely, the presence of female dancers made concert dance genres such as jazz and modern more readily available to the unfamiliar audience.

For the national television broadcast, the female dancing soldiers wore an ankle-length white dress; while, during their regular tours for the military units, they used to wear short, colorful dresses. In the television version, the *grand-battements à la seconde* allow the exposure of the women’s legs without compromising the standards of decency to which Israeli women—even Israeli women soldier—were expected to attend. Writing about the “gendering” of military service in the IDF, feminist sociologist Dafna Nundi Izraeli (2000) showed the continuity between “gendered division of labor” and “gendered structure of power” in the civil and military realms. The military applies various strategies to sustain gender inequality (Izraeli 2000: 257) but, in this regard, the experience of the IDF dance troupes is a striking one. Women in the troupe were professionally more qualified; differently from the men, the majority of them had previous professional or semi-professional dance training. Hence, they provided qualified labor

and cultural capital to the army. By providing limited dance training (four to five months per year), the dance troupe did not even constitute a platform for the women dancers to increase their artistry.

Differently from other women in mandatory service, the female dancers-soldiers did not exercise the administrative function that usually enlisted women covered as part of the Women's Corps.³³¹ As sexualized sources of "recreation" for the male soldiers, women soldiers in the dance troupes served as sources for the reiteration and "glorification of the masculine in general and of hegemonic masculinity in particular" (Izraeli 2000: 267), even more so if we consider that all the hierarchical positions above them were occupied by men (from Gavri Levy up to the different heads of units and commands). Glorification of masculinity is one of the functions of women soldiers that Dafna Izraeli conceptualized, and it is usually associated with the construction of the Israeli women's role as caregivers and mothers, or sisters to be protected. Their traditional function of "morale boosters" is usually linked to their inscription in the sphere of domestic comfort and consolation. However, differently from this traditional view, in the years that followed the Israeli defeat in the Yom Kippur War, which questioned the effectiveness of the machoist heroism of the soldiers, women in the army were eroticized as 're-qualifiers' of the men's threatened masculinity. Not only were women dancers-soldiers selected according to physical qualities that corresponded to a stereotyped Hollywoodian canon, but female assistants to commanders were also selected according to physical standards of commodified beauty (Izraeli 2000, 268-280). While in the latter case female beauty bolsters male military power and manliness, in the former, I claim that female dancers-soldiers performing on the military stage

³³¹ CHEN is the acronym of Chel Nashim, the IDF Women's Corps. Ironically, in Hebrew *chen* also means "charm." It was established on May 16, 1948, with the establishment of the IDF, and reorganized throughout the years. The Commander of the Women's Corps has always been a woman.

exercise the function of indexes of desire, meaning that they are not only or exactly treated as “trophies for heroes” (Izraeli 2000: 269) but they indicate what the male soldier is supposed to desire. In this way, they represent the uncanny figure that helps him restore the order of his soldierhood, namely power over bodies and sense of conquest. I claim that this is the most significant aspect of the brief experience of the military dance bands as a post-Yom Kippur war event.

In addition to this point, the introduction of theatrical dance genres in the army reinforced the possibility of connoting the dancing women on stage as indexes of desire. For instance, choreographically, Rozmarin’s piece is a compilation of basic jazz steps—“jazz squares,” expansive *chassés*, “jazz layouts,” and flick-ball-changes as transitions. Mostly, moving horizontally, in unison, with a linear and vertical quality, removing the explosive and explicit energy of jazz bodies, choreographing sensualized female bodies through the emphasis on the hips and the limbs: conceptually, these jazz bodies do not differ too much from traditional female ballet bodies. The traditional, Western, modern, theatrical *dispositif* structurally accommodates the privileging of the male gaze within the patriarchal sovereign and state order (Foster 1996; Franko 2015, 173; Martin 1998, 157). To reproblematicize the experience of the army dance troupes, traditionally overlooked as mere entertainment (and I have showed above why entertainment should not be overlooked as mere) leads to a further inquiry about the never neutral privileging of specific dance genres. First, jazz was a more popular and more accessible genre, but choreographically Rozmarin 'balletized' it. The mix of jazz vocabulary with a balletic, choreographic grid-like structure of horizontal and vertical rigor produced that "sexual titillation" that dance scholar Constance Valis Hill recognized in the combination of jazz with a technique that privileges control, exactitude, and verticality—like ballet (2001, 31).

Whether more explicit in the performances organized in the army units (because of the women's shorter dresses) or more mitigated on national television, women dancing soldiers had to be able to extrude a sense of eroticism that, at the same time, did not compromise the women's symbolic respectability and reminded the military audience of the Sabra's object of sexual desire—hence, of his ultimate Sabra's drive. While the Sabra eroticism as formulated in the 1940s referred primarily to the male body (Almog 2000), later it invested the female body in order to reaffirm the official male heteronormative order. By introducing the aesthetic and technical disciplinary codes of the Western theatrical tradition, the idea of Sabra body promoted in the Pahad abandoned the sense of collective amateurism embedded in the conceptualization of folk dance, and thus the sense of "sloppiness" and "roughness" associated with the Yishuv's Labor Zionist Sabra. In this way, the dancing soldiers of the Pahad performed an image of the Sabra body as more disciplined and patriarchally-marked that better complied with the values of the new, conservative Israeli government and military leadership. The physical code formulated in the IDF with the army troupes persists as the general criterion that indexes institutional corporeal practices in Israel.

II. 4 The Conservative Turn: The Decline of the Dance Army Troupes

The year 1977 is crucial in the history of Israel, the IDF, and its entertainment troupes. For the first time since 1948, in May 1977, the Labor party lost the general elections and the leader of the Likud party, Menachem Begin, former leader of the Irgun (the Yishuv's extreme right-wing militia), became Prime Minister. Begin's election represented a sea change in political, social, and cultural terms. Begin was recognized as a strong, right wing leader who was ceremonious and willing to manifest patriarchal authority—opposite in style to the "sloppy"

political leaders of the Zionist left (Shapira 2012: 357).³³² and to the Labor Zionist-constructed image of the Sabra. During his electoral campaign, Begin opposed the creation of an autonomous Palestinian state. Previously, Labor Prime Ministers discussed land exchange while establishing military outposts and civil settlements in the Occupied Territories. While in practical terms, Israel throughout its political spectrum always affirmed its hegemonic status over the Palestinians, with Begin the discourse shifted: while Labor leaders acted in the name of “security,” as a Revisionist Zionist Begin openly supported expansionism in the name of “the Greater Land of Israel,” declared that Israel’s “right to exist” was not a matter of negotiations (Begin 1977), and favored the politics of *aliyah* and “right to return.”³³³ Indeed, Begin was also the first Prime Minister since statehood that fueled religious discourses, included an ultra-Orthodox party in his coalition, and utilized the Holocaust as propaganda—a way to both blame the Labor party’s negligence in addressing the Shoah, and inscribe the Israeli people within the wider discourse of Jewish victimhood. In other words, Begin represented an inversion in the Israeli public discourse and in Israel’s international relations (see Shapira 2012, ch. 17; Anziska 2018, ch. 3). Like all strong political leaders granted public visibility while in high positions of power, Begin installed and legitimized specific political discourses; as Prime Minister, he fostered a reassessment of the idea of Sabra, Israeli body, and military bodies.

³³² “He wore a suit, spoke politely,” Shapira adds, “and demanded courteous behavior—accepted practice in elite Mizrahi circles. His authoritarianism was a replacement for the eroded authority of the father” (2012, 362).

³³³ More radical than Political Zionism, Revisionist Zionism refers back to Ze’ev Jabotinsky’s so-called liberal democratic Zionism. Jabotinsky believed in the return of all Jews to the “Land of Israel.” Historian and exponent of “Identity Zionism” Gil Troy writes that the “European Romantics” that alimented Revisionist Zionism merged “Aaron David Gordon’s love of land with Ahad Ha’am’s nationalist cultural revivalism” accommodating religious traditions in their secularism (Troy 2018, xlv).

Begin left his Revisionist Zionist supporters disappointed when he signed the historical agreement with Egypt and its President Anwar Sadat. Anita Shapira frames this as a radical move that Begin undertook to differentiate his politics from Labor leader Yitzhak Rabin’s politics of interim agreements and ongoing negotiations with the Arab states (see Shapira 2012, 365-377).

While Begin appointed Moshe Dayan as Minister of Foreign Affairs—a person surely knowledgeable of the military and political strategies of the Arab countries—Minister of Defense became Ezer Weizmann, former IDF Head of Operations within the General Staff, commander of the Air Force, and architect of the conquest of the Sinai in 1967. Between the end of July and the beginning of August 1977, the Head of Operations Yekutiel Adam issued a letter to Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur, asking to terminate the military bands.³³⁴ On August 7, Gur did not accept the Head of Operation's recommendation. A few weeks later, on September 9, the new Head of Operations Rafael Eitan, commander of the paratroopers that occupied Gaza in 1967, addressed the financial advisor of the Chief of Staff, informing him about a meeting he held with the Head of Logistics and the Head of Manpower. Eitan complained about two main issues: the excessive costs and function of the military troupes. Throughout the years, with the increasing quality and sophistication of their performances, the costs of production of the entertainment groups augmented. This especially applied to the dance groups—and the Pahad troupe in particular—with their numerous costumes, larger stages, and often elaborated lighting systems. Secondly, Eitan lamented the fact that, more and more often, army troupes were required to perform for new migrants or in diplomatic events—both in Israel and abroad. Thus, they stopped exercising the “recreational” function they were originally supposed to perform.

Indeed, the scope of the entertainment troupes went beyond the audience of conscripted soldiers and soldiers stationed in the Sinai and the Golan Heights. The *lehaqot*, and in particular the dance groups which did not pose the linguistic barrier for the international audience, performed an effective ambassadorial function, transmitting an image of Israel as energetic,

³³⁴ I reconstructed the sequence of events that led to the termination of the entertainment troupes through the documents made available to me at the IDF archive, File number: 19/4/2015. Not all the letters in the correspondence are available.

healthy (often synonym for “beautiful”), and trendy. This maneuver helped to mitigate the image of Israel and its army as aggressive (and not “defensive”) that international outlets disseminated after the 1967 war.³³⁵ Moreover, the use of entertainment groups and dance in particular served as a strategy to increase the army’s ‘civil quota,’ to maintain the image of the Israeli soldier first and foremost as a young citizen, and of the IDF as “the people’s army.” The main foreign audience was made of diplomatic delegations as well as of Zionist organizations in the United States and Europe that funded the IDF and other Israeli initiatives, such as the construction of settlements. But with the rise to power of the Likud and the re-articulation of the idea of Sabra that Revisionist Zionism proposed, the experience of the *lehaqot tzvayiot* became obsolete and ideologically counterproductive.

Rafael Eitan was appointed IDF Chief of Staff in April 1978. In June, the cancellation process of the entertainment groups was effective, with some temporary exceptions—the Pahad dance troupe included, so that it continued to perform until the Fall. Despite the Revisionist Zionist rhetoric of “the Greater Israel,” before his election, Begin unofficially expressed his intentions to negotiate on the Sinai and Golan territories in exchange for stability and greater control on the West Bank. In November 1977, the president of Egypt Anwar al-Sadat’s historical (or “dramatic” [Caplan 2010, 179]) visit to Jerusalem officialized the negotiation process regarding the Sinai Peninsula. The then Chief of Staff Gur showed skepticism regarding an

³³⁵ See, for instance, Susan Sontag’s documentary *Promised Lands* (1973). While many scholars and columnists praised aggression in terms of military preparedness and technological advancement, controversy arose in relation to the morality of the IDF’s tactics. It is, in fact, on the “moral dimensions” of the Yom Kippur War that Israelis and the international audience perceived Israel as defeated (Bolia 2004): an excess of confidence brought the commanders to underestimate and misjudge the enemy and, thus, to remedy with an excessive deployment of force. The moral problem, here, is the lack of alertness, that did not allow the IDF to perform a prompt and tough response.

According to a mainstream reading of the Yom Kippur War, the “sloppy” attitude of the Labor decision-makers undermined the possibility of a prompt and “tough” reaction. While, several have problematized the Israeli attitude in this conflict (e.g. Brecher and Raz 1977), a reading that considers gender as an analytical framework (the stakes of certain ideas of masculinity in the army, the blaming of Prime Minister Golda Meir) is still missing.

agreement with Egypt. Negotiations continued, producing what is known as the “Camp David Accords,” signed under the strategic mediation of the newly-elected U.S. President Carter. The deal implemented the partial demilitarization of the Sinai and the installment of a buffer zone along the border.³³⁶ With the progressive withdrawal of IDF outposts in the desert, the role of entertainment troupes clearly became less urgent. But there was more at stake, especially for the new IDF Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan.

Eitan notoriously opposed the withdrawal from the Sinai and supported the expansion of settlements, which he considered and reframed as "area defense" (Will 1980: 11), and included new settlers among the reservist forces.³³⁷ Eitan *de facto* favored the constitution of a settlers' paramilitary, and encouraged Israeli civilians to carry weapons.³³⁸ Eitan represented and promoted a return to toughness not only for the Israeli soldier but for the Israeli citizen in general. Through his discourses and military-political interventions, he upheld an idea of Sabra as inherently more aggressive, on the alert, ready to attack. An expression Yitzhak Rabin utilized to qualify Eitan would suffice to summarize the fact that Eitan himself impersonated such idea of Sabra: “Wherever there was shooting and fire, in whatever war zone, Raful [Eitan’s nickname] was there” (Eitan 1992).³³⁹

³³⁶ The evacuation of the Israeli settlements in the Sinai terminated in 1982.

³³⁷ Numerous obituaries have reported Eitan’s declarations about military and political matters, his actions as soldier and Chief of Staff, including his forced retirement from the IDF after the Lebanon war in 1982, and his activity as politician and leader of Tzomet, the right-wing party he formed.

³³⁸ Eitan declared in 1979: “Every Israeli who enters the territories, and even the Old City of Jerusalem, should carry arms and know how to use them. [...] In my judgment more Israeli civilians must be allowed to carry weapons all the time. Some argue that such a state of affairs will be exploited for the worst purposes. My reply: Already hundreds of thousands of guns are in the hands of IDF personnel, the police and the Israeli civilian sectors. An addition of several thousand weapons more will not change matters good or bad in this respect.” (cited in Masalha 2000, 88).

³³⁹ Rabin’s sentence appears on the cover of Eitan’s own memoir.

In an interview, the director of the Bat-Dor dance company Jeannette Ordman recounted a conversation with the Chief of Staff Eitan during a gala. Talking about the importance of dance education in general, she expressed her disapproval of the entertainment troupes' disbandment, and reported that Eitan replied that soldiers are not supposed to dance, that dance did not serve the purposes of the IDF (*Eye on Dance and the Arts*, n. 326). Despite this conservative political and cultural turn, the dance army troupes, reaching the largest audience of young soldiers on mandatory service, worked as an effective means to introduce the Israeli youth to concert dance. For instance, the Pahad dance troupe, program after program, increased the presence of concert dance genres, and the quality of the selected dancers' technique and training improved. Batsheva, Bat-Dor, Jazz Plus, and other smaller dance companies based in Tel Aviv established stronger collaborations with the IDF, either by offering teachers or professional studio space. To my knowledge, the IDF hired only Gavri Levy, while the labor of professional dance teachers and choreographers was considered as their *miluim* (reserve duty). This system was economically convenient for the army, and allowed concert dance companies to expand their audience.

As mentioned, in the Sinai, the Pahad dance *lehaqa* used to perform also for international delegates, for the international press, and for the United Nations' troops, offering a program that mixed folk dance, modern, musical, and jazz, which worked to manifest Israel as culturally rooted in the territory and Western in expression at once. This was not just a way for Israel to manifest its alignment to the U.S. bloc from a cultural-diplomatic perspective. In fact, when the American army was performing with its entertainment bands as an occupying force in Korea or Japan, they presented theatrical Western dance genres as "dances of freedom."³⁴⁰ Similarly, in the

³⁴⁰ On the entertainment groups in the U.S. army, see Plank (1988). For a reenactment of the colonial use of dance among the U.S. troops in Korea, see the film *Swing Kids*, directed by Kang Hyeong-Cheol.

context of the Israeli occupation, dance through the army entertainment program served as a form of cultural, military, and political territorialization, while claiming to support the Israeli soldiers' morale. In this way, the use of dance in the IDF entertainment groups complied with the larger Western modes of cultural imperialism that go hand-in-hand with the commodification of the female dancing bodies in the name of military power as well as state and Western sovereignty.³⁴¹

As top-down organized forms of cultural capital, dance and entertainment in the IDF lasted until needed, and transformed according to the evolving political-military agenda. At the national and, more specifically, territorial level, Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan privileged a renewed, macho idea of Sabra, with a readiness for combat and military effectiveness as corporeal values. In this discourse, dance was conceived as a practice that could not contribute to the corporeal and moral integrity of the ideal soldier. By distracting soldiers from duty, instead of uplifting their morale, dance was considered a feminizing distraction. At the same time, the Sabra kinesthesia of the Pahad dance troupe, centered on the erotic appeal of the Sabra body, kept circulating through non-military channels, yet benefiting the image of the army. Former Pahad dancers toured internationally as a civilian group, with the eloquent name "Shalom," under the direction of Gavri Levy. Indeed, at the end of the 1970s, different articulations of Sabra body and ideas of Israel and Israeli army were simultaneously circulating.

Part III The Israeli Soldier in the Digital Age

Despite having lost their luster of the 1960s and 1970s, army entertainment groups were reinstated following the disastrous invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which Anita Shapira describes

³⁴¹ This applies to the context of the U.S. army, where young women were specifically selected in colleges to tour with the entertainment troupes (in Plank 1988, 37).

as “a watershed in the history of Israeli society” (2012, 383). This event was indeed a turning point for Israel. It affected the IDF, its public perception, and its role in cultural production, and in its aftermath Rafael Eitan was forced to retire from the army and Prime Minister Begin was made to resign.³⁴² More importantly, soldiers and officers of the Israeli army criticized the way the government and the High Command misplanned and led operations. Commanders resigned, civilian groups—right-wingers included—rallied, questioning the “defensive” values of the IDF in light of the increasing number of civilian casualties, especially after reporters declared that the Israeli army was responsible for the massacres of Sabra and Shatila.³⁴³

As a matter of fact, the Lebanon War exacerbated the public opinion's criticism towards an army that seemed to have lost the original Labor Zionist character (Beinin 1980), as widely voiced on the pages of the center-left wing newspaper *Ha'aretz*.³⁴⁴ These are also the years in which the Arab narrative started to be acknowledged in Israeli film productions (Shohat 1989), Said published *Orientalism* (2003 [1978]) and *The Question of Palestine* (1992 [1979]), Chomsky expressed anti-Zionist arguments in *The Fateful Triangle* (2014 [1983]), the Israeli “new historians” challenged a hegemonic Zionist master narrative (see Pappé 1995 and 1998), and feminist groups—such as the Israeli branch of Women in Black and SHANI (Israeli Women Against Occupation)—organized anti-Occupation initiatives (see Freedman 1989; Svirsky 2008; Beinin and Mazali 2006).³⁴⁵

³⁴² Begin did not officially resign because of political reasons but for psychological ones (Shapira 2012, 389).

³⁴³ As Neil Caplan reports, during the 1982 Lebanon war, “taking advantage of the departure of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], Lebanese Christian militias on 16-18 September settled old scores by entering these two refugee camps and massacring between 800 and 2000 Palestinians (estimates vary widely), mostly civilians. The complicity of the Israeli forces in assisting the Phalangist marauders led to years of dispute over the extent of political and moral responsibility to be accorded to individual Israelis, or collectively to the IDF” (2010: 186).

³⁴⁴ Indeed, Begin’s agreement with Egypt proved the public opinion that military intervention was not necessary in order to guarantee Israel’s survival (see Benziman 2010, 331).

While during the 1980s, the public support for the IDF and its relevance in popular culture declined, in the early 1990s, with the international mobilization of the Gulf War and the Oslo Accords, Israel experienced a further “demobilization of forces” (Weiss 1999, 281). The IDF responded by increasing its actions of cultural outreach in order to control the representation and role of the army in popular culture. For instance, officers worked as consultants for film directors, and the commands started to release public reports about operations or the soldiers' lives through its media outlets. Since the late 1990s, Israel started to invest in digital technology, especially applied to military research. In the 2000s, the Internet became the platform through which the IDF not only reconstructed a relation of proximity to the Israeli civil society but promoted Israel and governmental, Zionist values on the global digital scale.

In Part III, I look at dances choreographed and filmed by Israeli soldiers on duty in the Occupied Territories in the 2000s. Social media have dramatically contributed to a revival of Israeli militarism in years characterized by the exacerbation of Israeli nationalism during the Second Intifada (2000-2005), the Likud party's politics of settlement-expansion, and the rise of extreme-right wing religious parties. Here, I argue that dances performed within the army by soldiers wearing military uniforms, even if choreographed outside of an army-led choreocratic regime, reiterate the values represented by military power.

In a video probably released between 2005 and 2007, and viewed by hundreds of thousands of YouTube users, we see in a series of close ups, an Israeli soldier, holding a rifle, aiming at a Palestinian child who is about to throw a rock at him.³⁴⁶ The camera frame expands and we see

³⁴⁵ As Ilan Pappé synthesizes, the “new historians” focused on three main issues: “early Zionism, including its ideology and practice in the late 19th century; the history of the 1948 war; and analysis of the state's policies toward the Palestinian minority and Jewish immigrants from Arab countries” (1998, 14)—with a particular focus on the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi relations.

³⁴⁶ One of the problems of utilizing social media as academic sources is that authorship is often disputable. The video can be seen at < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2caeWiuJBg> > (last access January 18, 2019) under the

that the two are actually playing skeet shooting. The IDF soldier successfully shoots the rock. On a (non-credited) music that resembles a combination of klezmer and Arab music, the two, from opposite directions, rhythmically walk toward each other, and high-five. Similarly to the starting of a duet of contact improvisation, the child puts his hand on the soldier's shoulder, who lifts the kid on his back, and so they follow the spiraling dynamic by spinning together. Once the child lands, the soldier takes off his helmet and puts it on the child, patting the kid's head. Finally, in a blurry shot, we can see, in a steady-paced sequence, the soldier handing his rifle to the kid, the two exchanging a dap greeting (a choreographed, friendly, intricate substitute of a handshake that men in particular perform), and then walking away in unison in opposite directions. This was the promotional video of a civilian campaign for the reconciliation between Israel and Palestine called "The People's Voice," initiated by the Labor party politician and former head of the Israeli secret services (Shin Bet) Ami Ayalon, and Palestinian professor and political figure Sari Nusseibeh.³⁴⁷ Here, dance is utilized as the ultimate celebratory practice of a hopeful and imaginary peace, as the manifestation of a realizable coexistence, represented through the physical proximity of attuned bodies. The rifle and the rock become props of this duet. The video, with its digital outreach, utilizes choreography to transfigure the violence embedded into the two objects. Hence, dance is utilized as a shortcut/utopian means to instantly suspend and transform the signifiers, and reconfigure this conflict-resolution initiative as a "civilian" matter. The adjective "civilian" does not correspond to "grass-root" but works as an antagonist to "military," and, probably, also to "governmental." However, the promoters, Ayalon and

(misleading) title "Killer Israeli soldier", and was uploaded by a user in 2007. This does not indicate the very first upload on the website. The video has more than 385,000 views.

³⁴⁷ "The People's Voice" was initiated in 2003, advocating for peaceful reconciliation between Israel and Palestine, and for a two-state solution based on the 1967-border. Later, Nusseibeh declared to support a one-state solution.

Nusseibeh, are men deeply connected to the work of their governments. Under their guidance, dance is employed to mitigate the military and political/governmental charge of the visual, and introduce the “civilian” frame through the assimilated idea of dance as a conciliatory, and maybe innocuous, practice.

I focus on this example within the long, historical (and cross-cultural) process of epistemic construction of dance as a harmless, optimistic, peace-making, difference-flattening, and humanizing practice often produced by state-informed, ultra-nationalist, and colonial institutions. In this section, with my analysis of viral videos showing Israeli soldiers dancing while on duty in the Occupied Territories, I will demonstrate how such an epistemic conceptualization of dance masks a deeper epistemic layer. In fact, I will unveil the use of dance as a mitigating tool of reaffirmation of hegemonic and colonial values. In particular, I aim to show how IDF soldiers dancing in a self-organized—or seemingly self-organized—manner in the Occupied Territories relate to the military power structure, and how the organization of their dances impacts the conceptualization and representation of the conflict. How do soldiers organize dances within the military/militarized space they inhabit? What kind of status do their soldier bodies acquire when dancing in a uniform outside of their military disciplinary norm? And how does such a status alter when the dancing soldier bodies circulate on a platform of "global reach" (Foster 2017: 54) such as YouTube?³⁴⁸ How do soldiers compromise their act of dancing while on duty with the risk of disciplinary punishment? What is at stake when dance is the chosen performance practice

³⁴⁸ On the governmental and military use of YouTube, among other social media, in Israel, see Stein (2011), where the author specifies how “State work on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube employs a new set of rhetorics, modes of address, and aesthetics that endeavor to vernacularize or personalize the state through social media platforms, lending it a new kind of everyman valence—this being a particularly important project, officials argue, in times of unpopular military interventions” (912). In this way, civilian and military realms further overlap. On the one hand, state apparatus employ digital media to increase popular consensus, while embracing their unofficial, amateur aesthetic. On the other hand, social media expose state bodies and state materials (footages, speeches, official statements) to the comments and manipulations on which the state cannot often exercise control. See also Bench (2010).

by soldiers on duty in a climate of normalized hostility and legalized violence such as in the Occupied Territories?

As anthropologists Kunstman and Stein (2011) emphasize, "digital cultures" play a fundamental role in the practice and representation of "the Israeli military occupation of Palestine, a context in which the narrative of digital democracy – or rather, the proposition that the digital be understood as a 'natural' domain for anti-hegemonic politics – is widely embraced as a means to explain activist triumph in the face of repressive state military campaigns" (3).³⁴⁹ Israeli soldiers on duty dancing outside of an institutionalized event in the Occupied Territories utilize the digital platform as a site of competition against activist, anti-Occupation, non-military initiatives.³⁵⁰ During the Second Intifada, the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005), IDF officers, many of whom were religious and settlers, increased their presence on Israeli media, mainly on television and radio, (Pappé 2002: 47), in order to orientate and control the flux of information reaching the general Israeli public.³⁵¹

In 2008, the IDF started to invest in social media outreach, opening its own YouTube channel. At that time, soldiers were not authorized to carry personal smartphones during missions and active combat for security reasons. However, oral testimonies I collected (and for

³⁴⁹ See also Kunstman and Stein (2015), where they elaborate on the notion of Israel's "digital militarism," meaning "the process by which digital communication platforms and consumer practices have, over the course of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, become militarized tools in the hands of the state and nonstate actors, both in the field of military operations and in civilian frameworks" (6). In particular, digital militarism in Israel has the power of rendering "the Israeli occupation at once palpable and out of reach, both visible and invisible," while "the patina of the digital everyday can minimize and banalize this violence" (8).

³⁵⁰ On the use of digital media as an anti-Occupation and dissent tool, see, among others, Ashuri (2012), Doron and Lev-On (2012), Ziccardi (2013), and the website of the organization B'Tselem—The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories <www.btselem.org> (last access February 8, 2019).

³⁵¹ The IDF also reduced access to information to international journalists; see Pappé (2002). Paraphrasing Uri Ben Eliezer's definition of Israel as a nation-in-arms (1995), Pappé writes about "media-in-arms."

which interviewees prefer to remain anonymous) testify that soldiers were already utilizing personal smartphones while on active duty.³⁵² In the social media era, the possibility of sharing photos and videos of everyday military life or taken during clashes between the IDF soldiers and the Palestinian population has helped reduce the distance between the popular, civilian perception of military life and the soldiers, but also between the soldiers themselves and the civil realm.

The shortening of such a distance has radically different implications when the soldiers are simultaneously related to a variety of “networked publics,” namely the Israeli civil realm, the Palestinian civil realm, and the global spectatorship.³⁵³ Once again, the classical discourse of the Israeli civil-military relations, overlooking the centrality of the Palestinian civilians in its theorizations of the “civil,” dismisses the colonial power embedded in Israeli militarism and its ongoing performance through the presence of the IDF bodies. Dance in the videos I analyze in this section seems to work (once again in the history of the IDF) as a recreational practice, with which soldiers engage either to “humanize” themselves or to overperform their power by diminishing their military strength through non-institutionalized dances characterized by a cheerful character. I do not dispute the possibility that the two dimensions—humanization of the soldier and reaffirmation of military power—coexist, but I will explain how the latter prevails. The “humanizing” interpretation, fostered by commentators generally aligned with the IDF’s military agenda, works as a justifying frame for both the soldiers’ misbehavior (dancing on duty) within the IDF and their status as soldiers of an occupying force. Whether the soldiers dance to

³⁵² For the larger implications of the adoption of the smartphone technology in the IDF, see Kunstman and Stein (2015).

³⁵³ I draw on the notion of “networked publics as publics that are restructured by networked technologies” from Kunstman and Stein (2015: 106n12), who borrow it from Boyd (2014: 8).

self-humanize themselves or the public reads the soldiers' dancing as a humanizing activity, "humanization" works as a mode of civilianization. In other words, in the "humanizing" discourse dance is read as a de-militarizing practice, which at the same time preserves military legitimacy.

It is possible to consider that, by practicing dance outside of the institutional frame of command-from-above, soldiers find a humanizing, meaning civilianizing, practice that allows them to perform their desire to persevere in a civilian life-mode despite their inscription within the logic of necropower. Yet, we need to consider that the soldiers' life-affirmation happens within the military apparatus, which, while increasing their social prestige, actively limits or negates the livability of the occupied Palestinian population. Within this framework, the soldiers' life-affirmation lies in the unlivability of the Palestinians. As a consequence, the soldiers' "desire to live" is realized at the expense of other lives.

III. 1 Rocking the Casbah

A video posted, removed, and reposted multiple times on YouTube, originally uploaded in Summer 2010 under the title "Soldiers Dance in Hebron," shows six IDF male soldiers from the Naḥal Brigade, armed and wearing full combat gear, in the occupied city center of Hebron, in the West Bank.³⁵⁴ As soon as they hear the Muslim call to prayer, while patrolling, the soldiers start a choreographed dance on the hit "Tik Tok" by American pop-singer Kesha. The video, recorded and posted on social media by another soldier, immediately went viral on Facebook. The IDF commands ordered its removal but, as we know, products circulating on social media behave like

³⁵⁴ As mentioned in the previous section, the Naḥal was established to monitor the borders and establish settlements.

the mythological, monstrous figure of Hydra: you remove a video or a post, and hundreds of reproductions are already circulating.³⁵⁵

The camera does not shake. The point of view has been previously strategized, and the timing carefully orchestrated. Six soldiers, fully-equipped, slowly walk on a street in a residential area of Hebron. They arrange themselves in two lines. Initially, the soldiers act as if they are patrolling in a combat zone, attentively looking around for possible enemies, knees bent, watching each other's shoulders, embracing their heavy rifles, simultaneously reproducing themselves and staging their own self-parody through their theatricalization of military behavior. They crouch on one knee; the song starts, and they slowly stand up—*Wake up in the morning felling like P Diddy / Grab the glasses, I'm out the door: I'm gonna hit this city*, the lyrics say. As soon as the beat increases, the soldiers begin to move in unison and create duets, reproducing the popular movements of the "Macarena" while facing one another, smoothly bouncing their legs. When the chorus starts—*Don't stop, make it pop / DJ, blow my speakers up / Tonight, I'm a fight / Till we see the sunlight*—they turn in a canon, then re-establish their duets, extending the bouncing movement-quality to their upper body.

Now, their rifles hang and swing along the front side of their bodies. Phallic representations are common in military iconography, and particularly emphasized in these soldier-self-choreographed videos. To read the dangling rifle simply as a waiver of military force and enfeebling masculinity contrasts with the bodily control, the homosocial cohesiveness, and the choreographic precision the soldiers display in the video. In fact, the rifle becomes an extension of the soldier's body, and its swinging movement coherently follows and completes the bouncy, relaxed persona the soldiers perform. In this choreography, the soldiers display how to be

³⁵⁵ Adi Kunstman and Rebecca L. Stein (2011) reconstruct the circulation of this specific video in relation to suspects around its truthfulness.

spatially and temporally in charge, even when suspending the performance of the military norm through dance. At this point, the six soldiers hold each other's hands, turn underneath each other's arms, and, bouncing, they exit the "scene," while reperforming and exaggerating a theatrical, monitoring military behavior. *And the party don't stop, no.*

It is clear that these soldiers are not professionally trained in dance, yet they are able to display both precision in the execution of their non-virtuoso movements, and a certain mastery, which surely required a rehearsal process. The choreography also was carefully planned. The bodies of the soldiers, positioned on two rows, parallel the walls of the Palestinian homes, as if impressing their presence on the local architecture. The choreography shows the established territorial presence of the soldiers, and furthers and intensifies the territorializing strategy of occupation that their stationing in Hebron already testifies.

This dance, based on commercial, globally marketed music and movements, interferes with the sacred moment of the Muslim prayer. The music of Kesha dominates the soundscape, showing the volume of the spatial occupation of the territory, its population, its culture. Such a form of cultural harassment parallels the expanding importance that religiosity acquired in the IDF in the last couple of decades, which developed in parallel to the growing political control granted to the extreme right-wing, religious politicians in the Netanyahu governments. Indeed, I conceive of the secular character overemphasized here by the IDF soldiers in the terms expressed by Saba Mahmood (2009), according to whom "secularism is to be understood not simply as the doctrinal separation of the church [or any religious authority] and the state but the rearticulation of religion in a manner that is commensurate with modern sensibilities and modes of governance. To rethink the religious is also to rethink the secular and its truth-claims, its promise of internal and external goods" (836-837). In this video, IDF soldiers, through their spatial (physical and

acoustic) and timely takeover, display a macho secularism aimed at overpowering the sacrality of the Muslim prayer in Palestinian territory. Transferring Mahmood's discourse in the context of present Israel/Palestine, notions of secular and religious do not operate as a dichotomous, oppositional binary; on the contrary, they are strategically used, especially by Israeli institutional subjects, to reaffirm territorial and cultural dominion. Furthermore, the disrespect the six soldiers manifested can be situated along the same lines as the wider post 9/11, Western, anti-Muslim sentiments (and policies) that nurtured the U.S.-lead rhetoric of the global West as the "free-world." It is significant, in fact, that in its re-uploads the video appeared multiple times under the title "Rock the Casba" (*sic*).³⁵⁶ In a probably non-immediate yet blatant manner, the title attributed to the viral reiterations of this dance, along with the eloquent lyrics of the choreography, alludes back to Bush's "global war on terror," furthering the Western depictions and popularized perception of the Muslim "other," and in particular in this case of the Palestinian, as terrorist.³⁵⁷ Similarly, the self-definition of the IDF as "moral" and "pure," declared in its official doctrine, ultimately serves to morally, and only afterwards militarily, justify and legitimize the Israeli soldiers' behavior in the Occupied Territories as "just"³⁵⁸ or justifiable. In the end, the choreographic disruption of the time of the Muslim prayer in the center of Hebron results as a soft form of cultural harassment in the normalized everyday life of conflict in the West Bank.

³⁵⁶ The *qasbah* is a fortress or protected citadel typical of North African areas. The noun has been popularized by The Clash's song *Rock the Casbah* (1982), whose lyrics recount, in a hodgepodge of religious references, that "Sheik Shareef" does not like rock music because it is not "kosher."

³⁵⁷ On the historical representation of Palestinian nationalism as a history of terrorism, and for its deconstruction, see Pappé (2009).

³⁵⁸ The IDF doctrine of "purity of arms" is expressed in the IDF code of ethics entitled *The Spirit of the Israel Defense* (1994, revised 2001, and then in 2016), developed within the IDF Education and Training Division (the same that once managed the entertainment troupes). See also Zion (2016).

The audience of the six soldiers' performance is the digital global one. In the video, the local Palestinians are absent—kept off scene within their everyday environment. In Israel, the video had wide resonance across media. Kunstman and Stein report that "spoofs and remakes [of the video] proliferated on popular Israeli comedy shows, whose viewers were invited to produce their own remix. Dozens would eventually make their way to YouTube" (2011: 5). These reproductions transfer the parodic mode of the choreography from the military setting to the civil realm, expanding the very colonial significance of the dance while blurring the original from reproduction to reproduction.³⁵⁹ Differently from the precise reenactments that solemnly celebrate a military institution by reproducing historical battles, such as the Civil War in the United States, bridging them to the present while preparing the archive of the future (Schneider 2011), the Israeli reenactments on YouTube invest in energetic reproduction, and spatially expand the soldiers' experience of choreographed control in Hebron to the private Israeli home. While the former manifest "the effort to play one time in another time" (Schneider 2011: 10), the latter show the collective kinesthetic effort to extend the energy of one spatial, hegemonic instance to the national body.

III. 2 A Panoptical Feast

On August 29, 2013, the international edition of *The Guardian* made a case out of a video that shows Israeli male soldiers from the prestigious Givati Brigade dancing among Palestinian civilians in a club in Hebron.³⁶⁰ As claimed by the YouTube user identified as the uploader of the

³⁵⁹ On the issue of trailing reproductions, on the manipulation of the "original," especially in the realm of Media and Internet Studies, see Jean Baudrillard's notion of "simulacrum," which blurs the distinction between what is perceived as reality and representation (2010).

³⁶⁰ *The Guardian's* article is available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/29/hebron-israel-soldiers-dance-palestinians-gangnam-style>. Last accessed: January 12, 2019.

video, IDF soldiers on duty in full gear /weapons and helmet included), enter a Palestinian wedding party during a patrol in Hebron's Jaabra neighborhood, and join the Palestinian guests in club dancing to the sound of *Gangnam Style* by South Korean pop singer PSY, which became a global hit thanks also to the easy-to-learn choreography, often described as the imitation of horseback riding.³⁶¹

The framework of the Palestinian wedding dance complicates the intertwining politics of masculinity within the Israeli and Palestinian cultures. During the celebrations of the wedding, which represent the social recognition of a male's accomplished manhood (cf. McDonald 2010), the groom is "lifted onto the shoulders of his friends and family and processed through the crowd triumphantly" (202). The ritual is often repeated for other male participants. In the video, an Israeli soldier is involved in the celebration. Similarly to other Palestinian guests, the soldier gets lifted on the shoulders of a Palestinian. At this point, the Israeli and the Palestinian next to him join one hand, while the soldier keeps holding his rifle with the other. PSY's music, rather than a traditional *sahia*, instantiates the secular character of the celebration. Following the rhythm and the energy of the pop song, the two men bounce on the other men's shoulders. As prescribed by the ritual code, in this phase of the celebration men and women are separated. In this video, the Israeli male soldiers and the Palestinian men share the space and the dance. Dance, here, works as a *laissez-passer* for the temporary suspension of hostility, and the reciprocal acknowledgement and displaying of triumphant masculinity, which works as the ultimate, reciprocal recognition of the homosocial code on which nationalisms and state formations are built (see Presner 2007).

As it often happens on YouTube, the video is often removed and later reposted through a different account. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEW5KbiEqXk&list=PLMSW1QdJE2Xk7h6zSJulo2djfrBihMJkD&index=72> (Last accessed: January, 14, 2019).

³⁶¹ The song was released in July 2012. At the end of the first day on YouTube, the video had over half a million views. In January 2019, it is the third most visualized video in the history of YouTube.

The video, recorded with a mobile phone, was broadcast on the Israeli television. Channel 2 presented it as an "incident," and acknowledged that the IDF suspended the soldiers, part of the Rotem Battalion of the Givati.³⁶² Among the audience of YouTube users, several greeted the viral video as an example of peace and coexistence; others blamed the soldiers for risking their lives, assuming the presence of Hamas members at the party. Generally, mainstream media and the Israeli public opinion did not acknowledge the soldiers' trespassing of a private space during a private celebration. Despite the improvisational organization of this dance, the soldiers never ceased to manifest their military function of control over the territory and the people. This is emblematically represented by the soldier holding his rifle above the crowd in a panoptical configuration, further emphasized by the ongoing jumpy motion of the male crowd below him. This all-men scenario, in which competing masculinities meet, reaffirms and exalts the oedipal core of the historical emergence of state-nationalism and colonialism (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 170). In particular, while in the previous video the six Naħal soldiers performed group discipline and their ruling authority over the public space, the Givati soldiers further display their military control by exercising it in a private space. At the same time, the Israeli soldiers allow the Palestinians to be in charge of their bodies. The risk factor implied in trust, and that the Israeli commentators highlighted, reinforces an idea of possible coexistence as negotiated through a homosocial contract between masculinities. Indeed, in this dance of celebration, the absent figure is that of the woman.

³⁶² The video of Channel 2 news is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aylCQ_JaEQ0 (Last access: January 14, 2019).

III. 3 A War Dance

A third example comes from a video recorded in a military outpost in Gaza during the so-called “Operation Protective Edge,” in Summer 2014.³⁶³ The video was uploaded on July 21, 2014 by YouTube user “lev haolam” with the title “IDF Soldiers Take a Little R&R [Rest and Recuperation].”³⁶⁴ The account belongs to Lev HaOlam, an organization that supports the expansion of Zionist settlements, and promotes the commercialization of the settlers’ agricultural products.

Even though the title suggests this video represents a moment of “rest and recuperation,” I claim that different elements suggest it as a preparatory ritual for soldiers arguably getting ready for a mission. The caption of the video combines a sense of soldier’s bravado—it frames the dance as “a break from fighting the terrorism in Gaza”—and a sense of care and fear for the soldiers’ destiny—“They are singing and dancing, celebrating while they can, before they must return to danger.” As I will show, I argue that this video does not celebrate the soldiers’ life or mourns their finitude, but exalts the State and, more specifically, the State in its religious, messianic articulation. The video is set in a military warehouse full of soldiers in uniform—some with backpacks and their faces painted in green. Many wear a *kippah*. At the entrance of the building, three soldiers and two Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) men in religious clothes jump on the roof of an unclearly painted minibus, which resembles the minibuses of the *lehaqot tzvayot* (see

³⁶³ On the 2014 Israel-Gaza war, see, among others, the biopolitical reading of Perugini and Gordon (2015: 84-90), the analysis in the context of neoliberal sovereignty of Simon 2017, and the issue of the journalistic coverage of Protective Edge in Weisman (2017). On the use of social media and digital innovations in this war, see Malka, Ariel, and Avidar (2015).

³⁶⁴ The video is available at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=zL7J6G3BM1k> (last access February 18, 2019).

figures below).³⁶⁵ This works as a rhetorical, aesthetic marker of the recreational framework of the event, which authorizes the use of movement and dance within the military context.



Figure 2 From the film "HaLahaqa" (1978)³⁶⁶



Figure 3 From the film "Foxtrot" (2018)



Figure 4 Screenshot from the YouTube video "IDF Soldiers Take a Little R&R" (2014)

³⁶⁵ The iconic van is visible in the renowned Israeli movie *HaLahaqa* (dir. Avi Nesher, 1978) and, more recently, as a remnant of the past at a military checkpoint in the award-winning *Foxtrot* (2017).

³⁶⁶ Available at <https://www.mako.co.il/news-israel/entertainment/Article-f871f4e018ec431017.htm>

The amplified voice of a man leads the event. The set-up reproduces a club party. The music comes from speakers. The song *Mi Shemaamin* (“Those Who Believe”) by Eyal Golan starts like the chorus of a football chant with male voices that sing “The one who believes is not scared.”³⁶⁷ The soldiers sing along, and some, jumping, form a circle. The lyrics remind the soldiers that they are in God’s hands, that “He protects us from everyone,” and that “the nation of Israel will not give up.” Here, the typical Israeli military brotherhood and camaraderie (Almog 2000, Kaplan 2003) assumes a clear religious imprint.³⁶⁸ The soldiers in the circle hold each other’s shoulders or waists, and rhythmically jump in unison, like in a frantic *hora* deprived of lightness and choreographic details.³⁶⁹ Arranged with the sound strategies of EDM (Electronic Dance Music), characterized by a powerful bass and intense rhythmical frequency (BPM), Golan’s song invites the soldiers to assemble in the ecstatic feeling of club culture (see Malbon 1999). This scenario modernizes the culture of ecstatic religious dances of the Ḥassidic tradition, recontextualizing them in the Israeli war-context. As Rebecca Rossen reports, in the words of

³⁶⁷ Eyal Golan, a former soccer player, is a star of the Mizrahi pop music industry, a tv host and judge in talent-shows, and an icon of Israeli masculinity. On the affirmation of Mizrahi music on the Israeli popular scene as a reiteration of the idea of Israeli melting pot, and the specific case of Eyal Golan, see Regev and Seroussi (2004: 229-235). Accused of sexual relations with underage women, in February 2014, despite evidence, the Ministry of Justice dropped charges against Golan. (See, among others, “State Drops all Charges Against Eyal Golan,” in *Jerusalem Post*, February 5, 2014). The song in the video is a track from his 2010 album *Derech LeḤaim* (A Way to Life), which reached the top of the Israeli radio chart. Within this album, one track was produced in collaboration with the IDF radio to commemorate the Israeli Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers (*Yom Hazikaron*). In 2018, Golan was awarded by the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) for his contribution to Hebrew music, despite the protests of some members of the Parliament and women’s advocacy groups. Ultimately, the use of Golan’s music before a military incursion in Gaza exemplifies the role he performs in official Israeli culture as a symbol of both ethnic melting pot and patriarchal masculinity.

³⁶⁸ While traditionally the Ultra-Orthodox population was exempt from mandatory service and reserve duty, with the expansion of the settlement policies in the Occupied Territories under the Netanyahu governments, the large spectrum of religious Jews and, in particular the Ultra-Orthodox ones, who constitute the majority of the settlers, increasingly demanded to join the IDF and its combat units. The year 2014 saw a record in the enlistment not only of religious men but also religious women (Ettinger 2015). On the recent manifestation and dangers of religious fanaticism in the IDF, see Landsmann (2017). Along these lines, see also Shahak and Mezvinsky (2004). On Israeli Haredi and religious men in the IDF, see Cohen (2016), and Hakak (2016: 39-56).

³⁶⁹ On the characteristics of folk dances such as the *hora* in Zionist culture, see *supra*, Ch. 1, Part II.

Jewish modern dancer Pauline Koner, “The ḥassidic dance portrays the ecstatic mood of the old ḥassidic cult to whom song and dance was a means of reaching a state of religious exaltation” (2011: 342). Here, religious exaltation is articulated to serve the warfare system. At the same time, this mechanism contributes to the introduction of the current articulations of Religious Zionism, for a long time marginal in the traditionally secular Israeli army, in mainstream discourses and in the structure of one of the most emblematic sites of performance of Israeliness.³⁷⁰ Utilizing dance and mainstream pop music to normalize religious zeal in the army, religious leaders and soldiers in the event employ secular strategies to implement their messianic agenda into that of the IDF.³⁷¹ Moreover, religious Israelis, and religious settlers in particular, are considered marginal and problematic elements of Israeli society (Dalsheim and Harel 2009, Ellis 2014). In this context, dancing and combat are conceived as two markers of Israeli identity and channels to achieve full Israeliness.

More men join the conglomerate of soldiers, forming concentric circles. When the refrain starts, the majority of the men pushes one arm up in the air on the beat—a typical techno-house dance club gesture. This collective stance, in the ecstatic communal feeling of the event, is a way

³⁷⁰ Pre-State Religious Zionists advocated for the integration of religiosity in the predominantly secular Zionist project and for a Jewish return to the Biblical “Land of Israel.” The establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in 1948—with the religious element incorporated in the State’s name—demanded a reconfiguration of the relationship between religiosity, religious authorities, and Zionism, with a further shift activated by the new territorial conquests of the 1967 war, which relaunched discourses about the process of settlement in the religious “Land of Israel.” Since the mid-1990s, in particular with PM Netanyahu’s investment in religious settlers to reinforce the Israeli dominion in the West Bank, the more left-leaning parts of the Religious Zionist movement got increasingly marginalized, and Religious Zionism is often associated to the radical nationalist fundamentalism of right-wing settlers. See Troy 2018: 85-102, 233-266, and 415-438. On the ideological changes within Religious Zionism, see Don-Yehiya 2014. See, among others, Feige 2009, and Hellinger, Hershkowitz, and Susser 2018. For more specific distinctions among religious groups and political religious institutions in Israel, see Cohen and Kampinsky 2006.

³⁷¹ The commitment of religious parties to “Operation Protective Edge” needs to be read within the wider process of religious takeover in Israeli institutions connected to the expansion of the settlement project, and also circumstantially, since what triggered the beginning of the armed conflict in July 2014 was the kidnapping and murder of three young settlers by Hamas terrorists.

to “bring people up with me” (Malbon 1999: 93). These “brothers in arms,” through the gesturing and the jumping, exalted by the lyrics, simultaneously perform military tribalism and godly verticality.

The choreography is spatially dominated by an Ultra-Orthodox man in religious clothes that, waving the Israeli flag, emerges from the mass, lifted by some soldiers. The religious man with the flag occupies the center of the choreography, and becomes the body of reference. In fact, he initiates the further development of the collective dance ritual by passing the flag to the soldiers, who keep waving it, while he continues to chant and dance, waving his arms. Through his choreographic—visual and kinesthetic—leadership, the Ultra-Orthodox man holding the flag and passing it as a baton represents the “Jewish State” and the reiteration of its messianic political struggle, namely the territorial settlement in the Biblical “Land of Israel” or “Greater Land of Israel.” Other soldiers get lifted on others’ shoulders, and they all add collective clapping on the beat to increase the communal exaltation. At the margins of the circle, soldiers that did not engage in the dance, are filming with their phones or laughing. Some, instead, look worried and nervous—probably thinking about the upcoming mission, unpersuaded by this collective war dance ritual. Not only is there the religious man with the flag who dominates the center of the choreographic scheme, but there are also two religious men on the roof of the minibus, still monitoring and filming the scene from above. With the panoptical view of the man with the flag and the visual peripheral dominion of the other two religious men, this war dance ultimately celebrates the sovereignty of Ultra-Orthodoxy as the power to which the soldiers spatially and politically *subordinate*.

III. 4 The Necropower of the Soldiers' Carnival

The three dance examples analyzed share the same stage, the Occupied Territories, and, more broadly, the Occupation. Here, dance occupies an occupied space. Dance movement is superimposed over military movement; the former, performed by lower level conscripted soldiers, inserts itself into a much larger choreography, that of the occupation itself, a movement regulated from above by military discipline and rule, and governmental power. All three dances are characterized by jumping and bouncing as a movement marker that, in this context, underlines the soldiers' reliance on gravity as a choreographic tool to perform the territorial rootedness of the bodies. Furthermore, by wearing their uniforms and rifles or other military equipment, soldiers never stop performing their role as the ruling force.

In the first video (Hebron, 2010), soldiers do not merely mock military discipline by choreographing an MTV-like dance. In the second video (Palestinian wedding, 2013), the soldiers joining the Palestinian wedding do not merely represent a possible, peaceful coexistence. In the third video (pre-combat ritual 2014), the collective dance is not a mere, traditional, motivational ritual among soldiers. I argue, in fact, that dance increases the soldiers' representational index of power, meaning that dance adds a further dimension of power to their role. As soldiers, the vector that regulates their power works top-down (military hierarchy), while choreographic and dance initiatives install on and through their bodies an extra vector of dominion that moves from the bottom-up. Within this view, therefore, I do not consider these soldiers as merely practicing dance as an anti-anxiety, recreational tactic or as a return to civilian life, but as a strategy to re-affirm their own control over the local territory. As a consequence, what the IDF high command actually punishes when it accuses these dancing soldiers of

misconduct is their claim for power, their attempt to subvert the hierarchy through the means of dance.

Moreover, we need to consider the effect of the circulation of these videos on digital platforms like YouTube and other social media. Several studies have conceptualized the production of intimacy and sense of participation through digital media, in particular through social media networks (Barney et al. 2016, Miller 2017). The structures of feelings of belonging, participation, and identity are what have been defined as digital “social capital” (Shields Dobson, Robards, Carah 2018) on which uploaders and viral bodies invest for different kinds of profit (economic, social, political, etc.), which combine. In the case of these videos, I argue that uploaders, dancing bodies, and the IDF itself all capitalize in ideological and political terms. First of all, these videos, because of their military framework, have great appeal on the global digital audience, not necessarily because the necropower inherent in the concept of army, and neither because of a digital fascination for violence. Instead, the military context appeals because of the exercise of power, because of the territorial power game implied in the performance of Israeli soldiers in the Occupied Territories. In particular, the first two videos display the practice of domestication of space of the occupying force over the occupied population, and thus manifest power as a form of knowledge rather than as the blatant exercise of violence (see Foucault 1991, Deleuze 1995, and Barney et al. 2016). By mitigating and substituting the overt exercise of violence in a non-ordinary setting such as the military one, dance induces affiliation.

Furthermore, the audience’s fascination is produced not merely through the assumed lightness of dancing in a conflict-zone but, I claim, by the use of dance as a strategy of control. In this way, these videos are globally consumed apart from the specific political implications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but still suggest the political force of dance as “soft power,” a

power aimed at attracting interest, consent, affiliation (Chitty 2003).³⁷² On the one hand, in their comments, users familiar with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict took a strong political stand, highly criticizing or supporting the soldiers and the IDF in general. On the other hand, users without a particular investment in or knowledge of the conflict shared the video on their Facebook pages or Twitter accounts conceiving the soldiers' dances as breaks from the violence they live in, and without engaging with the Palestinian counterpart. By filtering dance as "soft power," the soldiers find their way to affirm on the large scale their bottom-up territorial power. Since conscripted soldiers find these "soft" digital channels to affirm their power, the IDF official up-down power is not undermined; on the contrary, the soldiers' dance restate and reinforce the IDF power overall.

This said, building on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of parody, I argue that these globalized, public, bottom-up, irrepressible (because viral) videos of dancing soldiers on duty represent the parodic development of the life cycle of the Israel Defense Forces. These dances utilize the main tool of the occupying military power: they take up Palestinian civilian space (the city-center of Hebron, a private Palestinian wedding, a temporary military outpost in Gaza), exercising the same military function. The dancing soldier appropriates the utterance of dominion and control designed by the highest ranks and reinforced throughout history as their own in the present—their *shared-insta-tweeted* present—utilizing it for their own purpose "by inserting a new semantic orientation into a word [in our case Occupation] which already has—and retains—its own orientation" (2006, 156). Therefore, here dance is a further occupation of the soldier in the practice of the Israeli Occupation.

³⁷² On the control that digital technologies exercise over the users' bodies and the intimate relationship that humans thus develop with surveillance devices, see Miller (2017).

Those that claim that dance in these videos works as a tactic for the soldier's desire to return to a civilian or anxiety-free life do not consider these dances' relationship with the power they reiterate; in this way, they do not grasp the parodic force of this dancing. Let me hypothesize, for a moment, that Israeli soldiers utilize dance as a humanizing practice that allows them to perform their "desire to live." Within my larger framework of livability, we must acknowledge that the soldiers' life-affirmation only happens within an apparatus (the army) that limits the livability of an occupied population; therefore, the soldiers' life-affirmation lies in the unlivability of the Palestinians. As a consequence, the soldiers' affirmation of their "desire to live" a more "human"—meaning, more "civil" life—contravenes the Spinozian concept of the perseverance of one's own life as a life that pursues its own livability while enabling others' livability. (That is why the concept of responsibility, if conceived in an individualized way, cannot be sufficient).

To sum up, dance here works as a further reiteration of dominion and of the colonial apparatus. Dance is neither a parody of the Palestinians, nor of the Occupation; instead, soldiers utilize the parodic device to exercise power by deviating from the hierarchy that dictates the limits of their own power. And, yes, this further excludes the Palestinians from the Israeli military discourse about the Occupation and from the soldiers' horizon of livability—meaning that, within this discourse, soldiers measure how to make their lives more livable in the army on the basis of a self-referential hierarchy of dominant power. The exercise of a desire for power feeds the military machine, which is to say that, by dancing on duty and by violating the behavioral or normative code of the army, the soldiers do not escape the military framework of power and dominion in which they are inscribed. On the contrary, it is that framework that allows them to behave as such.

Moreover, referring once more to Bakhtin's theorization, these dance videos, for the soldiers, work as their own carnival. Bakhtin defines carnival as "a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life." (2006, esp. 122-123). Building on the parody of military discipline that allows the soldiers to represent their occupying power, soldiers employ dance to suspend the disciplinary norm (included the norm that defines the Palestinian as the enemy in the case of the wedding video), and grant themselves permission to employ a different technique of the body (dance) from that through which they gain enjoyment. However, considering the necropower to which these dances contribute, I argue that they enact a perverse carnival. And I intend "perversion" in the Deleuzian sense, not as the deviation from the 'normal,' but as a transformation of energy.

This perverse carnival differently modulates in the three videos. The first one utilizes choreography as a ruling paradigm able to reproduce, while mocking it within a global-pop-feminized frame, the strategic system of territorialization based on the synchronized movement of the collective. The improvised wedding dance, in which the Israeli soldiers enter a private Palestinian celebration and allow the Palestinians to lift their bodies, works as a strategy to suspend their own military discipline and to establish control over Palestinian civilians beyond the military frame. Finally, in the third video, the pre-combat war dance, the perverse carnival manifests in the staging of the nationalist parade, in which the accumulation of aggressive energy for combat builds up as a mass celebration of national symbols led by the lyrics of a pop song.

The anchorwoman of Channel 2 defined the scene of Israeli soldiers at the Palestinian wedding as "surreal." I think that what she recognized as surreal is the perverse use of dance as a means of reiteration of necropower: the unexpected, not innocent use of dance as an intensifier of dominion, through which the soldier's body displays a non-conventional smooth, loose, and

bouncy quality. Dance, therefore, is utilized within the IDF as a new tool of dominion that the “democratic” social media circulation has introduced from the bottom of the hierarchy of power.

Epilogue: Choreographing Livability in Israel

I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings, but I may not be able to avoid it.

— Hadar Ahuvia, Israeli choreographer, 2018³⁷³

Dance in Israel is very powerful, one that implies an important physical commitment, and I would claim it's also full of characteristics of control. One might wonder where that power, that strength, comes from, and what it can mean.

It's as if our society's violence had contaminated our gestures, our movements. I wonder today if this form of dancing isn't just another way to continue the occupation.

— Arkadi Zaides, Israeli choreographer, 2014³⁷⁴

In this dissertation, I have highlighted, through a series of case studies, how dance in Israel has made itself *responsible* in the development of an idea of State consciousness, in the weaving of political relations at the local, national, and international level, and in the realization of ideas of Israeli citizenship (meaning, what is *worth* to be considered Israeli). In order to show how dance has operated in Israel between the 1940s and the 2000s, how it conceptualized and revised ideas of Israeli corporeality, and how it contributed to shaping the lives of different communities in Israel, I have performed a specific killjoy persona. I have utilized an analytical and scrutinizing tone, not only because of the academic context in which I share my research, but especially as a strategy to monitor the unfolding of complex interconnections, and expose the mechanisms through which the stakes of dancing have met the stakes of different power structures. Critical analysis and scrutiny keep the killjoy scholar focused. A killjoy dance scholar looks suspiciously at (and ultimately questions or refuses) the normative and normalizing ways in which dance operates and becomes a tool for the operations of hegemonic power. In other words, a killjoy dance scholar goes after the mechanisms through which dance establishes social

³⁷³ In Burke (2018).

³⁷⁴ In Benyamina (2014).

hierarchies, and regulates standards of livability based on the marginalization, domestication, and forced assimilation of specific bodies. Following Foucault's analyses of the subtle ways in which power operates through the bodies, this dissertation has showed how these hegemonic processes have progressively unfolded, through individual as well as collective and institutional investments.

More specifically, I have retraced the ways in which a narrative of dance in Israel as a joyful, recreational, community-building experience has been constructed. I have argued that the main epistemic articulation of dance in Israel is its use as a strategy of mitigation, downplaying, attenuation of settler-colonial mechanisms and state practices of commodification and marginalization of specific subjects. At the same time, I have deconstructed such narratives when I have detected the ways in which dances manifested or *reverberated* as an oppressive or exclusionary tool. I have also tried to highlight the subtle, nonlinear production of livability and unlivability, and how one can experience different degrees of both at once.

In this epilogue, I am going to recapitulate and specify how epistemic articulations of dance in the kibbutz and the IDF have choreographed the life stakes of their dancing subjects. All corporeal presences impact their sites of performance, and can produce reverberations beyond the site they inhabit or in which they move, in relation to social, political, historical circumstances. The extent to which they impact a site depends upon one's or a group's strategies of performance, and their will and ability to negotiate with or circumvent the politics and policies that, at various levels, govern the power dynamics within the site.

Choreographing Un/Livability through the Kibbutz

Between the 1940s and the end of the 1960s, dance in kibbutz culture primarily focused on the fostering of statehood and on the consolidation of Israel as a nation-state. I have proposed the notion of *folk dance assemblage* to show how, despite differences in the individual investments, folk dance practitioners as a whole contributed to the reiterations of settler-colonial methods in their fabrication of “Israeli folk dance.” I have conceptualized *corporeal appropriation* as the settler-colonial method of appropriating dances from indigenous communities through *amicable relations* with the ultimate outcome of substituting the indigenous corporeal agenda with the settlers’ one. The construction of a folk dance tradition perceivable as both Jewish and indigenous happened through a process of *repertoirization* of dances that benefited the larger Zionist project in two ways. First, it allowed the territorialization of a Zionist cultural identity while promoting a regenerated idea of Zionist body as vigorous and light, as disciplined and merry. Second, it supported an elaboration of Zionism as an endeavor inherently “multicultural,” able to gather different ethnicities under its umbrella, and satisfy and appeal different groups of the Diaspora.

Among the different members of the folk dance assemblage, two in particular emerged as emblematic of how the process of fabrication of a Zionist folk dance tradition and its consolidation as “Israeli” informed the stakes of their dancing. Gurit Kadman was part of the Ashkenazi elite that led the Zionist institutionalization in Palestine. Through her dance initiatives, she invested in the promotion of an exportable idea of Zionist body and actively participated in the creation of international networks of cultural diplomacy. It is through her institutional leadership that her dance work expanded from the kibbutz, through international dance and political circuits, to the Israeli army. Differently from Kadman, Sara Levi-Tanai had a Yemenite heritage. She accessed Ashkenazi-led groups and tactically moved within institutions

that fostered a multicultural idea of Israel to affirm a Yemenite dance tradition in the mainstream cultural environment. However, her choreographic work and the Yemenite dancers of her company Inbal had to undergo various processes of domestication and orientalizing of their Yemenite bodies, until the dismissal of the state's multicultural policy and the consequent museification of the Inbal Dance Theater. This operation has indeed guaranteed Levi-Tanai recognition in the canon of "Israeli dance," but as a necessarily excluded body. While Kadman was in charge of the elaboration of networks and methods for the dissemination of dance, thus actively participating in the Zionist sovereign process, Levi-Tanai had to comply with the Ashkenazi and Western corporeal norms in order to obtain visibility. When Levi-Tanai realized that State apparatuses no longer benefited from Inbal's ambassadorial role, institutions responded by framing Inbal as a historical/historicized experience, which still works as a persistent referent for Israel's multicultural rhetoric.

In an essay in which she unpacks the cultural premises of her choreographic process, Israeli choreographer Hadar Ahuvia mentions an Israeli children's song that in English can be translated as "There is for us a country, the street is for us, the land is for us, this song is for us." Therefore, Ahuvia infers, "the dances are for us." (Ahuvia 2018) But are they? In her choreography Everything You Have is Yours? (2016), Ahuvia questions the core principles of Israeli nation-building and its legacy in the American Diaspora.³⁷⁵ In order to do so, she deconstructs dances of the folk dance assemblage as disseminated by contemporary Jewish and Christian folk dance instructors in the United States. On the backdrop, a video projection shows an American male Israeli folk dancer teaching the Yemenite step while moving with his female

³⁷⁵ The version of *Everything You Have is Yours?* by Hadar Ahuvia about which I write refers to its 2016 showing at 14th Street Y in New York. A reworked version has restaged in 2018.

partner. On stage, Hadar Ahuvia and Mor Mendell simultaneously reenact the instructions, wearing the same clothes as the man, reproducing his gestures and the inflection of his voice. At the center of the stage, a small plant in a vase works as a parodic referent to the rhetoric of natural “origin” of the kibbutz culture in which “Israeli folk dances” were fabricated.

Repeating the movement phrase without the instructional video, the two female dancers name the steps, exaggerate the energetic quality of their movements, and expand in the space, traveling along the perimeter. A voiceover that synthesizes the history of settler colonialism in Israel/Palestine accompanies the performers’ verbal description of the Yemenite step while enacting it.

This choreographic action works as a practice of genealogical justice for the recognition of dance traditions assimilated under the “Israeli folk dance” umbrella. The use of a YouTube dance tutorial as a backdrop-inverse mirror and object of parodic reenactment displaces its primary function of dissemination and, thus, its authority. The two women’s dance progressively delegitimizes the knowledge coming from the projection. Each time Ahuvia acknowledges and underlines through her voice the Yemenite step, she performs a decolonizing step.³⁷⁶ As the title provocatively asks, Ahuvia’s piece, through her choreographic genealogy, criticizes the very idea of belonging in terms of settler colonial possession.

Ahuvia’s piece highlights the perpetuating and transnational reiterations of folk dance as a kibbutz practice that, since its inception in kibbutz culture, has operated for the territorial affirmation and reiteration of Zionist sovereignty. Folk dance, unless deconstructed, operates as a

³⁷⁶ Here, I am playing with Derrida’s ambiguous expression about the fact that deconstruction is not a method, “*pas de méthode*,” (1979, 96) which in English can be also translated as “step of method, methodological step.” See McQuillan (2000, 5).

machine that naturalizes Zionism as a multicultural practice of territorial and cultural Ashkenazi sovereignty.

With regard to modern dance in relation to kibbutz culture, in the 1950s and 1960s, American modern dance artists served to domesticate and discipline non-Ashkenazi bodies for their exposure to the Western concert dance audiences. In the late 1960s and 1970s, modern dance as exercised by Ashkenazi bodies in the kibbutz became a source for the challenge of the kibbutz system's ideological order and life-norms. Women modern dancers tactically used kibbutz structures, institutional networks, and financial sources to support the implementation of professional modern dance practice in the kibbutz. The kibbutz gendered labor structure limited these dancers' possibility of persevering in their practice. At stake was the possibility for their female bodies to affirm themselves beyond the functions assigned by the Labor Zionist system. Establishing interkibbutz alliances, these modern dancers played with the antagonism between kibbutz institutions and state organs, strategically turning to one or the other. Ultimately, by framing modern dance as a kibbutz service, modern dancers found more convenient opportunities of negotiation in the kibbutz institutions. At the same time, they reframed a fundamental concept of kibbutz culture, that of *hagshama atzmit* (self-realization), from principle through which the individual conforms to the ideological order to expression of individual desire.

This experience seemed to announce an epistemic shift in the conceptualization of dance in the kibbutz through an agenda primarily devoted to the fulfillment of the dancing bodies. However, modern dance in the kibbutz consolidated its institutional legitimacy when it readjusted its agenda to match the governmental one. I specifically refer to the introduction of the Holocaust as a public discourse in Israel, which, at the end of the 1960s, facilitated the

establishment of a professional dance company directed by Holocaust survivor Yehudit Arnon in kibbutz Ga'aton (also a kibbutz founded by Holocaust survivors). Since then, the Kibbutz Dance Company embodied the national discourse of the survivor of the Shoah as a new national hero. At this stage, modern dance in the kibbutz, similarly to folk dance, became configured as a practice responsible for the advancement of both the national and kibbutz agendas.

Since the 1980s, despite the economic crisis of the kibbutz system, the Kibbutz Dance Company expanded. With the introduction of neoliberal politics in Israel, and the process of privatization of the kibbutzim, modern dance in the kibbutz assumed an entrepreneurial function. The marketability of the company and the kibbutz itself increased in the 1990s through specific politics of internationalization and branding under the leadership of Arnon's student Rami Be'er. Assuming a globalized idea of management, the company productively harmonizes its commitment to locality and the state. The inclusion of North American, European, and Asian dancers in the company marks the neoliberal version of the Israel's melting pot as a globalized country. Nowadays, the dance system in Ga'aton articulates locality as globality. Choreographically, the company stages choreographic works that universalize the kibbutz experience to satisfy a globalized audience, hence the presentation of the kibbutz as a site for the exaltation of nature and community as marketable values while the historical premises in which those values emerged go unseen. The symbolic power of the company in Ga'aton has increased so much that dance not only confirmed its role as an economic enterprise but also reconfigured the architectonic structure of the kibbutz. This process has continued to expand in the 2000s, when Ga'aton became one of the major international centers for the production of a globalized concert dance body, while also re-stating kibbutz locality by fostering the kibbutz Socialist utopia in the neoliberal system. The utopia of collectivism in the kibbutz is currently realized as

the shared construction of globally marketable dance bodies that, as such, generally articulate as a-political—meaning, they are not invested in the ways that power structures exploit and commodify their bodies.

In 1993, in the midst of the ideological and economic crisis of the kibbutz system, Israeli choreographer Neta Pulvermacher staged Five Beds/Children of the Dream.³⁷⁷ Based on Pulvermacher's autobiographical experience, the piece questions the notion of collectivism as an ideologically regulating norm of life in the kibbutz. The piece is set in a communal children's bedroom, where the young kibbutzniks used to sleep separated from their parents. The choreography opens with four dancers standing and facing the audience; they all wear striped pajamas and boots. In unison, they perform a sequence of linear gestures with stomping inserts that invites the viewer to associate discipline to militarism. Occasionally, they shout "home" with the vigor of a command. The acts of stomping and marching, performed in a "sloppy," childish way, become kinesthetic tropes throughout the piece. Patriotic music and gestures require a verticality that the playful quality of the characters disrupts. This conflict of energies produces a comic effect that results in an uncanniness—that is, the uncanny effect of the conflict between ideological disciplinary control and individual desires.

The choreography works like a time-machine that, on the one hand, brings the viewers back to the mechanics of life in a 1960s kibbutz, and, on the other hand, condenses the life-stories of five kibbutzniks. Throughout the piece, in fact, the audience participates in the unfolding of the personal narratives of each character, while we see them grow from children to teenagers. Their movement quality smoothens and their pace slows down as the news of the suicide of a friend's

³⁷⁷ *Five Beds/Children of The Dream* by Neta Pulvermacher premiered in 1993 at Danspace Project in New York.

soldier brother reaches the kids. The energetic quality of the bodies transforms along with the characters' development of a sense of self and relationality that transcends the institutional structure. The violent encounter with the reality and effects of war as an institutionalized practice reconfigures the way the performers relate to the larger disciplinary system. While, before, discipline was a partner with which the dancers played by amplifying it, now, the exposure of its larger implications leaves the performers energetically weakened. At the same time, this process opens up the space for a more intimate and delicate encounter among the bodies. In this way, they discover touch as a source of physical support and a marker of a sense of corporeal presence informed by the reciprocal acknowledgement of their vulnerability.

Choreographing Un/Livability through the Israel Defense Forces

Not differently from other nation-state armies, the Israel Defense Forces is conceived to legally exercise necropower through its soldiers and structures. The notion of necropower per se excludes the realization of a full, necessarily reciprocal, livability, since necropower entails the disposability of those lives the state considers incompatible with its agenda. The IDF has also worked as the site for the affirmation of the Israeli soldier as the normative model for the regulation of ideas of Israeli body. Similarly to the main epistemic articulation of dance in the kibbutz, in the IDF, dance simultaneously mitigates necropower and patriarchal order while reproducing them. At the same time, dance represents a platform for the dissemination of a humanized narrative of soldierhood.

In the pre-state militias, folk dance, through the manifestation of vigor and brotherhood, was framed as a source of Zionist resistance that served to advance claims of Zionist indigeneity in Palestine. In this context, dance articulates as an actual military strategy that the Zionist soldier

employs to affirm its corporeal and territorial sovereignty. Folk dances also contributed to an aestheticization of the Zionist soldier, favoring homosociality as the manly nucleus of patriotic unity. Additionally, and most importantly, folk dance in the late 1940s established a continuity between militarism and civilian life that served, by anticipating it, the establishment of an Israeli state consciousness.

In the early years of the IDF, the women of the folk dance assemblage, led by Kadman, introduced folk dance in the army as a *choreocratic apparatus*, meaning that dance contributed to the administration of military life through the disciplining of the soldiers' bodies. Considering that military folk dance training was particularly conceived for non-Ashkenazi bodies, folk dance in the army worked as a domestication strategy for the production of the ideal Zionist combat body, normatively conceptualized as inherently Western. Moreover, folk dance in the IDF was articulated as a form of *cultural militarism*, that is a cultural practice able to transmit military values while simultaneously downplaying militarism as inherently violent through its rhetoric of togetherness, unity, peoplehood, joy, rigor, and easiness at once. In this phase, albeit briefly, dance granted women leadership roles in the structuring and administration of the newly established army.

Dance as cultural militarism "civilianizes" the army. While, in the 1940s-50s, it was the folk dance assemblage that installed Zionist civilian values in the army, in the 1960s-70s, the army entertainment troupes exported into the civilian realm normatively gendered ideas of Israeliness as embodied by the IDF male and female soldiers. In the state-era, the stakes of dancing in the army implicated the cultural militarization of the civil realm. Similarly to what happened in the kibbutz during the Cold War, when Israel was affirming itself as part of the Western bloc, Western concert dance genres prevailed over folk dance. On the one hand, framed as a

recreational practice, dance in the army kept enhancing a feeling of lightheartedness. On the other hand, it became a vehicle for the radicalization of a patriarchal Sabra masculinity through the spectacularized production of docile femininity. Livability, here, points out the exacerbation of the gender divide and the commodification of women's bodies for the sake of the strengthening of the state army's image. In this way, dance kept operating choreocratically.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the institutionalized presence of dance in the army drastically decreased because, besides budgetary issues, the traditional sense of lightheartedness associated with it did not serve the image of the Israeli soldier in years when the IDF had to overperform military strength (like during the Intifadas). Dance returns as a soldier's practice in the 2000s, not as a proper choreocratic activity, but as the soldiers' private initiative for global sharing on digital platforms such as YouTube and social media. The positive and festive feeling soldiers manifest in their dance videos humanizes them, if decontextualized from the larger military apparatus. Relying on dance practices from popular culture, soldiers dancing while on duty in the Occupied Territories reiterate the idea of dance in the army as a recreational, regenerative "break" from their exercise of necropower. Because their dance is not choreocratically regulated, soldiers have undergone military punishment. However, within the game of military hierarchy and discipline, the soldiers' personal dance initiatives work as a form of *soft power* that restates military control over the territory in which the soldiers move. In this way, dance continues to operate for the advancement of the military machine and the soldiers as choreocratic agents.

*In Archive (2014), Arkadi Zaides operates a choreographic scrutiny of the body of the Israeli soldier on duty in the Occupied Territories.*³⁷⁸ *On the backdrop, Zaides projects videos of Israeli*

³⁷⁸ *Archive* by Arkadi Zaides premiered at the Festival d'Avignon in 2014.

soldiers recorded by Palestinian civilians with the support of B'Tselem—The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. On stage, Zaides reproduces the gestures, corporeal attitudes, reactions, rhythms, etc. of Israeli soldiers and Israeli settlers as seen from the perspective of the Occupied Palestinian population.

Distancing himself from mainstream forms of Israeli dance that overload choreography with ongoing movement and intense energy, Zaides utilizes stasis and poses as tropes to capture and overmanifest what the Israeli and international public overlooks, namely the routine of movements Israeli soldiers reproduce in the daily exercise of violence. By breaking down and repeating these gestures, looking for the most minute details, Zaides unveils the chain of disciplining, reiteration, and normalization of the performance of necropower. As the performance progresses, Zaides becomes more specific in the reproduction of breathing and facial expressions. At some point, he reenacts the gesture of a young settler throwing rocks toward the Palestinian holding the camera. Arkadi replicates his stride, his inhaling before throwing, the downward stretching of his facial muscles, and so we closely participate in the threatening feeling that Arkadi's spatial takeover and inflating body produce.

Decontextualized from the Territories and performed in everyday civilian clothing on the concert stage, the occupying body manifests in its absurdity: it seems to stumble at every other step, and to lose its sense of direction. In other words, it displays the fragmented, inhuman quality of a puppet whose strings are maneuvered from above.

Projecting this Research Forward

While I have elaborated the concept of *choreocracy* in relation to the introduction of folk dance in the IDF as a form of cultural militarism (a cultural practice for the embodiment and

transmission of military values), I recognize that in several of my case studies dance operates as a distributing practice for the governmental administration and management of bodies, and for the performance of specific feelings associated with the representation of a “State consciousness.” Hence, for the future elaboration of this dissertation, I plan to focus on and further develop the conceptual framework of choreocracy, and expand it beyond the military realm. For instance, folk dance in the kibbutz in the 1940s also operated as choreocracy, as an administrative form of power able to integrate or supersede traditional bureaucratic practices. This future trajectory also entails a deeper study of conceptualizations and practices of bureaucracy, in general and in Israeli history. My hope is to further locate the reasons for and modes through which Israel has largely invested in the promotion of a dance culture. I also plan to continue to investigate how the state keeps benefiting from dance practices that do not seem invested in the governmental agenda or do not seem part of the mechanics of existing institutional apparatuses.

Thus, while I intend to reconceptualize my work in choreocratic terms, I will keep elaborating and articulating my livability framework, which, in this study, has helped me look at how different dancing subjects have invested in their dancing, why they have persevered in their dancing, and towards whom they have ultimately taken responsibility through their dancing. The works of the contemporary choreographers I have interweaved in this epilogue show how the stakes of dance in Israel can move against a choreocratic norm. In particular, Hadar Ahuvia and Arkadi Zaides show how choreography constitutes a practice able to unpack and exhibit the very mechanisms that, in kibbutz culture and in the army, have produced and reiterated unlivability. Neta Pulvermacher exposes how the acknowledgement of the inherent vulnerability of the body has the force to suspend the coercive logic of disciplinary systems that cultivate docility through

the performance of vigor. Finally, another Israeli choreographer, May Zarhy, whose duet *Yes* (2015) closes this dissertation, shows how an encounter between subjects becomes realized when they work to enhance each other's corporeal presence, even if they do not share the same skills, technique, background, directionality, etc.³⁷⁹ Thinking through dancing, watching dancing, making dancing, and training in dancing while engaging with the questions of the livability framework might help us consider what we individually and collectively tend to and project into the future through the physical, energetic, and political possibilities of dance.

We are in the basement of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, waiting for the performance to start. Some sit on the stools of the closed cafeteria, while others hang against the bare concrete walls or sit on the floor. Audible is the dull, buzzing noise of the empty escalators, which move slowly but continuously and seem to emphasize a sense of void that waiting in such a space produces. At some point, the performers come in, and ask us to move the chairs so as to form a semicircle that they mark with some tape. Yes, we agree, we will not trespass. The performers exit.

After a while, a low-pitched, singing voice starts to fill the space, performing tone modulations that make it hard to understand from which direction the voice arrives. Soon the voice reveals itself as a polyphonic chant, dissonant and harmonious at once. Looking around, trying to follow the movement of the voices, I notice that the two performers, May Zarhy and Michal Oppenheim, are slowly sliding and rolling through the space, while their voices keep reverberating. They do not face each other, their bodies overlap, make room for one another; they move in a polyphonic way. They alternate in the vocal and movement leadership: sometimes May sets a new direction for the vocals, sometimes Michal initiates a new reconfiguration of the

³⁷⁹ *Yes (Ken)* by May Zarhy, in collaboration with Michal Oppenheim, premiered at Tel Aviv Museum of Art as part of the Diver Festival in 2015.

corporeal relation. Neither of them displays any distracting virtuosity. They unfold their bodies and voices in a non-hierarchical manner, coordinating and accommodating each other through listening and focus.

Even when the corporeal and vocal dialogue gets stuck in a moment of impasse, they persevere in the listening and reciprocity of their different yet joined practices. These impasses do not happen without discomfort. Sometimes, they get stuck in frantic repetitions. But, because of their commitment to listening, they do not get trapped in alienation. On the contrary, the performers and the audience recognize the amusing absurdity of these kinetic and acoustic repetitions. But the performers utilize repetition as a strategy of re-tuning. Thus, variations emerge. And when they both recognize a new element that helps them foster their duet, they follow it.

As an audience member, not only do I find myself partaking in their satisfaction for solving the impasse, but I also become involved in the process of listening. At the end of the performance, I recall the sense of void I felt while I was waiting before the show, when the only significant noise was the buzz of the escalators. Now, we audience members softly smile at each other; instead of chattering, some exchange a gaze that signals complicity and participation. Despite not knowing each other, despite that initial invitation to keep ourselves in place, in our chairs, behind the tape, we have connected and established a way to relate to one another. The space is now filled with the presence of my fellow audience members; I still do not know anything about their stories, their lives, or even their opinion about the piece, but sharing the experience of this performance has made us less anonymous and somehow more relevant to one another. In Yes, the joy of dancing and choreography emerges from the performers' ability to

*make us recognize, and take responsibility for the very presence of those with whom we shared
the space, the time, the listening, the dance.*

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