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Mother Figure: Art and the Palestinian Dream-State, 1965-1982

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Mother Figure: Art and the Palestinian Dream-State, 1965-1982

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in Art History

by

Alessandra Amin

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Mother Figure: Art and the Palestinian Dream-State

by

Alessandra Amin

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Saloni Mathur, Chair

Mother Figure: Art and the Palestinian Dream-State, 1965-1982 considers the development of new aesthetic and philosophical currents in Palestinian art between the launch of the Palestinian Revolution in 1965 and its defeat in the Siege of Beirut in 1982. During this brief, tumultuous, and radically hopeful period, Palestinians in exile gained unprecedented agency over their fate, emblematized in the Beirut-based pseudo-state of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In the visual and literary arts, the dynamic, forward-looking optimism of the revolutionary moment wrestled with the ongoing traumas of exile, creating tension that materialized in the related figures of the dream and the maternal body. Placing established nationalist aesthetics in conversation with understudied imaginaries of fantasy and science-fiction, this dissertation traces the emergence of the "dream-state," an extranationalist framework for conceptualizing Palestine that simultaneously indexes the nightmarish uncanny in its present and fosters multidirectional modes of anticipating its future. This framework marks Palestine's difference from nations that exist in sovereign, territorialized form; Palestinians do not "imagine" the nation as a

subconscious means of belonging to a community, but as a complex act of mourning, resistance, speculation, and survival.

This dissertation looks primarily at the visual art of Samira Badran (b. 1954), Mustafa Hallaj (1938-2002), Juliana Seraphim (1934-2005), and Ismail Shammout (1930-2006). It also considers the work of visual artists Mona Saudi (1945-2022), Ibrahim Ghannam (1930-1984), Jumana Husseini (1932-2018), and Abdel Rahman Al-Muzayen (b. 1943), as well as literature by Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), Taha Muhammad Ali (1931-2011), Ghassan Kanafani (1936-1972), and Muzaffar al-Nawaab (b. 1934). Across the diverse artistic practices represented by these figures, the dream-state appears most clearly in different iterations of the female form that emphasize its reproductive capacity. Through these iterations—faithful surrogate, loving mother, barren monster, virgin territory—the maternal body articulates the dream-state's tenacious futurity while indexing its patriarchal parameters. In considering the dream-state through and against its wombs, *Mother Figure* explores the gendered hopes and anxieties shaping new modes of imagining Palestine at a generative moment in decolonial history.

The dissertation of Alessandra Amin is approved.

George Thomas Baker

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2022

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

All translations from Arabic, French, or German are mine unless otherwise noted.

I have transliterated Arabic terms in accordance with the International Journal for Middle East Studies (IJMES) guidelines. For the names of people, places, and organizations, I have deferred to the Romanized spelling most commonly used by the individual or in the country where the place/organization is located, which in the cases of Lebanon and North Africa is often in Francophone rather than Anglophone transliteration (i.e., Achrafieh instead of Ashrafiyya). In cases where commonly used English place names exist, I have used them (i.e., Jerusalem instead of Al-Quds, Jaffa instead of Yafa). Per IJMES guidelines, proper nouns and words that appear in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary have not been italicized and are not written with diacritical markings. I have opted to translate all known titles of artwork into English, but journal titles remain in their original languages.

A glossary of all Arabic terms used in this dissertation may be found in the appendix at the end of the document.

Introduction: A Dream About Dreams in the Memory of a Dream

A woman stands on a balcony, backlit against the blurred backdrop of a refugee camp on the outskirts of Beirut. She wears a beige sweater and big plastic pearl earrings, her dark hair tied behind her in a loose white kerchief. Her eyebrows, plucked thin, rise and fall with her story, which she tells in Palestinian Arabic softened by a slight lisp. "The sky filled with verses from the Qur'an," she recalls.

> I read every verse that appeared—*every* one—and after a while I noticed a big crowd. A woman in white came to me and asked why I wasn't praying. I said I didn't know how and asked her to teach me, and she said OK. She did, and I prayed, and then I noticed the crowd again. 'What's going on?' I said. They said, 'It's victory! We've won!' I asked myself: is it possible? Could we really have won so soon?[1]

The screen goes black. In Arabic and French, white letters spell out the film's title: *Al-Manām, Le Rêve,* "the dream." Filmed between 1980 and 1981, *Al-Manām* travels to the Sabra, Shatila, Bourj al-Barajneh and Ain al-Hilweh refugee camps in Lebanon, where generations of displaced Palestinians have lived since Israel's violent establishment in 1948. Its Syrian director, Mohammad Malas, set out to make a film about the Palestinian Revolution, but upon arrival in Beirut had been met with an overwhelming sensorium of contradictions. Israeli warplanes filled the sky like hawks circling prey, yet terrestrial life carried on at a brisk clip: men in uniform mingled with women buying produce, suit-clad people shuffled in and out of shell-damaged offices while kids played soccer and hung posters for upcoming cultural events. Malas was at a loss for how best to document life in these conditions, where everything seemed animated at once by ongoing trauma and the electric crackle of ambition. He ultimately decided that the way

[1] *Al-Manām* [*The Dream*], directed by Mohammad Malas (Damascus: Maram Cinema & TV, 1987). 0:27-1:09. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOL5URnypiQ . Translation from Arabic.

forward was to focus on the Palestinian subconscious, building his documentary around the dreams of his interlocutors.[2]

In frame after frame of the resulting film, Palestinians talk about their dreams and experiences, their monologues separated only intermittently by shots of the camps set to poignant music. No direct narration interrupts the refugees' stories, which are told in the intimate settings of kitchens, bedrooms, bunks in militia encampments. One man recounts a dream of meeting a long-dead Saudi royal while getting a shave at a barber shop. A woman, cleaning broad beans, relays a dream of playing tour guide in her hometown of Acre, proudly showing Palestine to a group of Lebanese women. People explain how their families came to Lebanon, or speak of martyred brothers and sons. After a while, it becomes difficult to distinguish between subjects' dreams and waking lives. A young man sitting on a desk in front of a Che Guevara poster tells of going to buy strawberries when an Israeli bomb rocked the marketplace, sending people and produce flying. All that indicates the story's veracity is the haunted way he tells it. "The strawberry man was killed, left in bits and pieces," he explains, his body rigid. "There were no intact corpses."[3]

Al-Manām was not produced until 1986, five years after Malas had shot his last footage. This explains the elegiac quality of its opening scene. By the film's release in 1987, the doubt expressed by the woman on the balcony—"could we really have won so soon?" —appeared painfully prophetic. In 1982, after besieging the Lebanese capital by land, air, and sea for two harrowing months, the Israeli army succeeded in its stated goal of ousting the Palestine Liberation Organization from its stronghold in Beirut. The PLO's withdrawal agreement

[2] Nadia Yaqub, "Refracted Filmmaking in Muhammad Malas's *The Dream* and Kamal Aljafari's *The Roof,*" *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 7, no. 2 (2014): 156.

[3] *Al-Manām,* 20:22-21:26

explicitly ensured the safety of the civilian population that remained in the refugee camps, which was to be guaranteed by a multinational military coalition convened specifically for the occasion. When this coalition disbanded two weeks ahead of schedule, the camps were left defenseless. Under the pretext of responding to a high-profile assassination wrongfully attributed to the Palestinians, the IDF sealed off Sabra and Shatila and deployed Lebanese Christian militiamen to slaughter their inhabitants, which by this point overwhelmingly comprised women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. Between 700 and 3,500 civilians were killed during the massacre, with only two recorded casualties on the side of the assailants.[4] While survivors searched among mutilated corpses for the remains of their loved ones, any lingering hope for a Palestinian victory bled out beside them.

Just months prior to the Siege of Beirut, the Assad regime in Malas's native Syria had perpetrated a massacre of its own people in the city of Hama. In 1985, internecine violence among Palestinian factions exploded into Lebanon's War of the Camps, fought for nearly three years between a kaleidoscopic array of splinter groups, political parties, and international agitators. In a few short years, the revolutionary optimism of the 1960s and 70s had soured into bitter disillusionment. Malas, according to film scholar Nadia Yaqub, "decided he had no choice but to use the tools of cinema…to recreate the life of the camps as it had been prior to 1982, as a means of imbuing the desperate present of the mid- and late 1980s with strength and hope."[5]

[4] The wide discrepancy in estimated death tolls reflects the chaotic nature of the event as well as the inconsistency of subsequent investigations. Israel's official investigation, the Kahan Commission, reported 700 to 800 deaths, while the Palestinian Red Crescent counted over 2,000. Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliouk's in-depth study of the crisis arrived at a maximum figure of 3000 to 3500 deaths.

[5] Nadia Yaqub, *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 196.

Malas describes the fruit of these labors, *Al-Manām*, as "a dream about dreams that happened in the memory of a dream."[6]

The fleeting years between the launch of the Palestinian Revolution in 1965 and the eviction of the PLO from Beirut in 1982 saw a great many failures, hardships, setbacks, and tragedies. Its enduring cultural legacy, however, is one of hope, embodied in the image of the revolution's epicenter. "Beirut was the place where Palestinian political information and expression flourished," writes Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish of this period in the city's history.

> Beirut was the birthplace for thousands of Palestinians who knew no other cradle. Beirut was an island upon which Arab immigrants dreaming of a new world landed. It was the foster mother of a heroic mythology that could offer the Arabs a promise other than that born of the June War…Beirut became the property of anyone who dreamed of a different political order and accommodated the chaos that for every exile resolved the complex of being an exile.[7]

Darwish penned those words in 1985, in a poetic memoir of the 1982 siege. Malas sought to return to this era as a wellspring of strength and optimism the following year, in 1986. While the Palestinian Revolution has inspired a great deal of romanticism since, the relative immediacy of Darwish's reflections and Malas's film suggests that this legacy of hope is more than mere nostalgia. The intoxicating sense that, as Edward Said once remarked, "everything seemed possible in Beirut" during the 1970s arose from a plethora of sources, including the city's vibrant university culture, relatively liberal press, thriving nightlife, and longstanding status as a "crossroads" between Europe and the Arab world.[8] It was also due in no small part to the

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[6] Quoted in Nadia Yaqub, Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution, 196.

[7] Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*, trans. Ibrahim Muhawi (1985; trans. 1995; reis. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), 134.

[8] Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 172.

Palestinians themselves, who in a matter of years had righted a sinking ship in an almost miraculous bid for self-determination.

In the decade following the Nakba,[9] the quest for Palestinian liberation was wholly at the mercy of foreign governments.[10] Palestinians living under Israeli rule were subject to martial law, and any nascent political movements were summarily crushed by the occupying authorities. In Gaza (then administered by Egypt), the West Bank (then administered by Jordan), and virtually all other Arab host states, political mobilization was also subject to harsh restrictions. Arab unity was the order of the day, and vague calls for a pan-Arab answer to the "Palestine problem" were merely blunt weapons in the political arsenals of various regimes jockeying for regional influence. When the Arab League created the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964, it was "essentially toothless," described by historian Paul Thomas Chamberlin as an instrument of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser to distract from the fact that his government was "retreating from the more radical dimensions of Arab nationalism" it had previously championed.[11] Meanwhile, large concentrations of Palestinian refugees lived in camps run by an overtaxed UNRWA, often in horrific conditions and with virtually no means of improving their

[9] "Nakba," which means "catastrophe" in Arabic, here refers to the large-scale destruction of Palestinian society through which the State of Israel established itself in 1947-1948. During this period, approximately three quarters of the Palestinian population was permanently displaced, and over 400 villages were depopulated and destroyed by Zionist forces.

[10] For more on the history of the Palestinian struggle before 1965, see Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) and Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

[11] Paul Thomas Chamberlin, The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold-War Order (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.

position.[12] In the unflattering light of the international press, Palestinians were cast as "ragged, sullen and resentful"[13] wretches, "huddled in sordid camps or lying like beasts in the open."[14]

With the *inṭilāqa,* or "launch," of the Palestinian Revolution in 1965, this image of helpless refugeeism began to disappear beneath growing global awareness of Palestinian armed struggle. Members of Palestinian militias were fêted as freedom fighters across the decolonizing world, while in the metropoles of shrinking empires they were repudiated as terrorists. The disastrous Arab loss of the June (Six Day) War in 1967 loosened the grip of pan-Arabism on the PLO, which by 1968 was dominated by the "Palestine first" ethos of Yasser Arafat's political party, Fatah. The zealous determination of the fedayeen and the stirring rhetoric of their leader, Arafat, stoked the fires of optimism that had begun to burn bright in Amman, Damascus, and Beirut. Fatah's simple slogan became a battle cry, but it also became a genuine belief: *thawra ḥatta al-nāṣr*, revolution until victory.

The emotional magnetism of armed struggle notwithstanding, the most immediate source of hope for many Palestinian refugees came in the form of the PLO's impressive civilian infrastructure. Beginning in the late 1960s, the PLO established the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), the Palestine Martyrs' Works Society (SAMED),[15] security forces, and various cultural apparatuses to improve everyday life for displaced Palestinians. The results of this

[12] The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was established in 1949 to manage the humanitarian crisis resulting from the State of Israel's establishment. It is the only UN agency dedicated to the needs of refugees from a specific region or conflict, and to this day remains the primary source of support for 5.7 million registered refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

[13] "Sullen Refugees Wait Near Israel," *The New York Times,* January 28th, 1954, p. 9

[14] "The Palestine Refugees: A Last Chance?" *Manchester Guardian,* March 9th, 1951, p. 4.

[15] SAMED was established in 1970 to provide training and employment to the families of people who died in the service of the Palestinian cause, but expanded its services to all Palestinians following the outbreak of the Lebanese civil wars in 1975.

infrastructure were especially striking in Lebanon, where the PLO concentrated its resources following the violent deterioration of relations with the Jordanian government in 1970. By 1982, the PRCS operated 11 major hospitals in Lebanon—each with "a completely modern operating theatre, X-ray department, laboratory, pharmacy, blood bank, out-patient clinic, and at least some facilities for each medical specialization"—as well as over sixty dental and medical clinics.[16] Both preventative and curative healthcare was offered free of charge to PLO employees, while everyone else, including non-Palestinians, could access the same services at a nominal fee; adjusted for inflation, clinic visits cost around $2.79 USD, while in-patient hospital care cost about $14/day.[17] Most of the doctors and nurses on staff at these institutions were Palestinian, some trained at a nursing school operated by the PRCS in Beirut. The PRCS also ran a prosthetics center, day care facilities, and a Social Department offering a literacy program and vocational training for women in sewing, embroidery, languages, and typing.

The creation of employment opportunities was of paramount importance for Palestinians in Lebanon, where punitive laws prevent most refugees from finding stable work to this day.[18] In the industrial sector, SAMED established communally owned factories to produce shoes, clothing, toys, plastic goods, furniture, candy, and other materials, employing around 5,000 Palestinians in Lebanon as of 1981. The PLO's vast Department of Information and Culture

[16] Cheryl Rubenberg, "The Civilian Infrastructure of the Palestine Liberation Organization: An Analysis of the PLO in Lebanon Until June 1982." *Journal for Palestine Studies* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1983): 62.

[17] These figures reflect the respective costs of $1 and $5 in 1981, adjusted for inflation in 2022.

[18] Palestinians are legally prohibited from working in 36 professions in Lebanon, including medicine, farming, fishing, and public transit. In order to work in other sectors, Palestinians must obtain work permits that, while free, require an extensive bureaucratic process that is effectively dependent on the whims of both employers and officials. Changes to Lebanese law in 2005 and 2010 allowed Palestinians some access to employment in the public sector, but the protections they provided were not fully implemented and were rolled back in 2019. For more information on these circumstances prior to 2019, see United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (February 2016).

supported separate divisions for national culture, cinema, theater, folk dance, photography, fine arts, and graphic design. It also maintained a Research Center with a 25,000-volume library, extensive archives, and a publishing house responsible for books, pamphlets and periodicals such as *Shu'un Filastiniyya* (Palestinian Affairs). There were even scouting programs; founded initially to train future fedayeen, the *Ashbal* ("Lion Cubs") and *Zahrat* ("Flowers") organizations offered children access to academic tutors and the opportunity to learn sports, arts and crafts, photography, and various kinds of mechanical skills.[19]

At no point in the seven decades of their existence in Lebanon have Palestinian refugees lived an easy life. The pseudo-state that converged in Beirut during the heyday of the PLO was rife with its own conflicts and contradictions, and it could not solve all of the Palestinians' many problems. Nevertheless, promises were made. They glint through the grainy scenes of Malas's *al-Manām*: in the careful maneuvering of a SAMED bootmaker, in the pride with which a mother holds a rifle made by her martyred son. Stability, dignity, liberation. A reward after so much suffering. From the darkness of the present moment—his, ours—Malas brings us back to a time when such things seemed luminously possible.

Al-Manām is a window onto an era in which Beirut and the Palestinian Revolution were synonymous, a collective crucible for the intractable multitude of meanings we attach to the concept of dreaming. In referring to his film as "a dream about dreams that happened in the memory of a dream," Malas gestures to his own lofty intentions as a filmmaker, the dreams—literal and aspirational—of his subjects, and a bygone era that was revealed as illusory only in its

[19] For more on the civilian infrastructure of the PLO before the siege of Beirut, see Chery Rubenberg "The Civilian Infrastracture of the Palestine Liberation Organization," (*Journal for Palestine Studies* 12, no. 3, 1983), Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon* (Westview Press, 1990), and Ilana Feldman, "Humanitarianism and Revolution: Samed, the Palestine Red Crescent Society, and the Work of Liberation," (*Humanitarianism & Media, 1990 to the Present,* 2019).

passing. To dream, *Al-Manām* reminds us, is to desire, to aspire, to idle, to inhabit the past or the future or, perhaps, both at once. A dream is the meaningless, automatic march of images through a sleeping brain, unless it's an omen, or a goal, or a brief trip to an otherworld wedged between life and death. In the delightfully compatible formulations of Sigmund Freud and Disney's Cinderella, a dream is a wish your heart makes (and your brain fulfils). None of these different conceptions of dreaming were wholly independent from each other in revolutionary Beirut. There, the dream of a "new world" was slippery and vaporous, a want that edged on divination, a truth that was, always, also a fantasy.

For Palestinians within and outside of Lebanon between the mid-1960s and the early 1980s, the scintillating promises of the Revolution were counterbalanced by other, darker dreams. In exile or under occupation, Palestinians faced their physical and rhetorical erasure by the state of Israel, navigating the upheaval of their lives by an entity that continually denied their existence. *Al-Manām* captures the surreal nature of this predicament in the fluidity it suggests between the dreams and experiences of its subjects. Indeed, the film points to dreaming as a mode of relation that bridges the grandiose hopes of the revolutionary moment with the profoundly disorienting experiences of exile and effacement. This dynamic is not unique to Malas's work. In fact, it underlies much of the art and literature of the period, and is the central concern of this dissertation.

Mother Figure: Art and the Palestinian Dream-State, 1965-1982 embarks from the assertion that modern Palestinian art assumed new aesthetic and philosophical valences during the 1960s and 1970s. Against the prevailing trend in the small scholarly corpus on modern Palestinian art, I neither emphasize this point nor consider it the "origin" of Palestinian art as

such.[20] Building on twenty months of fieldwork conducted in Jerusalem, Amman, and Beirut between 2017 and 2020, I engage paintings, drawings, political posters, cultural journals, exhibition materials, and popular literature in English, Arabic, and French in approaching the rich context sketched broadly above as one of many Palestinian "beginnings." Following literary theorist Edward Said, a beginning is an active, secular locus of creation, in contrast to the fundamentally passive, mythical, divine origin.[21] If the origin "centrally dominates all that derives from it," the beginning's role is more tentative; it is the first step towards the creation of difference from precedent, defying linear trajectories in favor of diffuse and indeterminate outcomes.[22] The beginning at the heart of this dissertation took shape in the forms of the dream and the maternal body, which materialized as nested modes of relating to Palestine in the visual art and literature of the era.

Mother Figure charts the emergence of a Palestinian "dream-state" through established nationalist aesthetics as well as previously understudied imaginaries of fantasy and science-

[20] Gannit Ankori's *Palestinian Art* (2006), Kamal Boullata's *Palestinian Art from 1850 to the Present* (2009), and Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon's *The Origins of Palestinian Art* (2013) constitute the primary scholarly works to be published in English on twentieth-century Palestinian art; all three take its origin as a central concern. Though Makhoul and Hon also frame their work via Saidian "beginnings," their analysis ultimately reinforces the logic of the origin by centering the Nakba as the definitive genesis of Palestinian visual culture. Nisa Ari's recent dissertation, "Cultural Mandates, Artistic Missions, and the 'Welfare of Palestine,' 1876-1948" (MIT, 2019), is an excellent example of scholarship that, while seeking explicitly to explore a moment of "firsts," avoids the determinism of the origin by shifting its focus away from milestones of Palestinian nationalism and towards the dynamic, fraught relationships between art, politics, and modern charity.

[21] I admit that considering art in terms of beginnings may move the idea beyond its intended confines; for Said, "beginning is doing — intending — a whole set of particular things primarily in writing or because of writing" (*Beginnings,* 19). Without collapsing the many distinctions between writing and the visual arts, or even arguing for a semiological reading of the latter, I believe that the triad of thought, emotion, and perception that Said considers "functions of the beginning act of writing" are also operative in its visual corollary.

[22] Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 373.

fiction.[23] Building on colloquial, Islamic, and psychoanalytic formulations of dreaming, I propose the dream-state as an extranationalist framework for conceptualizing Palestine that simultaneously indexes the nightmarish uncanny in its present and fosters multidirectional modes of anticipating its future. Crucially, this framework marks Palestine's difference from nations that exist in sovereign, territorialized form; for Palestinians, unlike citizens of self-determined countries, "imagining" the nation is not a subconscious means of belonging to a social group but a complex act of mourning, speculation, resistance, and survival. I argue that this framework is most visible in the figure of the maternal body, which is ubiquitous across the diverse artistic practices considered in this dissertation. Appearing in many forms—faithful surrogate, loving mother, barren monster, and virgin territory, to name a few—the maternal body articulates the dream-state's tenacious futurity while indexing its patriarchal parameters. More than a motif, this body is a central prism whose many facets reflect the gendered hopes and anxieties shaping images of Palestine's future during the zenith of its revolution. In considering the dream-state through and against its wombs, this dissertation attends to the affective charge of artistic production at a generative moment in decolonial history, suggesting that new aesthetic cadres for imagining liberation formed in its uneasy knot of displacement and hope.

[23] My thinking here draws from intellectual historian Omnia El Shakry's "archival imaginary" ("History Without Documents") and artist and theorist Allan Sekula's "shadow archive" ("The Body and the Archive"), both of which problematize the limitations placed upon analytical possibilities by extant categories of knowledge and their presumed relationship to one another. In a sense, nationalist and fantastical imagery in modern Palestinian art constitute "archives whose semantic interdependence is normally obscured by the 'coherence' and 'mutual exclusivity' of the social groups registered within each" (Sekula 26).

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1, "Entering a Dream-State," introduces the dream as a multifaceted mode of relating to Palestine in the art and literature of the revolutionary era. The chapter begins with a prose poem and an illustration by Jordanian artist Mona Saudi and an essay by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, all of which were published in a 1974 issue of *Mawaqif.* Between the pages of this widely read, Beirut-based literary journal, Saudi and Darwish conjure a Palestinian "dream state," a framework for conceptualizing Palestine that negotiates the reckless hope of the Palestinian Revolution with the upheaval of exile and erasure. The chapter sketches the contours of this framework, emphasizing the way in which it marks Palestine's difference from nations that exist in sovereign, territorialized form, and contextualizes its emergence within the cultural conditions of the 1948 Nakba. During the Nakba, Palestinians witnessed their own erasure through Israel's revival, in "a land without a people," of an ancient and purportedly indigenous civilization. I argue that these surreal circumstances created an interstitial mode of being analogous to the Islamic *barzakh,* a liminal space between life and death believed by some to be accessible in sleep. Finally, I consider how this mode of being operates in the work of two Palestinian creators, poet Taha Mohammed Ali and visual artist Mustafa Hallaj.

In Chapter 1, both Saudi and Darwish engage with the dream-state in relation to the maternal body, which each author evokes in radically different terms. The following chapters bring this figure to the fore, centering different iterations of the female body that emphasize its reproductive capacity. Chapter 2, "Aspiration, Surrogacy, and the Art of a Gendered Future," considers depictions of Palestine as a woman that proliferated in the nationalist art of the 1960s and 1970s. Focusing on the work of Ismail Shammout (1931-2006), then-director of the PLO's Department of Art and National Culture, I situate these images within the context of Beirut's

Palestinian refugee camps and the vicissitudes of family life that structured them. In the camps, discourse around recent military defeats pitted modernity against traditional models of masculinity, while the conditions of exile and the burgeoning liberation movement unsettled entrenched gender roles. In response to (male) anxiety about the erosion of such roles, the images at the center of my analysis operate in time-bound modes of substitution and gestation, becoming "surrogates" for Palestine rather than its eternal emblems. In so doing, they embody a forward-thinking, aspirational mode of dreaming Palestine that nevertheless affirms its patriarchal social order. Following this analysis, I turn to the closely related phenomenon of *turāth,* or cultural patrimony, in contemporaneous visual art. Heritage crafts, especially *tatreez*, or embroidery, were both central to aspirational art in the orbit of the PLO and derided as anachronistic by many anticolonial thinkers who, following Fanon, demanded a revolutionary "combat art" from their Palestinian comrades. Such a hypothetical, vanguard art form was implicitly visualized through the hyper-masculine image of the fedayee, whereas *tatreez* and other folk idioms were traditionally feminized and depicted on women's bodies. Considering the role of folk art in legitimizing Israel's claims to indigeneity, I argue that the prevalence of *tatreez* in Palestinian paintings and posters is as combative as it is nostalgic, adding a subversive dimension to the surrogacy performed by the women who wear it.

Chapter 3, "The Barzākh of Beirut," focuses on the work of Juliana Seraphim (1934-2005), a Jaffa-born bonne vivante whose status as a middle-class Christian granted her Lebanese citizenship and enabled her assimilation into Beirut's vibrant art world. This chapter begins by examining how Seraphim destabilizes the dominant framework for understanding modern Palestinian art in Beirut, resisting its criteria of inclusion while unearthing their buried implications. Examining Seraphim as a historiographical irritant opens onto the larger question

of her cultural liminality, and I argue that the artist's illegibility in both Lebanese sectarian and Palestinian nationalist terms engendered a subjective *barzākh,* an interstitial intersection of incommensurate subjectivities that she channeled into both her artwork and her outlandish persona. In this context, I consider how her experience of exile takes shape as a double consciousness in the fantastical, hybrid forms of her canvases. I then examine the relationship between the artist's career-spanning fixation with the grotesque and the centrality of 'the feminine' to her oneiric aesthetic. Often lost to the tacit equation of femininity with frivolity, the transgressive potential of Seraphim's work takes shape in its refusal, through the grotesque, of reproductive sexuality, resisting rather than celebrating the "immaculate womb" of the ideal maternal body. Finally, I place this work in conversation with a drawing by Palestinian artist Samira Badran (b. 1954), arguing that their resonance speaks not to an essential "Palestinianness" but to the feminized dialectic of virginity and contamination through which Palestine is frequently imagined.

Chapter 4, "The Bride of Your Arabness," expands on this dialectic as it relates to depictions of the Palestinian landscape. Though the establishment and expansion of the State of Israel had irrevocably altered its terrain, the physical territory of Palestine during the heyday of the revolution appeared most frequently in unblemished images of golden fields, stone cities, olive groves and fresh oranges. Looking at such motifs in the work of Ibrahim Ghannam and Jumana Husseini, I argue that their forceful denial of territorial reality dovetails with contemporary literary and political rhetoric in which Palestine appears as a virgin under constant threat of rape. The formulation of Zionist-conquest-as-sexual-violence not only equates colonialism with violation but articulates a fear of its consequences, i.e., a forced pregnancy and its hybrid offspring. If the oeuvres of Ghannam and Husseini refuse the possibility of an

"impure" Palestine, those of Mustafa Hallaj and Samira Badran imagine the homeland as a hybrid, shapeshifting dream realm. Turning to works on paper by these artists, I consider how imaginative vocabularies of fantasy and science fiction become crucial to the confrontation of Palestine's (sur)reality within this framework of virginity and 'contamination.' Focusing on more drawings from Badran's Ramallah series, I argue that the artist's engagement with construction equipment and building materials renders the rape of Palestine painfully visible, yet the hybrid creatures that arise from it are not beyond redemption. Instead, they serve as ambiguous oracles, evoking the dream-state as a site of divination in their projection of the future through the refuse of the present.

My Last Name Means "Honest" in Arabic, and Other Reflections on Research and Stakes

During his tenure as director of the Palestinian Museum, Jack Persekian spearheaded a research initiative focusing on seventeen international exhibitions of Palestinian art that occurred between 1976 and 2009. Staged in such far-flung cities as Moscow, Geneva, London, and Tunis, these exhibitions live on only in a handful of photographs and promotional materials, as well as ample testimony from participating artists. All of the artwork and most of the documentation related to these exhibitions have vanished. Persekian's team attempted to uncover new information and reconstruct the stories of these events, hoping to understand the fates of the artwork they displayed. The researchers came up empty, their project serving to highlight the "incomplete documentation, closed or inaccessible archives, and general state of

disorganization" that "have plagued the museum and cultural industry in Palestine for many years."[24]

"17 Lost Exhibitions" encapsulates the unique set of challenges posed by the study of modern Palestinian art, which remains a small subfield even in the larger context of scholarship on modern and contemporary Arab visual culture.[25] There is no central archive,[26] and the Israeli state has looted or destroyed much of the material that once existed in the archives of the Palestine Liberation Organization and other Palestinian cultural institutions.[27] Despite numerous iterations of a "Palestinian Museum,"[28] artwork exists mostly in private collections, which themselves have been scattered to the far corners of the earth. Sometimes, things simply

[24] Jack Persekian, "17 Lost Exhibitions," *Field Notes* 4 (April 2015): 66.

[25] The field of modern Palestinian art history continues to be dominated by the work of the late artist and critic Kamal Boullata, whose *Palestinian Art from 1850 to the Present* (2009) remains the definitive survey work to date and whose writings in both English and Arabic have been influential for decades. Gannit Ankori's *Palestinian Art* (2006), controversial due to its alleged plagiarism of Boullata's various essays, Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon's *The Origins of Palestinian Art* (2013), and Samia Halaby's *The Liberation Art of Palestine: Palestinian Painting and Sculpture in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century* (2001) are the other major English-language works to deal with art prior to the First Intifada (1987-1993). Nadia Yaqub's *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution* (2018) and Zeina Maasri's *Cosmopolitan Radicalism: The Visual Politics of Beirut's Global Sixties* (2020) both make meaningful contributions to the study of the visual culture of the Palestinian Revolution.

[26] In the Arab world generally, archival collections are scarce and/or difficult to access. For this reason, anthologies like the recent *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents*, edited by Anneka Lenssen, Sarah Rogers, and Nada Shabout (MoMA 2018) are invaluable. Other noteworthy efforts to make primary sources on Arab art and visual culture more accessible include NYU Abu Dhabi's recently founded Al-Mawrid Arab Center for the Study of Art, directed by Salwa Mikdadi, and the Palestinian Museum's digital archive. Birzeit University's online art gallery is another excellent resource.

[27] Israeli curator and visual history scholar Rona Sela has written extensively on the topic of looted Palestinian archives (e.g. 2017, 2018). For an original investigation of how Palestinian artists, filmmakers, dancers, and other cultural workers reimagine and reinvest in the archive under such fraught conditions, see Gil Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine: Toward an Archival Imagination of the Future* (2021).

[28] The long-awaited Palestinian Museum, founded as an organization in 1997, finally opened in Birzeit in 2016. Due largely to internal strife, including the rather unceremonious firing of director Jack Persekian, there were no exhibitions at the time of its inauguration. A Palestine Museum and a Museum of the Palestinian People have since opened in Woodbridge, CT (2018) and Washington, DC (2019).

disappear. There are myriad reasons for this, ranging from the shaky foundations of arts institutions in pre-Nakba Palestine[29] to the negligence, corruption, and inexperience of various responsible parties. Speaking to me about the vanished London show of 1976, artist Nabil Anani credits his work's disappearance to a lack of funds for return shipping as well as to a disheartening disinterest on the part of the organizers. "We were inexperienced," he concedes. "We didn't really know how to take a show down, how to follow up with people. A couple works are gone, *khalas,* it's fine! It's not like people died. These things happen."[30]

Anani, an incredibly affable man with a penchant for checked shirts, has the unflappable poise of someone who has seen a lot of trouble. Born in 1943, he has effectively only produced art under the occupation of a government that has actively inhibited his vocation. Since at least 1967, the Israeli military has subjected Palestinian artists to censorship, confiscated their work, shut down exhibitions, and otherwise interfered with their livelihoods in ways that can border on absurd.[31] In a now-infamous incident, Israeli authorities shut down a show at Ramallah's Gallery

[29] Where national art schools had been established by colonial and Arab governments alike in Cairo (est. 1908), Beirut (est. 1937), and Baghdad (est. 1940), the only permanent school of fine arts in Palestine was the explicitly Zionist Bezalel (est. 1906). Arts institutions open to non-Jewish Arabs were largely ephemeral fairs and small trade schools that were geared towards economic and humanitarian development rather than "art for art's sake." None of them survived the establishment of Israel, and the subsequent Palestinian refugee crisis overwhelmed the cultural sector until the emergence of the PLO in the mid-1960s. See Nisa Ari, "Cultural Mandates, Artistic Missions, and the 'Welfare of Palestine,' 1876-1948," PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2019.

[30] Nabil Anani in conversation with the author, 18 April 2018, Ramallah. Translation from Arabic.

[31] The censorship and confiscation of artwork is justified by IDF Military Order 101 (1967), "Regarding Prohibition of Incitement and Hostile Propaganda," which is most commonly known for its ban on the display of Palestinian flags. The Order, as published in the Palestine Yearbook of International Law, V. 1 (1984), states that "It is forbidden to print and publish in the Area any publication, advertisement, proclamation, picture, pamphlet or any other document which contains any material with a political signification except where obtaining before hand [sic] a license from the Military Commander in the Area where the printing or the publication is to be carried out." It defines "printing" as "carving on stone, typing on a typewriter, copying, photographing, recording, filming, or any other matter of representation of communicating expressions, numbers, symbols, pictures, maps, paintings, decorations, tapes, sounds, tunes, or any other similar material."

79 in late 1979 or early 1980. The proprietors of the gallery, Anani and his colleagues Sliman Mansour and Issam Badr, were summoned to the police station, where they were informed that artists were no longer allowed to use the colors of the Palestinian flag—black, white, green, or red—in their artwork.[32] "What would happen," Badr asked, "if I just wanted to paint a watermelon?" The Israeli policeman responded sternly that it would be confiscated.[33]

Since I began fieldwork in earnest in 2017, Israel's repression of Palestinian cultural expression has manifested in numerous incidents of violence. In August 2018, two months after I last left Palestine, the IDF bombed the Al-Mishal cultural center in Gaza during its many reprisals for the March of Return.[34] In so doing, the army deliberately destroyed an arts library, administrative offices for dance troupes and musicians, and a major theater in the throes of final preparations for its biggest show of the year.[35] In May 2021, during protests over the Sheikh Jarrah evictions,[36] Israeli soldiers ransacked Bethlehem's Dar Jacir for Art and Research,

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[32] It should be noted here that this prohibition, which stems from IDF Military Order 101 (see previous footnote), has directly resulted in the imprisonment of Palestinian artists. For example, Fathi Ghabin in Gaza was imprisoned for six months in 1984 for painting a picture of his nephew, Suhain, who had been shot to death by Israeli soldiers in 1982 at the age of 7. An official explaining his sentence cited use of "the colors of the PLO flag" as a reason for his conviction. See Edward Walsh, "A Palestinian Uses Art to Express Resistance to Israel," *International Herald Tribune,* 29 May 1984.

[33] This story was first recounted to me by Sliman Mansour in an interview on April 17th, 2018 in Jerusalem. Nabil Anani confirmed it when I spoke with him the following day.

[34] The Great March of Return refers to a series of protests at the Israel-Gaza border from March 2018 through the end of 2019. Protestors demanded the right of return to pre-1948 familial lands (approximately half of Gaza's 2.1 million residents are internally displaced refugees, as defined by UNRWA) and an end to Israel's 12-year blockade of the Gaza Strip. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the IDF killed 214 Palestinians, including 46 children, and injured 36,143 in reprisals. One in five injured Palestinians was hit by live fire.

[35] See Hazem Balousha and Oliver Holmes, "'Our memories have vanished': the Palestinian theater destroyed in a bomb strike," *The Guardian,* 22 August 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/aug/22/our-memories-have-vanished-the-palestinian-theatre-destroyed-in-a-bomb-strike

[36] In May 2021, widespread protests erupted throughout Israel and the Occupied Territories after an Israeli court ordered the eviction of six Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem in favor of Israeli settlers, which many Palestinians saw as part of wider efforts to create a unified Jewish Jerusalem. Israel responded to the protests with violence, and after

confiscating phones, computers, hard drives, cameras, books, and personal items belonging to resident artists and leaving empty shell casings and tear gas canisters strewn throughout the damaged interior.[37] Dar Jacir is an especially noteworthy example because its founders, sisters Emily and Annemarie Jacir, are a visual artist and filmmaker of international renown; the heightened publicity thus granted the incident was neither a deterrent to the IDF, nor did it result in anything even resembling justice. Furthermore, Al-Mishal and Dar Jacir are just two of many similar incidents, which have been taking place consistently for decades. Aggression ranging from harassment to raids to bombings has contributed to the failure of many galleries and arts centers, destroying institutional memory and making it difficult for researchers to pursue projects that depend on them.

Because of these dynamics, I was wary of overdependence on sources in Palestine, and I found myself grounding the bulk of my work in Beirut. Many of the issues identified in "17 Lost Exhibitions" exist in Lebanon as well—in 2018, for example, the National Library opened for the first time since its closure during the civil wars in 1979 only to close again, abruptly, almost immediately—but at the very least its institutions were not always under existential threat. Things felt easier in Beirut, almost charmed. As I discuss in the epilogue to this dissertation, the 1982 Siege of Beirut left a gaping hole in the city's record of the Palestinian Revolution, but the American University of Beirut, the Institute for Palestine Studies, the Sursock Museum, and a host of smaller galleries and collections opened exciting new directions for my research. Besides, it was a genuine pleasure to work in the convivial office of the Dalloul Foundation, to rifle

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Israeli riot police stormed the Haram al-Sharif on 7 and 10 May, Hamas responded with rocket fire from Gaza. This began the 2021 Israeli aerial assault on Gaza, which famously resulted in the destruction of Al Jazeera's offices there and cost the lives of 260 Palestinians.

[37] See "Solidarity with our friends at Dar Jacir for Art and Research," Moving Image Middle East https://www.mime.news/posts/solidarity-with-our-friends-at-dar-jacir-for-art-and-research

through the dust-laden volumes of Hamra's used bookstores, to inhale Mona Saudi's secondhand smoke while she regaled me with tales of a revolutionary past. Like so many before me, I loved Beirut.

I was at home in Berkeley on August 4th, 2020, when the windows shattered in my wife's childhood bedroom. Nour's family's apartment building is about four kilometers west of the Port of Beirut, where 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate had just caused one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history. The Sursock Museum is 800 meters away from the blast site.[38] The explosion, which killed more than 200 people and wounded 7,000 others, came on top of an ongoing economic crisis that has seen the Lebanese pound depreciate by over 90% since 2019. This was more than extraordinary bad luck, because the Beirut I'd enjoyed had always been a band-aid over the same wounds that opened during the era with which this dissertation is concerned. When, in the early 1990s, fifteen excruciating years of civil wars ended in a policy of "no victor, no vanquished," only two individuals were held accountable for war crimes. Today, the first sits at the head of the Lebanese Parliament's second-largest Christian party, and the second is Lebanon's President.[39] The corruption that led to both the financial crisis and the port explosion, and that continues to hinder the resolution of either, came at the very same hands that massacred Palestinian civilians at Tel al-Zaatar and Sabra and Shatila.[40] Contrary to popular

[38] The Sursock Museum, which finished a decade-long project of renovation in 2015, was hugely affected by the blast, which ripped through its roof, shattered its windows, ripped doors off hinges, and badly damaged its interior. At least 57 artworks were left in need of serious restoration. With the help of large grants from the Italian and French governments, as well as private donors, the Sursock has been able to rebuild at an impressive pace. At the time of writing, the building remains closed to the public.

[39] Michel Aoun, current president of Lebanon, was a general overseeing the siege of Tel al-Zaatar in 1976, which demolished the last Palestinian refugee camp in Christian East Beirut and killed at least 1,500 people. Samir Geagea, current head of the now-demilitarized Lebanese Forces, was a high ranking officer in the LF when it committed the massacre at Sabra and Shatila and has long been accused of involvement, which he denies.

[40] For an excellent explanation of the convoluted avenues of government corruption that facilitated the port explosion, see the *New York Times'* interactive "How A Massive Bomb Came Together in Beirut's

clichés, Beirut is not a phoenix caught in a cycle of sublime, tragic passion; it is, as novelist Hala Alyan has framed it, an arsonists' city.[41]

As I tried to comfort Nour in the wake of the explosion, I thought about my father, who when I embarked on this project had implored me to choose a different topic. Palestine, he warned me, would only break my heart, just as it had ultimately broken his dad's. There was the faintest betrayal in my attachment to Palestine, as the granddaughter of three people who had left their homes because of war. When these grandparents—a Palestinian, an Italian, and a Romanian—settled in the United States, they did so in part to ensure my right to love things that are soft and uncomplicated. I have never needed to worry about the windows of my parents' house, about whether there's even medicine in the country for my mother to buy if she needs it. To me, a popping balloon will only ever sound like a birthday party. Nevertheless, personal (af)filiations brought me to this project, and in many ways continue to shape its stakes.

My grandfather, Samir, was born in Nazareth in 1934. He was living in Ramle with his parents and three siblings when the IDF evicted its residents in 1948, herding Arab men of fighting age onto buses headed for labor camps.[42] His father, Salim, evaded this fate by dint of his job with the British, leveraging his position in one colonizer's police force to avoid capture

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Port" (2020). For clarification on how the same government's policies and actions led to the financial crisis, see Edmund Blair, "Lebanon's Financial Crisis and How it Happened," *Financial Times,* 23 January 2022.

[41] Hala Alyan, *The Arsonists' City* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020).

[42] According to Salman Abu Sitta and Terry Rempel (*Journal of Palestine Studies* 43, no. 4, 2014), the expulsion of 60,000-70,000 Palestinians from Ramle and Lydda during Operation Dani in 1948 included the first major roundup of Palestinian men sent to Israeli POW camps. Civilian internees were forced to work in various capacities, including collecting transporting looted goods from conquered towns and villages, moving rubble from destroyed buildings, paving roads, and digging trenches. The four official camps that operated during the Nakba are well documented by delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose mission chief, Jacques de Reynier, likened their conditions to slavery (ICRC "Monthly Report No. 8: October 1948," Beirut, 5 November 1948, p. 3.).

by another's army. They fled first to the family home in Jenin, and later, once Ramle was indubitably lost, to Libya. When he came to the United States for college, Samir married a white woman from Michigan and adopted her son, a preternaturally serious toddler who would eventually become my dad. The marriage broke the terms of an arranged engagement to a cousin, causing a years-long rift between Samir and his family.

In 2015, during my first preliminary research trip to Jordan, I learned that the last part of this story wasn't true. As I ate loquats at her kitchen table in Amman, my great-aunt Saida explained to me that the cause of the infamous schism was actually my father's adoption, to which Salim objected on religious grounds.[43] There had never been an engagement; Samir had created the whole story to protect my father, fearing that he would feel guilty about the rift or, worse, worry that he was somehow less loved than his (half-) brothers. Towering over my tiny aunt even as we sat down together, pulling awkwardly at my clothing to cover my decadent Western tattoos, I knew the truth before my father and my uncles. My grandfather had been dead for a year. Saida, who had helped broker the peace between Samir and Salim, had taken me days earlier to the wedding of a distant relative. "Who's the foreigner?" people had asked her, unaware that I spoke some Arabic. "She's not a foreigner," Saida had snapped. "She's Samir's."

In researching this dissertation, I traveled to Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine with a surname that someone had worked very hard to give me, a testament not to the blood in my veins but to a deep and enduring love. Everywhere I went, it fit where my body did not; mine is the anemic, total whiteness of a spinster in a BBC period drama, entertaining no glimmer of the

[43] Legal adoption is forbidden is Islam, which draws a sharp distinction between adopted and biological children. While Islam sanctions and even encourages raising non-biological children in need, these children are not allowed to take the surname of their adoptive families and are not entitled to inheritance. In the Middle East, liberal Muslims who disagree with this point of view and choose to adopt children generally go to great lengths to conceal the fact of their adoption, for legal as well as social reasons.

many ways in which one can "look Arab." Often, this dissonance solicited numerous questions—about my family, my religion, my language and habits—that really boiled down to one: *who are you, to this place?* Answering required complex mathematics. Substitutions were usually made to avoid disgrace: a vague, noncommittal Catholicism for my lifelong atheism, a husband for my wife. In the Arab economy of open secrets, to acknowledge my father's adoption was often to "air my family's dirty laundry," so I did so only cautiously, in scenarios where I knew my interlocutors well or where doing otherwise would be deliberately misleading. Still, I never had to lie about my culture. No one had to teach me how to do the math.

Palestine was particularly difficult. The first time I went, the four common letters on my passport cost me eight hours of detention at the Allenby Bridge, where young IDF recruits rifled through my things and read my diary aloud. Each of the four times they interrogated me, they asked whether I still had family in the country, and every time they did, the air soured in my lungs. I thought of a house in Jenin packed with my relatives in 1948, of seven-year-old Saida playing with her cousins, believing the whole ordeal to be a fun adventure. None of them live in Palestine anymore. None of their children were born there. As I told the soldiers "no," again and again, anger burned the back of my throat.

Who am I, then, to Palestine? What claim do I stake to a place where people kill and die to stake claims? I am the white daughter of the white son of a Palestinian man who loved his country, who raised his white son to raise his white daughter to love his country, too. My claim is not to blood or to land but to grief, to the cavernous sadness, rimmed in rage, that sinks like a rotten root under occupied Palestine, sending its emissaries to greet me from the margins of my reading. It is also to a stubborn, belligerent hope for liberation that survives, somehow, each successive disaster, an immovable object consistently besting what seems an unstoppable force.

Above all, I claim the inability to extract myself fully from Palestine, in my life or in my work. Throughout the entire preparation of this dissertation, some part of me was always there, in that corner of the world where so much hinges on a name.

Chapter 1: Entering a Dream State

A man consults a wall clock and doesn't find "his time." He realizes that he has no memories, having tossed them out the window like old fruit peels, and as a result does not know whether to move forward or backward, through space or through time. He encounters hostile figures "bombarding a river with books and dreams" and attaching flowers to trees on which they did not grow. They ask him what he calls the endeavor he's embarked upon; finding that his "words have been exiled from language," he is unable to reply. The figures transform into judges "in charge of the dream's official name," but do not grant the man an opportunity to speak. Instead, they demand his applause, dismissing him as an "anachronism" when he fails to clap.[1]

This strange tale paraphrases the opening scene of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's "Disengage from the Dream!," published in the Summer 1974 issue of the influential literary journal *Mawaqif.* The disjointed, disorienting story unfolds unselfconsciously, describing the bizarre series of tenuously connected events as if they require no further explanation. That the basic laws of physics have no jurisdiction over its protagonist goes unremarked upon, as do the bizarre actions of the shadowy "judges" with whom he cannot manage to communicate. The scene reads like an experimental film, at once nonsensical and overripe with symbolism, arranged according to its own opaque, erratic logic rather than any established narrative structure. The reader feels eerily like she has entered a dream.

A similar sensation pervades "A Person Grows from the Soil of His Dream," an illustrated prose poem published by Jordanian artist Mona Saudi in the same issue of *Mawaqif.*

[1] Mahmoud Darwish, "Fik al-irtibat ma' al-helm!" ["Disengage with the Dream!"], *Mawaqif* 28 (Summer 1974): 5-7. All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

"This woman was born today in a green stone (or perhaps it was a plant from the Jordanian hills)," begins the first of twelve numbered verses. "She doesn't know that she was called Rose, and Stone, and Cloud." A vibrant montage of images follows: a narrator promises two unnamed addressees a pair of sculptures, of "mother-earth" and "son-body." A dust-colored horse "appears within the shadows of exile… as if in a frameless picture," continuing his lonesome walk into the abyss even after he is shot in the head. A tree grows in a woman's womb and bears an apple, into which "space and God and the stars and all of creation" crowd before the birth of the moon. "Night is an open arc," writes Saudi. "It is the scream with which the body shines." The verses echo and refract off of each other, never cohering into a linear story, yet never completely divorced from a central, primal sensorium: darkness, dust, dampness, earth, blood, rain, maternity, growth. [2]

In their respective *Mawaqif* pieces, Mona Saudi (1945-2022) and Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) conjure Palestine through the language of dreaming. They do this formally, through the misalignment of time and space and the purposeful stitching-together of partial, mismatched images. They also directly refer to "the dream" throughout their works, and, in Darwish's case, explicitly call this dream Palestine. This association comes up first with the chilling evocation of the "dream's official name" –implied to be determined by hostile forces, a formulation that resonates with the shift from "Palestine" to "Israel"– and grows stronger as the text turns away from its introductory strangeness in a crescendo of stirring political rhetoric. "Palestine is not a point on the map," Darwish writes towards the end of his essay. "It is the vision of every Arab,

[2] Mona Saudi, "Wal-insān nabāt ḥelmo" ["Man Grows from the Soil of His Dream"], *Mawaqif* 28 (Summer 1974): 60-65.

the cross that every Arab bears. It is a test, and it is the future, and it is one righteous name for a dream that does not betray us."[3]

Beginning with these works, this chapter considers the emergence of the dream as a mode of relating to Palestine in the art and writing of the 1960s and 70s. Following my discussion of Saudi and Darwish, I define the "dream-state" as a framework for envisioning Palestine, emphasizing its capacity to articulate the difference between the imaginaries of nations that exist in sovereign, territorialized form and those of nations that, like Palestine, do not. I then establish the historical conditions of this dream-state, looking to the relationship between Zionism and the mythologized past in the period surrounding the 1948 Nakba. During this time, Palestinians faced their erasure –both physical and rhetorical– in the image of "a land without a people for people without a land," experiencing enormous material upheaval as Israel constructed itself as the revival of an ancient Hebrew civilization. These circumstances created a different kind of "dream state" for Palestinians, a surreal, disorienting condition of existence in which one's presence is figured as absence, one's present as someone else's past. I liken this condition to the Islamic *barzākh,* a liminal space between life and death believed by some to be accessible in sleep. Finally, I consider how this liminality manifests in the Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali's "Postoperative complications following the extraction of memory" and an untitled print by Palestinian artist Mustafa Hallaj.

[3] Darwish, "Fik al-irtibat ma' al-helm!" 7

STRANGE DREAMS: MAHMOUD DARWISH AND MONA SAUDI

"Disengage from the Dream!" and "A Person Grows from the Soil of His Dream" were published in the wake of the October War, fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab forces in 1973. Israel's victory in this conflict thwarted Arab efforts to liberate the territories lost in 1967, ensuring Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. The militaristic title of Darwish's essay references the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement that followed the war, which "constitute[d] a first step toward a final, just and durable peace"[4] between Egypt and Israel and represented a marked shift in a region that had abided by the "Three Nos" of the Khartoum Resolution since 1967.[5] This was seen by many Arabs as a treacherous concession to Israel, and indeed would ultimately lay the groundwork for Egypt's historic, hugely controversial recognition of its northern neighbor in 1979.

This feeling of betrayal is palpable in Darwish's essay. "There is nothing worse than defeat except choosing defeat," he writes. "There is nothing worse than slavery except the humiliation of the slave by the master. Have we come all this way, from cradle to grave, just to gain the affection of a snake?"[6] Little connects this polemic to the hallucinatory luster of its introduction except the figure of the dream, around which the text revolves. Darwish contends that the crisis of the "beautiful Arab dream" lies not in the flaws of the "guiltless" dream itself, but in the doubt and derision sown by those who seek to destroy it. The dream, he writes, is an

[4] "Egyptian-Israeli Agreement on Disengagement of Forces in Pursuance of the Geneva Peace Conference," signed 18 January 1974. *United Nations Peace Agreements Database,* https://peacemaker.un.org/egyptisrael-disengagementforces74

[5] The Khartoum Resolution of 1 September 1967 was issued at the Arab League Summit in the Sudanese capital following the Arab loss of the June War. The resolution famously announced "Three Nos" to be upheld by Arab League members until Israel withdrew from occupied Arab territories: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel.

[6] Darwish, "Fik al-irtibat ma' al-helm!" 6

embryo embedded in Arab land; what the Arab world is currently experiencing is a traumatic attempt, "from the inside and the outside, to abort it," because its birth is imminently possible. "If it were just a 'dreamer's dream,'" he writes, "why would they seek to abort it with such ferocity?"[7]

Darwish's decision to frame Palestinian liberation as a dream is not a particularly original one. After all, colloquial associations between dreaming and aspiration make it an obvious vehicle for the ambitions of the disenfranchised, evoking both utopian desire and the distant possibility of a "dream come true." Few Americans, for example, can hear the phrase "I have a dream" without recalling Martin Luther King Junior's iconic 1963 speech, in which the celebrated civil rights activist described his vision of a country "sweltering with the heat of oppression… transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice."[8] What distinguishes Darwish's essay from myriad other decolonial texts on the promises of independence is its multifaceted engagement with dreaming, which extends beyond the realm of aspiration and into the nebulous chaos of oneiric thought processes. In his opening vignette, Darwish evokes the experience of Palestinian-ness as fundamentally disorienting, tethered to reality by an ever-fraying thread. Alienated from time, space, and language, his protagonist is unmoored from common systems of meaning, unable to operate within his dreamlike circumstances yet incapable of thinking beyond them. The sense of instability established in the essay's opening paragraphs reappears, ghostlike, throughout the rest of text, inhabiting the slippage between Palestine, freedom, and Arab nationalism connoted by the term "dream." This dream, in other words, is not only dreamlike

[7] Darwish, "Fik al-irtibat ma' al-helm!" 7

[8] Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream" (speech, Washington, DC, August 28, 1963), National Public Radio, https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety

insofar as it represents a hoped-for hypothetical; it also embodies the *form* of a dream, off-kilter and surreal.

Saudi, too, summons the illusory haze of dreaming through her prose-poem. If, in her first lines of text, Saudi establishes a fundamental slippage between elements of the natural world –a womb is a stone is a plant, giving life to a woman who is also a flower, a rock, and a vaporous wisp– she has muddied another distinction by the end of verse II. Literally translated, the title of Saudi's poem means "a person is the plant of his dream." Closer in meaning is "a person grows from the soil of his dream," which better encompasses the sense in Arabic that the dream is both nourishment and anchor for human development. Saudi reiterates this title in the second verse: "What is found in the dream is found in the earth, and a person grows from the soil of his dream." The boundary between the solid, material world of the earth and the ethereal realm of dreaming is blurred; the dream gains the properties of sustenance generally attributed to the earth, while the earth takes on the open potential of the dream. The overlap of land/woman/dream persists throughout the text, the slippage magnified by rhetorical shifts that break the narrative into vivid, graphic fragments. Tense, person, and perspective change within and between verses; the addressee, too, vacillates between masculine and feminine, singular and plural.

Saudi's illustrations echo the fluidity of her text. With a handful of carefully drawn lines, she conjures fingers that are ferns, lungs that are lovers, leaves that are cocoons that are skeletons. In one drawing (figure 1), a wash of India ink surrounds an uneven rectangle that evokes a stone stela inscribed with relief sculptures. Occupying the bottom two-thirds of this "stela" is a rectangular composition, at the center of which is a gash-like collection of vertical lines that bow out on either side of a darkened core. Tapered cylinders ending in blunt, flared

bases emerge from behind this shape, and in the background a neat column of petal-like shapes runs the length of the composition. The background is shaded in cross-hatching, save a section of nearly empty space in the upper left-hand corner that is separated from the rest of the composition by linear curves like those that compose the central form. In that space is a character evocative of the Arabic letter ج; across from it is a form reminiscent of a fist.

At first glance, the central shape strongly evokes a vulva. The tapered cylinders flanking the form evoke the legs of a person seated or lying down with her knees bent; in conversation with Saudi's text, and given the disproportionate prominence of a vulva that looms as if drawn in hieratic scale, it suggests the image of a woman giving birth. Seen differently, the figure looks like a woman with her knees drawn to her chest, head bent so that her long hair obscures her face and cascades to her ankles. Some unseen hand lifts a few strands of her hair, parting it like a curtain to reveal the blank white space beneath, and her hand, resting on her knee, grasps a leaf or a sheet of paper. There is no authoritative interpretation, here: as in the text, the slippage is the point. Different parts of the body morph seamlessly into others, themselves evocative of other natural forms, like rocks or seashells, opening buds or rolling hills. The vine, straight and even, resembles a spinal column or a row of teeth; the ج is reminiscent of a bird's head. Even the emotional tone of the image fluctuates. As a symbolic representation of reproduction and/or sexuality, it is powerful, almost menacing. As a depiction of a seated figure, it connotes despair, exhaustion, fear, or shame, a woman huddling into herself and away from the world around her.

This illustration speaks to a recurring thematization in Saudi's work. Beginning with her first stone sculpture in the late 1960s, the artist has repeatedly and deliberately represented Palestine through the figure of Mother Earth.[9] Just as the illustration invites this comparison

[9] Mona Saudi in conversation with author, 29 November 2018, Beirut.

through its formal vacillation between the maternal body and the natural world, the text of "A Person Grows…" immediately equates the woman at its center with natural elements both generic (stone, plant life, water/air) and regionally specific (the Jordanian hills). Though the word "Palestine" is absent from her richly unsettling montage, the place itself is everywhere, evoked in the sense of rootless melancholy that permeates the work. Saudi writes:

> She planted a seedling in her heart and said, Oh sadness, come.
>
> We will travel a distance that cannot be measured except by the heart. We will be stretched along a thread of light that pierces the loneliness of the universe, the cities and the plants. Oh dream, […] give me the strength to be born in the mother, among the tribe, in the house to which there is no road but the trembling of the heart.[10]

Palestine is a woman whose heart nurtures a seedling, once again in the role of Mother Earth. It is also the seedling itself, and, paradoxically, the place to which the woman desires to travel. This is underscored by its exilic portrayal as an elusive place of belonging –the mother[land], the tribe– that can only be accessed internally, through emotions and memories. Palestine, envisioned as a collective, beseeches a personified dream to facilitate its return to itself, to grant it the strength to be reborn within its own body. That the surreal, oneiric logic of Saudi's work allows for such an impossibility is reinforced by her language. "The strength to be born in the mother" would read more fluently if I replaced "mother" with "motherland," and the translation would not be inaccurate; Saudi is, after all, referring to Palestine. I have chosen this formulation to mirror Saudi's much subtler Arabic, which uses *umm*, meaning "mother," instead of *umma,* meaning "nation," "community," or "motherland." Unlike its English equivalent (-land), *umma*'s additional syllable has no particular meaning as a suffix, lending to the impression of a softer distinction between the two Arabic terms. *Umma*, in other words, carries strong

[10] Saudi, "Wal-insān nabāt ḥelmo," 62

maternal implications while explicitly invoking a place; Saudi's decision to use *umm* instead suggests the intentional evocation of a maternal body.

This interpretation is supported by the illustration, in which the symbolic representation of birth and the depiction of the forlorn woman are mutually constitutive. Furthermore, the text's invitation of sadness is echoed in the illustration's transient depiction of a huddled body. The drawing-together of tragedy and maternity recalls Darwish's essay, in which the dream is figured as a fetus nestled in the womb of Arab land. For Darwish, the tragedy is the threat of abortion that lingers within and beyond this womb, something antithetical to the birth of the dream. For Saudi, however, grief is part of the dream-journey towards Palestine, sadness a companion who is asked to come along. The process of dreaming by which Palestine instantiates itself is, Saudi suggests, also a process of mourning.

In their *Mawaqif* contributions, Mona Saudi and Mahmoud Darwish evoke the dream as a multifaceted point of access to Palestine. They do so with significant attention to the bizarre betrayals of physics that dreaming alone enables, bending spatial and temporal boundaries to disorient the reader. They also do so in ways that conjure a maternal body in very different terms –for Darwish, as a vessel to be protected, and for Saudi as a force of resilience and regeneration. I will revisit the former of these elements later in this chapter, examining the oneiric surreal in the context of recent Palestinian history. I will turn to the latter, the question of resilience and regeneration, later in the dissertation, in relation to my discussion of the concept of surrogacy in paintings of Palestinian women. Here, I turn to the dream itself as a means of theorizing Palestine.

DEFINING THE DREAM-STATE

On the first day of 1965, a communiqué out of Beirut announced the success of a Palestinian guerrilla operation. The previous night, the document claimed, an armed unit had crossed the Lebanese border and fulfilled its mission "entirely within the occupied lands" before returning safely to camp. With brevity and opacity befitting its military subject matter, the missive gave readers a thrilling image of Palestinian commandos slipping in and out of their expropriated homeland, unseen and unscathed. It also sent a clear warning to those who would harm Arab civilians, "wherever they might be": the resistance would strike whenever provoked, and would treat any violence against its people as "a war crime." Crucially, the announcement introduced its readers to the group responsible for the incursion, which the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) would later identify as its newly established military wing. For now, the guerrillas offered only an unaffiliated name: al-Asifa*,* "the Storm."[11]

Whether the bulletin had been penned as a lie or simply sent early to the press with misplaced confidence, it gave a wildly inaccurate account of the evening's events. The group that set out from Saida's Ayn al-Hilwa refugee camp on December 31st, 1964, was essentially hobbled out of the gate by Lebanese security forces, which arrested the fighters before they even made it to the border.[12] Nevertheless, the tall tale of al-Asifa's New Year's strike has taken root in the popular imagination as the story of a cross-border incursion thwarted by chance, its protagonists successfully securing a bomb at the site of the national water carrier but failing to

[11] Harika al-tahrir al-filastini Fat'h, "Bayaan 1: al-Asifa (01-01-1965)" ["Memorandum no. 1: The Storm (01-01-1965")]. *Watha'iq 'askariyya: al-'asifa* (Beirut: Palestine Liberation Organization, 1968), 9.

[12] Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 1.

detonate it. Many Palestinians now commemorate January 1st, 1965, as the *inṭilāqa,* or "launch" of the Palestinian Revolution.

The "event" that launched the Palestinian Revolution was thus the issuance of a misleading brief by publicly unknown actors announcing the success of a guerrilla attack that never happened. From a cynical perspective, it was a deceitful spin on an ineffective and amateurish provocation, heralding a movement whose bark would often prove worse than its bite. More generously, it signaled a moment in which collective hope hinged as much on symbolic victories as on material ones, its resonance gesturing toward exiled Palestinians' thirst for a sense of agency and control. Indeed, while the *inṭilāqa* is synonymous with the establishment of Fatah's militia, the significance of its date exceeds partisan parameters. The sea change that swept Palestinian politics in 1965 was a true "beginning" in the Saidian sense, a coalescence of multiple actors, shifting agendas, and changes in public opinion that opened onto a field of indeterminate possibilities.

The heyday that followed this *inṭilāqa* saw artists and intellectuals from Oakland to Algiers mobilizing Palestine as a universal symbol of anti-imperialism through literary journals, political media, exhibitions and more. Activists throughout the Global South deployed the figure of Palestine in political critique and cultural reform, drawing comparisons, for example, between French imperialism in the Maghreb and Israeli efforts to efface Palestinian culture.[13] Palestinian artists traveled abroad, frequently under the auspices of political entities, and developed new aesthetic strategies in response to different stimuli, diverse audiences, and a cultural climate increasingly attuned to the struggle of their people. The nascent Palestine Liberation

[13] For an in-depth discussion of the figure of Palestine in North African literature, theater, criticism, and political critique during the era of decolonization, see Olivia C. Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

Organization placed new emphasis on Palestine's optics, as its arts and media departments simultaneously encouraged the image of Palestine as the cradle of international revolution and worked to enshrine its specific visual heritage on a global stage. This was especially true after the PLO's 1970 move to Beirut, where it established the notorious "state within a state" that would later play a major role in Lebanon's civil wars.

Meanwhile, the physical space of historic Palestine drifted beyond reach. Israel's 1967 seizure of the West Bank and Gaza placed the entire country under occupation and created another massive wave of Palestinian refugees. Palestinians who were able to remain in their homes were subject to martial law, their mobility increasingly limited. Symbolically stronger than ever, Palestine's terrestrial form became less and less hospitable to its indigenous people, hundreds of thousands of whom had now lived in tents, concrete huts, and corrugated iron shacks for nearly two decades. That the dream-related imagery I have discussed thus far in this chapter emerged at a time when Palestine itself was atomized across the globe, diffuse and ephemeral, indicates the extent to which these conditions shaped popular conceptions of Palestine. Indeed, dreaming offers an expansive, extranational framework for understanding Palestine as holistic entity –that is to say, as a symbol, a political movement, a nation of people, and a hoped-for state.

Comparative literature scholars Stathis Gourgouris and María Acosta Cruz have mobilized the term "dream nation" in the contexts of Greece and Puerto Rico, respectively. In *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (1996), Gourgouris maps modern Greek nationalism onto a Freudian model of dreaming, arguing that the process of nationalization is analogous to dream-work insofar as it is fundamentally

iconographic, non-discursive, and self-constitutive.[14] The author's analysis is part of a vast discourse, inaugurated by the 1983 publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities,* that "is predicated on… the nation's fundamental *nonexistence*."[15] Like Anderson, Gourgouris conceives of the nation as a socio-imaginary construct that is fundamentally rooted in collective belief; "one 'becomes' a national subject," he argues, "insofar as one participates in (imagines, constructs, *dreams*) the fantasy of belonging to a national community."[16] The author's interest in "the nation as dream-form" springs from a desire to "account for the intangible dimensions in the formation and sustenance of national identity" and the "profoundly *affective* adherence to national ideals, to a whole imaginary universe that so often registers with... tangible, *real* violence."[17] To formulate the nation as a dream, he insists, "is to bring forth the phantasmic dimensions of the process by which national communities form and sustain themselves over and above" the social, ethnic, historical, geographical, and linguistic elements that bind an imagined community.[18]

In contrast to Gourgouris's laboriously theorized framework, Acosta Cruz presents the "dream nation" as effectively self-evident. *Dream Nation: Puerto Rican Culture and the Fictions of Independence* (2010) explores why, among a polity that has consistently rejected political sovereignty, the rhetoric and iconography of independence remains so central to cultural nationalism. The author argues that independence has become a "symbolic aspiration" that

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[14] Stathis Gourgouris, Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996): 29.

[15] Gourgouris, *Dream Nation,* 38

[16] Gourgouris, *Dream Nation,* 34, emphasis in original

[17] Stathis Gourgouris, "Dream-Work of Dispossession: The Instance of Elia Suleiman." *Journal of Palestine Studies* XLIV, no.4 (Summer 2015): 33.

[18] Gourgouris, "Dream-Work of Dispossession," 33.

sustains how Puerto Rico imagines itself through the figure of the dream nation.[19] Acosta Cruz's dream nation is what I've come to think of as "utropian," idealized in terms common to most, if not all, decolonizing national cultures. Such themes include a return to an ostensibly "pure" precolonial way of life, a fixation on the landscape's natural beauty, a tendency to romanticize peasant-farmers as icons of indigeneity, and the use of familial imagery to allegorize the nation. Where Gourgouris's dream nation draws its logic from a dense thicket of academic discourse, Acosta Cruz's relies largely on colloquial associations of dreaming with hope, speculation, and idle desire.

In this dissertation, the term "dream-state" refers to Palestine as the sum of its many fractured iterations. It is the territory of historic Palestine; the idea of Palestine in the minds of its people; the symbol of Palestine in the decolonizing world; the pseudo-state of the PLO. It is, in equal parts, the blunt squalor of the refugee camp and the nostalgic olive groves of a nationalist utropia. In proposing Palestine as a dream-state, I share Gourgouris's investment in the intangible, affective elements of national identification as well as Acosta Cruz's insistence on dreaming as a space for aspiration and desire. My object of inquiry is nevertheless very different from those of these authors, and my investment in the idea of the dream-state is, in part, a means of articulating that difference. In some ways, the designation of "imagined community" may seem particularly apt in the Palestinian case. In her study of young Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, for example, sociologist May Farah considers how an "exiled population who are no longer—and never were—physically connected to the nation nevertheless imagine themselves as connected to and part of a national community," emphasizing "the 'imagined' in creating a

[19] María Acosta Cruz, *Dream Nation: Puerto Rican Culture and the Fictions of Independence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014): 1.

national reality or association" with Palestine.[20] It is precisely this predicament, however, that renders both the "imagined community" and the "dream nation" as articulated by Gourgouris and Acosta-Cruz inadequate for understanding Palestine.

While the nation-as-form is, undeniably, a socio-imaginary construct, the specific, fraught relationship between reality, imagination, and Palestinian collective identity presents a fundamental challenge to any framework that positions *all* nations as intrinsically dreamlike, mythological, or imaginary. In asserting that "Palestine is a concept, not a country," celebrated Palestinian director Elia Suleiman does not mean that it's one among many nations whose sociopolitical identities are entirely constructed.[21] He points instead to both its power as a symbol and the way in which *material circumstances* have necessitated its expansion beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Both Israel and Palestine are imagined communities in Anderson's sense, but Israel *actually* exercises political sovereignty within discrete territorial boundaries and Palestine, however it may "dream itself," does not. Palestine exists primarily "in the mind" of Palestinians in a much more urgent sense than, say, Greece exists primarily "in the mind" of Greeks; the majority of its people live in exile, where "imagining" the nation is not a subconscious means of belonging to a social group but a complex act of mourning, longing, resistance and survival.

In choosing to use the term "state" over "nation," I mean to signal two primary ideas. Firstly, I wish to highlight the centrality of a state to Palestinian aspirations, personal as well as political, during the period under consideration. The brick-and-mortar of a functioning, sovereign

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[20] May Farah, "Mediating Palestine." *Mediated Communities: Civic Voices, Empowerment and Media Literacy in the Digital Era,* ed. Moses Shumow (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2015), 84.

[21] Elia Suleiman, interview by Sabine Prokhoris and Christophe Wavelet, *Vacarme* 8 (15 May 1999), online. http://www.vacarme.org/article107.html.

government had gained tremendous importance in the years following the Nakba, when most Palestinians, whether displaced or under martial law, had little agency and nowhere to turn for help with basic needs beyond the supremely overstretched UNRWA offices. The establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization changed the situation on the ground tremendously for refugees outside of Palestine, as it provided the approximate scaffolding of a state by creating opportunities for employment and political participation. It also took quasi-governmental charge of social services such as security, garbage collection, sewage, electricity, and water. Though the PLO is often remembered as the corrupt and toothless organization into which it ultimately devolved, the pseudo-state it developed in the late 1960s represented an unprecedented promise for agency, dignity, and self-sufficiency.

The second intention of my phrasing is to evoke a literal dream state, which is to say either the period of sleep in which one dreams or the experience of oneirophrenia, characterized by dream-like hallucinations due to extreme sleep or sensory deprivation. This relates to the sense of disjunction and alienation pervasive in the *Mawaqif* pieces, evoking the nightmarish uncanny of Palestinian reality. It is this condition of unease that I will now explore, situating it within the historical context of Palestine's dispersal.

'AYN HAWD/EIN HOD: A PARABLE

"I hoped to find a 'Tahiti' like Gauguin for my painting," wrote Marcel Janco to Hans Richter in 1950, "but I was mistaken, because the climate here is difficult and one works savagely in order to exist."[22] The artist had fled his native Romania following the horrific

[22] Marcel Janco to Hans Richter, March 10th, 1950, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), xxvi-xxvii

Bucharest Pogrom in 1941, and the new home he described to his Dadaist comrade was the young state of Israel. While it had not turned out to be the primitivist paradise of his daydreams, it nonetheless nurtured a certain strain of "authenticity" in Janco's artwork. "I am still very close to… the true dada," he mused to Richter, "which at bottom always defended the forces of creation, instinctive and fresh, colored by the popular art that one finds in all people."[23]

Janco's letter echoes the aura of pioneerism that haloes Israel's early years in the Zionist imagination. This romanticized history centers the transformative power of labor for both the land and those settling it; in gleaning lives from the (apocryphally) barren, inhospitable Palestinian soil, Jewish colonists supposedly grew closer to their primordial homeland, accessing eternal essences denied them in diaspora. Through the Zionist looking glass, the Arab Palestinians who had successfully farmed this land for centuries were mere features of it, if they existed at all. Like Gauguin's Tahitians, Palestinians in pre- and early-state Israeli art were largely authenticating details in a fetishized virgin landscape, "vestiges of the natural in a world already too tamed."[24]

Marcel Janco's "Tahiti" did ultimately materialize. Nestled in the foothills of Mount Carmel, the village of 'Ayn Hawd had been an agricultural community of about 650 Palestinians until Zionist forces expelled its residents in 1948.[25] When, on a mission with the Government Planning Authority in the early 1950s, Janco "came upon" 'Ayn Hawd, he was told that its stone buildings were slated for demolition. Moved by its "staggering beauty" and convinced, "without any clear notion," that "this place had historical content that bound it to the history" of Israel,

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[23] Janco xxvii

[24] Jane Duran, "Education and Feminist Aesthetics: Gauguin and the Exotic," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2009), 88.

[25] Walid Khalidi, ed. All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948 (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 149.

Janco petitioned the government to spare it.[26] Under his direction, the village was transformed into the artists' colony of Ein Hod, its buildings renovated to preserve their architectural integrity and associated antiquated charm. While intact, structurally sound buildings were incorporated wholesale into the project, Janco and his team also preserved ruins almost reverentially, "inserting hidden iron bars to maintain the sentimental look and mood of vernacular architecture frozen in time at the last stages of decay."[27]

As Susan Slyomovics has pointed out in her extensive work on the topic, Ein Hod's ruins are a crucial component of its willfully ahistorical "ancientness." The artists' colony, which exists to this day, continues to build its mythology around the same nebulous sense of historical significance evoked in Janco's story. It ascribes its architectural character not to its recent Arab inhabitants but "to ancient and biblical sources, to Crusader origins, or a generalized, Mediterranean basin cube-and-stone style of construction."[28] In its reliance on an ancient past that is implicitly, if not explicitly, coded as Hebrew, Ein Hod joins numerous Israeli touristic destinations in which remnants of Palestinian lives are commodified by narratives that obscure the recent, violent history of Palestinians themselves. At the ruins of Sataf, for example, hikers explore agricultural terraces described in official touristic literature as "a reminder of an almost vanished Hebrew culture dating back thousands of years," roaming olive groves and almond orchards they're told harken back to "the days of the ancient Israelites."[29] Nothing alerts them to the fact that these terraces were built and planted by the Palestinians who lived in the village

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[26] Quoted in Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 47

[27] Slyomovics 51

[28] Slyomovics 53

[29] "Sataf - Ancient Agriculture in Action," Jewish National Fund Tourism & Recreation website, https://www.kkl-jnf.org/tourism-and-recreation/forests-and-parks/sataf-site.aspx

until 1948, turned to rubble not by the inscrutable sands of time but by the tanks and bulldozers of the Israeli army some seventy years ago.

Sataf and Ein Hod are outliers among over four hundred villages emptied of their ecosystems in 1948, the physical remnants of which have mostly been effaced. Remaining ruins are, as in the above examples, largely naturalized into the landscape as leftovers of a distant past congruous with Israel's identity as a Jewish state.[30] In most of these places, little exists to challenge the suggestion that Jewish people have continuously occupied a given site, interrupted only by long, medieval stretches of emptiness and neglect; Janco's Ein Hod, however, was and remains haunted by the proximity of its former residents. After release from an Israeli POW camp in 1949, a handful of 'Ayn Hawd's previous inhabitants established a village on a hill overlooking their old homes, their rights to which had been rescinded by Israel's absentee property laws.[31] Some, desperate for work, even helped transform 'Ayn Hawd into Ein Hod.[32] Marcel Janco —— however mystified by this "ancient" village, however "humorous, even sympathetic" his painterly approach to Arabs[33] — knew exactly to whom his new house had belonged, and the circumstances under which it was vacated.

The history of Ein Hod exemplifies a peculiar relationship between mythology and reality, one in which the former does not derive from the latter but is instead superimposed upon

[30] For more on the incorporation of Palestinian ruins in Israeli touristic sites, see Noga Kadman, *Erased from Space and Consciousness,* trans. Dimi Reider (Indiana University Press, 2015).

[31] Established as emergency military ordinances during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and codified shortly thereafter, Israel's absentee property laws define Palestinians internally or externally displaced by the Nakba as "absentees" and claim their property for the state. As a whole, these laws comprise the main legal instrument by which Israel took possession of Palestinian land in the aftermath of its declaration of statehood.

[32] Meron Benvenisti describes the employment of 'Ain Hawd's former residents in the construction of Ein Hod in *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948* (University of California Press, 2000). See pages 193-197.

[33] Marcel Mendelson, *Marcel Janco* (1962), cited in Slyomovics 37.

it. Janco arrived in Palestine in search of something primitive and essential, a kind of purity that had eluded him in Europe and that he hoped could inspire his painting the way Tahiti had inspired Gauguin. Like Gauguin, he was disappointed in what he found and willfully reimagined the place he encountered to conform to his desires, which themselves sprang from the colonialist assumption of non-Western cultures as intrinsically underdeveloped. If, in the spirit of primitivism, both artists saw the countries they colonized as backwards portals to a simpler time, Janco's experience differentiates itself in its link to a very specific context. Janco's Ein Hod points both to Israel's origin myth and to the state's relationship with that origin myth, which is one of near-literal instantiation. Like all modern nations, Israel mythologizes its history in the service of nationalism; unlike most, it goes to great pains to bring this fabled past into the physical present.

ISRAEL'S AGE OF MIRACLES AND THE PALESTINIAN BARZĀKH

The Israeli Declaration of Independence, issued on May 14th, 1948, begins by describing the birth of the state as follows:

> Eretz-Israel[34] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom. Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, ma'pilim[35] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving

[34] "The land of Israel" (Hebrew).

[35] Hebrew term referring to Jewish settlers who came to present-day Palestine/Israel in defiance of Ottoman and British immigration quotas (c.1880-1947).

> peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.[36]

This preamble sketches the contours of Israel's origin myth, according to which the state arose naturally and righteously through the return of an exiled people to their homeland. One could be forgiven for assuming, based on this text, that the homeland in question lay fallow and uninhabited until the arrival of Jewish settlers; Palestinians' existence is apparent only in the negative, a shadow cast by the evocation of self-defense and of bringing "the blessings of progress" to "all" its (presumably uncivilized) inhabitants. The tale of slow, peaceful evolution laid out in Israel's Declaration of Independence belies both its colonial nature and its rapid development,[37] not to mention the violence that erupted in the wake of the United Nations partition plan.

The history creatively reimagined in this document begins with the Hebrew Bible. Called the Jewish people's "sacrosanct title-deed to Palestine" by Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion,[38] the sacred text identifies Jews as God's chosen people and names them heirs to the land of Canaan[39] through a covenant with the patriarch Abraham.[40] This religious narrative,

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[36] Declaration of Independence issued by the Provisional Government of Israel on May 14th, 1948, accessed on English-language website of the Israeli Knesset: https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/about/pages/declaration.aspx

[37] The Jewish population of Palestine rose from 8% in 1918 to 30% in 1946; in 1948, following the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, Jewish people constituted 82% of the population. Source: "Jewish and Non-Jewish Population of Palestine-Israel, 1517-2004," Appendix 5 to *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2008): 571.

[38] David Ben Gurion, *The Rebirth and Destiny of Israel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954): 100.

[39] Canaan is identified in the Hebrew Bible as the land west of the Jordan River, roughly corresponding to present-day Palestine/Israel.

[40] Genesis 17:3-8 (NRSV-CE), "Abram fell face down and God said to him… I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land in which you are now residing as aliens, the whole land of Canaan, as a permanent possession."

which has motivated immigration to present-day Palestine/Israel and buttressed support for Zionism since the late 19th century, shares unstable boundaries with secular history, understood by many as both an indisputable event of the ancient past and a divinely-issued commandment to occupy the land. The controversial historicity of the Bible notwithstanding, historians generally agree that an evolving confederation of Jewish kingdoms existed in ancient Israel from the Iron Age through the first century CE, waxing and waning with the tides of conquering empires. After the third Jewish-Roman War of 136 CE definitively removed Palestine from Jewish control, Jewish communities were often subject to harsh taxation, religious persecution, and other forms of oppression that fed a steady stream of Jewish emigration from the region. The Jewish community in Palestine had dwindled to a minority by the end of the 5th century CE and continued to decline as the centuries wore on, ultimately comprising only 3% of the territory's citizenry by the 1878 Ottoman census.[41]

Because of the Abrahamic covenant and the fraught history of the Jewish diaspora, the biblical land of Israel has indeed held a prominent place in Jewish religious and cultural traditions for hundreds of years. It was not until the late nineteenth century, however, that the idea of large-scale Jewish settlement in Palestine became a topic of widespread debate, and even then it was part of a wider field of possible solutions to the urgent problem of European antisemitism. When Zionism began to take shape in the 1880s, its project of a Jewish state was not necessarily bound to Palestine.[42] Indeed, Leon Pinsker's 1885 *Auto-Emancipation*, a foundational Zionist text, explicitly states that

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[41] "Jewish and Non-Jewish Population of Palestine-Israel, 1517-2004," Appendix 5 to *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2008): 571.

[42] In *Der Judenstaat* (1896), Herzl famously posits both Palestine and Argentina as potential sites for a future Jewish state (see Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 42). While Herzl's writings of the 1890s and 1900s,

> If we would have a secure home, so that we may give up our endless life of wandering and rehabilitate our nation in our own eyes and in the eyes of the world, we must, above all, not dream of restoring ancient Judea. We must not attach ourselves to the place where our political life was once violently interrupted and destroyed. The goal of our present endeavors must be not the "Holy Land," but a land of our own. We need nothing but a large piece of land for our poor brothers; a piece of land which shall remain our property, from which no foreign master can expel us… It is [the Bible and the God-idea[43]] which have made our old fatherland the Holy Land, and not Jerusalem or the Jordan.[44]

Pinsker was not the first to suggest Jewish settlement outside of Palestine, nor would he be the last.[45] Though the World Zionist Organization's 1897 Basel Program invoked Palestine as the site of such a state, its Congress only ceased to explore other possible locations in 1905, when it formally declined British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain's 1903 offer of 5,000 square miles in present-day Uganda.[46] In committing to Palestine as the site of a future Jewish state, Zionists married the goal of a national safe haven to a homecoming narrative steeped in ancient history and religious belief. The project of settling Palestine became a matter of Jewish destiny, framed as a miraculous, divinely sanctioned return to the navel of Jewish civilization.

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show a clear ideological preference for Palestine, his concern for the dire conditions under which many European, and especially Russian, Jews were living left him open to other options in the name of pragmatism. Most famous of these was the Uganda Scheme (see *Zionist Writings,* 221-239). Furthermore, the Territorialists (a group led by Israel Zangwill that sought a Jewish state wherever one could feasibly exist) only formally split from Herzl following the collapse of the Uganda Scheme; many continued to consider themselves Zionists. See Alroey (2016).

[43] Original German "Gottidee," see Autoemanzipation: Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen von einem russischen Juden (Brünn: Jüdischer Buch- und Kunstverlag, 1913), 22.

[44] Leo Pinsker, Auto-Emancipation, trans. D.S. Blondheim, Zionist Publications (New York: The Maccabaen Publishing Company, 1906), 11. The author published under the name "Leo" in both English and German versions of this text.

[45] For more on Jewish territorialism outside of Palestine, see Gur Alroey, *Zionism Without Zion: The Jewish Territorial Organization and Its Conflict with the Zionist Organization.* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016).

[46] Theodor Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement, proposed the "Uganda Scheme" at the Sixth World Zionist Congress in 1903 after hearing Chamberlain's offer (see "Opening Address at the Sixth Zionist Congress" in *Zionist Writings,* 221-230). Despite the Congress's nominal approval, many saw Herzl's scheme as a betrayal of the plan outlined in the Basel Program four years earlier, which explicitly made claims to Palestine. Zionists refused the British offer after an exploratory mission in 1905 found the land, in present-day Kenya, unsuitable for Jewish inhabitance.

That such a return was predicated upon colonialism was not, at first, particularly controversial. How could it be? From its inception, Zionism sought the relocation of a predominantly European population to a territory outside of Western Europe, a project that looked logistically similar whether that territory was Argentina, Turkey, Canada, Uganda, Brazil, or Palestine.[47] When the Jewish Colonial Trust was established to fund the Zionist movement in 1899, the Western world still looked upon colonialism as an endeavor that was, if not benevolent, at least justified by European civilizational superiority. The father of Zionism himself, Theodor Herzl, considered the future Jewish state "a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism."[48] The 1917 Balfour Declaration that set the stage for the modern state of Israel was likewise considered legitimate despite its issuance by a colonial power –indeed, one that did not yet even control Palestine.[49] While the winds of change were blowing by the end of the British Mandate in 1946—India, for example, gained its independence just a few months before the partition of Palestine, albeit through its own historical partition—the establishment of Israel by the United Nations effectively amounted

[47] While Herzl famously entertained the possibilities of settling Argentina and Uganda for Jewish settlement, numerous other Zionist or proto-Zionist groups went even further in exploring different solutions to the problem of Jewish territorial sovereignty. For example, the Jewish Colonisation Organization, founded by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in 1891, purchased land in and sponsored Jewish immigration to Canada, Turkey, Brazil and Argentina in addition to Ottoman Palestine. JCA operations in Argentina, including the establishment of the Dora and Montefiore colonies, should be distinguished from the "Andinia Plan," a baseless, antisemitic conspiracy theory that originated in the Argentine military in the 1970s.

[48] Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State,* trans. Sylvie d'Avidor (1896; reis. London: Penguin Books, 2010), 44. Ebook edition.

[49] When the Balfour Declaration was issued in November 1917, Palestine was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. While the empire was in its death throes at this point in WWI, Allied forces had not yet guaranteed victory over the Central Powers, and the League of Nations did not issue Britain's mandate for Palestine until April 1920.

to a transfer of power between two colonial entities, negotiated without the consent of the indigenous population.

Colonialism, notes literary theorist Uri Eisenzweig, "requires a certain conception of space: Natural, that is non-historic, where all otherness is absent."[50] Accordingly, Zionism "participates in an ethnocentric structure that sees in Palestine (as in the whole of the Third World) nothing but natural space –that is, space devoid of the presence of the Other– and… does not understand that the very concept of such a Nature is an artifact of [Zionist] discourse."[51] From its beginnings in 19th-century Europe, Zionist ideology imagined Palestine as the empty husk of a once-great Hebrew civilization awaiting the return of its prodigal sons. As the 'Ayn Hawd example suggests, this vision of "a land without a people for people without a land" did not waver when confronted with contemporary Palestine. Instead, Zionist cartographers mapped an alternate reality over the country, replacing Arabic place-names with Hebrew ones that claimed biblical origins whether or not any could be proven to exist.[52] Archaeologists were summoned to find and preserve material evidence of Hebrew Bible events and to destroy or reassign those objects that connected non-Jewish peoples to the land from which they were excavated.[53] Forests were planted, and with them a sense of virgin promise befitting the newborn state.

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[50] Uri Eisenzweig, "An Imaginary Territory: The Problematic of Space in Zionist Discourse," trans. Debra Bendel. *Dialectical Anthropology* 5 (1981): 267.

[51] Eisenzweig 267

[52] See Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape,* 20-27

[53] For more on archaeology and Israeli nationalism, see Katharina Galor, *Finding Jerusalem: Archaeology Between Science and Ideology* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); Nadia Abu El-Haj*, Facts On The Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

However steadfast, the rhetorical denial of the Other could only ever go so far towards achieving Israel's foundational blank slate. In 1947, just over a million Muslims, Christians, and Druze lived in Palestine,[54] calling their homes by the names they'd used for centuries and contradicting, by sheer fact of their presence, the Zionist vision of a coherent Jewish state. In 1948, military operations with names like "Lot" and "Maccabi" displaced 750,000 of these Palestinians and expropriated their possessions, creating one of the largest refugee populations in history[55] through a violent campaign of ethnic cleansing.[56] Zionist forces destroyed hundreds of villages, the ruins of which were quickly and deliberately obscured by the strategic establishment of forested national parks.[57] As museums filled with artifacts that glorified an ancient Jewish past, the Palestinians that remained watched their own culture erased and appropriated.

There is nothing unique about the spectacular gaps between Israel's mythology and its historical reality. The United States, for example, narrates itself as a bastion of "liberty and

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[54] United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, "Settled Population of Palestine by Town and Sub-District, Estimated as at 31st December 1946," reproduced from "Supplement to the Survey of Palestine, June 1947," 22 March 1949. https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-210930/

[55] "Palestine refugees" are defined as Palestinians externally displaced during the 1948 Nakba and the June War of 1967 and their descendants who are officially registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The United Nations counts 5.7 million Palestine refugees in 2020, outnumbered globally only by the 6.8 million Syrians who have been displaced by the Syrian Civil War since 2011. See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html.

[56] Ethnic cleansing is not recognized as an independent crime under international law and there is therefore no authoritative definition of the term. The actions taken by Israel during its establishment in 1947-1948 are consistent with the widely used definition of ethnic cleansing established by the United Nations Commission of Experts mandated to investigate violations of international humanitarian law in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in 1993-94. In its final report S/1994/674, the Commission described ethnic cleansing as "a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas."

[57] For more on afforestation as a Zionist strategy for erasing Palestinian historical presence, see Joanna C. Long, "Rooting diaspora, reviving nation: Zionist landscapes of Palestine–Israel" in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34, no. 1 (January 2009): 61-77.

justice for all," founded as a haven for the religiously oppressed to become the global exemplar of democracy. It was established through the genocide of indigenous people, colonized by zealous Puritans and nationalized by white, slave-owning males who excluded women and people of color from political participation. In revisiting the history of Israel's establishment, I seek less to critique its ideological infrastructure than to underscore how *tangible* its national mythology has been for Palestinians, how potent a source of both extraordinary and quotidian violence. Since 1948, the attempted resurrection of an ancient kingdom has superseded Palestinian rights to land, property, education, and a host of other basic liberties, interfering with modern Palestinian lives at every conceivable level. The extent to which the *idea* of ancient Israel exerts a suffocating pressure on the *reality* of modern Palestine reveals how, as biblical scholar Keith Whitelam has argued, Palestine is refused value except "as the arena for the 'real and authentic history' of Israel."[58] Israel's origin story functions as a kind of ur-truth; simultaneously framed by a discourse of scientific credibility and charged with the infallibility of religious dogma, it is impervious to the intrusions of the Palestinian present.

Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali's "Post-operative Complications Following the Extraction of Memory" (1973) provides a glimpse into the impact of this context on Palestinian subjectivity:

> In an ancient, gypsy
> dictionary of dreams
> are explanations of my name
> and numerous
> interpretations of all I'll write.
>
> What horror comes across me
> when I come across myself
> in such a dictionary!

[58] Keith W. Whitelam, The Invention of Ancient Israel, The Silencing of Palestinian History (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), 43.

But there I am:
a camel fleeing the slaughterhouses,
galloping toward the East,
pursued by processions
of knives and assessors,
women wielding
mortar and pestle for chop meat!

I do not consider myself a pessimist,
and I certainly don't
suffer from the shock
of ancient, gypsy nightmares,
and yet, in the middle of the day,
whenever I turn on the radio,
or turn it off,
I breathe in a kind of historical,
theological leprosy.

Feeling the bonds of language
coming apart in my throat and loins,
I cease attending
to my sacred obligations:
barking, and the gnashing of teeth.

I confess!
I've been neglecting
my post-operative physiotherapy
following the extraction of memory.
I've even forgotten
the simplest way of collapsing
in exhaustion on the tile floor.[59]

In his poem, Ali (1931-2011) is horrified to find himself "in an ancient, gypsy dictionary of dreams," confined to the realm of the occult and ephemeral. His shocked identification with this "camel fleeing the slaughterhouses" suggests that this discovery is destabilizing, as if he has suddenly been given reason to doubt his existence outside of the book. There is, in this formulation, an uncomfortable dissolution of the self: as an entry in such a dictionary, Ali

[59] Taha Muhammad Ali, *So What? New & Selected Poems (With A Story), 1971-2005*, trans. Peter Cole, Gabriel Levin, Yahya Hijazi (Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, 2006): 9.

becomes a symbol for use in dissecting the dreams of others, meaningless beyond the context of someone else's mind. Furthermore, this position uproots the poet from any concept of time, as interpretations of his future writing appear in a book that itself is implied to predate his birth.

These literary devices express Ali's existence as a Palestinian under occupation, stripped of history and relegated to fantasy, defined exclusively in relation to Israel. His evocation of a "historical, theological leprosy" adds depth to this interpretation. Here, history and religion are disfigured as if by a highly communicable disease, or else the disease co-opts history and religion in the service of disfiguring others. It is also, significantly, this "leprosy" that seems to shake the poet's sense of self. If, at first, he is confident in dismissing "the shock of ancient, gypsy nightmares," breathing in this contagion loosens "the bonds of language" within him, rendering him unable to give shape to his anger in the barbaric ways he suggests, with characteristic sardonicism, are expected of him. In revealing that this behavior is linked to the surgical extraction of his memory, Ali implies that the operation has left him alienated from basic emotional expressions, or perhaps even from the knowledge of their cause. This is highlighted by his confession, in the final line, of having forgotten how to collapse "in exhaustion on the tile floor." In relation to the historical context described earlier in this chapter, the "extraction of memory" seems a blunt metaphor for Israel's erasure of Palestinian history.

What is most striking about "Post-operative Complications…" for our purposes is the affective in-betweenness it evokes. Ali seems to drift in and out of himself, at once shocked and cynical, present and absent, forgetful but aware of what he's forgotten. Its resonance with Darwish and Saudi's *Mawaqif* pieces is significant, for though conjured in personal, intimate terms, this purgatorial state can be seen to describe the situation of Palestinians writ large in the wake of the Nakba. Subsumed by Ali's "historical, theological leprosy," Palestinians occupy a

liminal space between existence and nonexistence, pronounced invisible by the logic of the very state that surveils them. That this is not purely metaphorical is best evidenced by the paradoxical term "present absentee," which legally designates Palestinians internally displaced by the events of 1948. Such people are deemed "present" insofar as they did not leave Palestine/Israel during the violence, yet "absent" because they vacated their homes (voluntarily or by force) during this time. The designation exists only for the purpose of disenfranchising "absentees" who, present or otherwise, are unable to reclaim land or property confiscated by Israel. The "absentee" has no recourse: he can live so close to his former home that he might see his favorite armchair through its window, but no key or title is sufficient to restore his full "presence."

This in-betweenness calls to mind the *barzākh,* understood in Islamic eschatology as the threshold between life and death. The Qur'an mentions the *barzākh* three times, the first of which establishes its widely accepted definition as a liminal space in which the souls of the deceased linger until they are resurrected for final judgment.[60] In the other two instances, the *barzākh* is an isthmus or barrier between two bodies of water, "one sweet and fresh and the other salty and bitter."[61] In an act evoked as demonstrative of divine power and magnanimity, God provides the *barzākh* to separate the waters even as they meet.[62] Some translations interpret the text to mean that these waters flow side by side, while others imply a mixing;[63] in either case, the waters appear to touch despite the barrier of the *barzākh,* which is unambiguously described as uncrossable. The paradox inherent in this description is a defining characteristic of the *barzākh,*

[60] Qur'an 23:99-100 (Oxford World's Classics translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem)

[61] Qur'an 25:53

[62] Qur'an 55:19

[63] For example, the Sahih International English version translates Q 55:19, "مرج البحرين يلتقيان" as "He released the two seas, meeting [side by side]," while Shaikh and Khatri translate the same verse as "He unleashed the two seas so that they merge together."

both as an isthmus and as a purgatorial otherworld. Described by anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo as the "intermediate world of imagination and semblances… in which contraries come together, bodies are spiritualized, and spirits become manifest in corporeal form," this space resists a simple binary of presence and absence.[64] In this realm, the impossible becomes possible: waters can mix while separated, a given space might expand and contract at once, a long period of time may exist within the span of a shorter one.[65]

The Palestinian dream-state bears more than a passing resemblance to the *barzākh.* As I have demonstrated, the establishment of the State of Israel redefined Palestine as a paradox, Palestinians as the people of "a land without a people" who thus became present and absent at once. Like souls in the *barzākh,* Palestinians wait as a matter of existence, anticipating deliverance or damnation. Since 1948, notes artist and art historian Kamal Boullata, they have been waiting "in line for the UNRWA distribution of food and temporary shelters, for a job to secure survival, for questioning by military and security Arab and Israeli officials, for a son or daughter's release from an Israeli prison, or for a visa to immigrate abroad."[66] Such experiences, heartbreakingly repetitive to the present day, are of course mere symptoms of the greater wait: in a free Palestine, one tells oneself, life will resume a kinder rhythm, no longer held hostage by the daily demands that mete it out in stops and starts.

The affinity between the dream-state and the *barzākh* is not confined to the negative, however. Both are spaces of infinite possibility, shaped as much by the transgression of barriers

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[64] Stefania Pandolfo, "The Barzākh of the Image and the Speculative Scene of Possession," *Speculation, Now: Essays and Artwork,* eds. Vyjayanthi Venuturupalli Rao, Prem Krishnamurthy, Carin Kuoni (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 169.

[65] Salman H. Bashier, Ibn al-'Arabi's Barzākh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship Between God and the World (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 79.

[66] Kamal Boullata, *Between Exits: Paintings by Hani Zurob* (London: Black Dog, 2012), 9.

as by the barriers themselves. They also embody, from the perspective of participants, a futurity of moral equilibrium: on Judgment Day, the righteous among the souls of the *barzākh* will ascend to paradise, just as the hoped-for liberation of Palestine will restore justice to its people. The imaginal nature of these places does not preclude their ontological reality; as Stefania Pandolfo observes about the *barzākh,* the dream-state of Palestine "is not illusion and error, but the lieu of an encounter with truth."[67] Furthermore, sleeping is not the sole mode of access to such a "lieu of encounter with truth," be it the dream-state or the *barzākh.* In her study of contemporary Egyptian dream interpretation, anthropologist Amira Mittermaier draws from the Sufi conception of the *barzākh* as reachable by living persons through "dream-visions, waking visions, and other spiritual modes of sight" that "reach beyond the observable." These modes, she states, "rely on a sincere gaze that is more attuned to the ephemeral, the not fully visible, the imaginary" in order to enter the space between presence and absence, "beyond the either/or."[68]

Throughout this dissertation, visual art and literature can be seen to exercise a similarly "sincere gaze" vis-à-vis Palestine, giving shape to its latent, fleeting, liminal and speculative dimensions. As the *barzākh* can be reached by different "spiritual modes of sight," the dream-state is accessible through multiple forms of creative expression that embody and mediate between diverse, multifaceted modes of "dreaming" a present, past, and future Palestine. In their engagement with ephemerality, imagination, and states of instability, paintings, prints, poems and other artworks pull from starkly different conditions of disjuncture, from the strangeness of

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[67] Stefania Pandolfo, "The Barzākh of the Image and the Speculative Scene of Possession," in *Speculation Now: Essays and Artwork,* eds. Vyjayanthi Venuturupalli Rao, Prem Krishnamurthy, Carin Kuoni (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 171.

[68] Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 89.

displacement to the worldliness of itineracy, to access a dream-state that is both/neither a personal experience and a political project. In so doing, these works seek an "encounter with truth" that cannot, in the sur-reality of the Palestinian present, occur through empirical experience. Here, the stakes resonate across time and space with those articulated by Saloni Mathur in her critical discussion of Geeta Kapur and Vivan Sundaram. Art, in this context, holds power

> not because it provides solace, escape, distraction, or diversion; nor does it promise coherence, resolution, or a predetermined direction. It is because art's intelligence and intrepid investigation of the world from which it emerges presents a place for us to *go right now;* it provides ballast against the terrible unknown, resources for a continual becoming, and a means for survival, resilience, and renewal.[69]

As the territory of Palestine remained—remains—suspended in various states of inaccessibility, art offers somewhere "to *go right now*," a place in which to take stock of the present and find means of confronting the future. For many artists, "ballast against the terrible unknown" materialized as engagement with this precise unknowability, as in the spiritually-inflected practice of the figure to whom I now turn.

MUSTAFA HALLAJ DREAMS OF A CORPSE

"Mustafa Hallaj had the features of a saint," writes critic Izzeddine al-Munasira, "with a big beard à la Tagore or Walt Whitman."[70] This description harmonizes with most accounts of the Palestinian artist (1938-2002), whose iconic beard serves as a touchstone for telling

[69] Saloni Mathur, A Fragile Inheritance: Radical Stakes in Contemporary Indian Art (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 22.

[70] Izzeddine Al-Munasira, Mawsu'at al-Fann al-Tashkili al-Filastini fil Qarn al-'Ishrin: Qira'at Tawthiqiyya Tarikhiyya Naqdiyya [Encyclopedia of Palestinian Plastic Arts in the Twentieth Century: Documentary, Historical, Critical Readings] (Amman: Dar Majdalawi Publishers, 2003), 149.

associations. Like Whitman and Tagore, Hallaj was known as a kind of free-spirited revolutionary, grounded in a spiritual sense of cosmic unity that, in Hallaj's case, was rooted in his embrace of Sufism. That the artist himself rather cultivated this image –and, perhaps, its association with a certain notion of genius– is suggested by the wild-haired Sufi he presents in self-portraiture (Figure 1.2). His tragic death only amplified his reputation; when, in 2002, he died attempting to save his work from his burning studio, one friend "imagined that Hallaj… selected to vanish by fire as a means to purify the universe."[71]

Often celebrated as a champion of Palestinian liberation art, Hallaj exemplified the diversity inherent in such a category. He took commissions from the PLO, which also supported some of his exhibitions –Yasser Arafat was a known admirer, even traveling to Damascus to launch a show for him in the mid-1970s[72]– and was an outspoken believer in Palestinian art's inseparability from armed struggle. It was, he argued, the duty of the Palestinian artist to mobilize his or her work in defense against the "self-denial" and "suffocation of historical heritage" imposed by the Israeli regime.[73] Nevertheless, the gregarious, nomadic printmaker eschewed affiliation with any given political party, and welcomed artists, musicians, and intellectuals of varied class backgrounds and political inclinations into the "salons" he hosted in Damascus and Beirut. Though his artistic practice grappled with many of the same themes as his peers, his aesthetic approach was markedly different from the social realism favored, for example, by painters, Ismail Shammout and Ibrahim Ghannam. Likened by some contemporaries

[71] Mohammad Fahed interviewed by Adib Safadi, *Diasporic Meanings: Mustafa Hallaj Retrospective Exhibition* (Jerusalem: Al-Hoash Palestinian Art Court, 2013), 38.

[72] Yahia Yakhluf interviewed by Mirna Bamieh, *Diasporic Meanings: Mustafa Hallaj Retrospective Exhibition* (Jerusalem: Al-Hoash Palestinian Art Court, 2013), 39.

[73] Al-Munasira, 161

to the work of Hieronymus Bosch,[74] Hallaj's oeuvre, unlike these latter counterparts, is a fantastical, frightening window onto a world of hybrid creatures and incongruous imagery.

The 1965 *inṭilāqa* first immersed the artist in the revolutionary currents for which he is now known. "When the Palestinian took up arms," Hallaj later remarked, "the light of dawn shone through my work."[75] An untitled, black-on-white linocut print from this year (Figure 1.3) is a somewhat subdued example of his engagement with Palestine, depicting an eerie landscape across three horizontal registers. The lowest register is a flat black expanse, the foreground of which is populated with a series of strange objects. An ovular figure appears to be half-buried in this expanse to the far left of the image, emerging as a blank, mezzaluna-shaped form hugged on one side by a textured arc. The object evokes the head of an ancient Phoenician or Mesopotamian sculpture, its face eroded away beneath a helmet-like frame of stiffly chiseled curls. Just behind it, an enormous, disembodied hand rests on the heel of its palm and its fingertips, bent sharply at the first knuckle as if to shelter the shape below without actually touching it. The ambiguous shape so gingerly protected evokes both a dove and a grenade fuse, a motif the artist would later repeat in political posters for Fatah (Figure 1.4-1.5). On either side of the hand, numerous standing figures stretch their arms skyward.

In the middle register of the print, an oversized, androgynous body lies face-down on a mound of earth or rocks, its limp, awkward position suggestive of death. The corpse itself seemingly acts as a barrier, almost bisecting the image to separate the land's rough terrain from a shimmering body of water. More spindly figures in identical, outstretched positions stand on

[74] See A. Aziz Alloun, "Al-Tanaaqudh," in exhibition catalog for *Moustafa el Hallag* (Damascus: Galerie d'Art Moderne, February 1973).

[75] Quoted in Mohammed Kheir Mahziya, *Al-Tashkil al-filastini al-mu'asr* (Damascus: Al-Markaz al-'arabi lil-computer, 1998), 227.

land and, paradoxically, atop the water, growing smaller as they recede into the background. Finally, the dark, curved suggestion of faraway hills fills the bottom of the upper register, juxtaposed against the thick stretch of stratus clouds sprawled across the sky. At one crest of the undulating hillside, more people reach up.

This is an image of strata. It is dominated by strong horizontal "stripes" that run the length of the composition and distinguish themselves aggressively through high contrast and textural variation. It is also full of figures that refuse or ignore them, revealing the porousness of these demarcations by crossing them with their stubbornly vertical bodies. Where the corpse appears solid and three-dimensional, the vertical figures are flat and insubstantial, nearly weightless but not entirely free from gravity's pull. Fragile and feather-light, they rise upward from grounded points like marine grasses from the sea floor, suspended in the water while anchored in the sand. There is a sense of "almost" in this posture, a thwarted potential for flight like a balloon tugging on a weighted string, barely prevented from floating away. The hand in the foreground of the image echoes the texture of the mound on which the corpse rests, imbued with a "not-quite" of its own: if the thin figures are poised to drift upward, the hand seems on the verge of disintegrating into the earth.

How do we understand this image? Historically, critics have been eager to interpret Hallaj's work as a sort of puzzle, the pieces of which inevitably cohere into symbols of Palestine. Fellow Palestinian artist Samia Halaby applauds his careful combination of historical references with symbols from a lexicon of liberation iconography, through which he creates "socially useful" narratives in service of the Palestinian struggle.[76] Kamal Boullata notes that Hallaj drew

[76] Samia Halaby, "Mustafa Al-Hallaj: Master of the Print and Master of Ceremonies." *Jadaliyya*, May 31, 2013. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11918/mustafa-al-hallaj_master-of-the-print-and-master-o.

"suggestive symbols" from "ancient art glorifying the afterlife" in order to "eulogize the Palestinian martyr."[77] Even Arafat purportedly interpreted one rendition of Gilgamesh as an allusion to the Palestinian Revolution.[78] The artist himself, however, took a notably less didactic approach to his own practice. "I do not state that my paintings include symbols," he noted in a 1970 interview,

> since these are not defined symbols to me. They are a part of the painting that represents my passion, meaning that I do not place the symbol first in an intellectual process, but rather pull the sensual forms from the ambiguity of a vision to the surface of a paper. However, the sources of the so-called symbols are my reading of history, mythology, and popular art over a long period of time. It has become part of my subconscious. It is no exaggeration, but most of these forms are frequent visitors to my dreams and my daydreams, when the relationship between me and the outside world is emotional and violent; the shape that represents this experience is created directly, without any intellectual mediator.[79]

Hallaj's unearthly imagery, by his own account, originates in the subconscious, appears to him in dreams, and expresses itself through unmediated automatism. Through the lens of canonical Western art history, he appears to be a quintessential surrealist. The artist, who counted Salvador Dalí among the "clowns of his era,"[80] would not likely agree. An apt assessment of Hallaj's "surrealist" tendencies starts not with European precedents but with his practice of Sufism, a broad current of Islamic mysticism concerned with the essential nature of being. As Iftikhar Dadi has convincingly demonstrated in relation to Pakistani artist Sadequain,

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[77] Kamal Boullata, Istihdar Al-Makan: Dirasa Fil-Fan Al-Tashkili Al-Filastini Al-Mu'asr [Creating Space: Studies of Contemporary Palestinian Art] (Tunis: Al-Munathara al-arabiyya lil tarbiya wa al-thiqafa wa ala'loum, 2000), 25.

[78] Yahia Yakhluf interviewed by Mirna Bamieh, *Diasporic Meanings: Mustafa Hallaj Retrospective Exhibition* (Jerusalem: Al-Hoash Palestinian Art Court, 2013), 39.

[79] Mustafa Hallaj interviewed by Fida' Najjari for *Attali'a Magazine* (September 26th, 1970). Trans. Sherin Abdel Razeq and Alaa Hleihel, reprinted in *Diasporic Meanings: Mustafa Hallaj Retrospective Exhibition* (Jerusalem: Al-Hoash Palestinian Art Court, 2013), 43.

[80] Al-Munasira 160

points of resonance between various strains of Sufism and European modernism can facilitate remarkable relays between the textual traditions associated with the former and the aesthetic conventions of the latter.[81] In Hallaj's work, impulses towards automatism, hybridity, distortion, and fragmentation are inextricable from a Sufi philosophical investment in all things oneiric.

Though Sufi beliefs and practices vary between schools, their general conception of dreaming extends "beyond the prognostic value normally associated with dreams to include the expectation that dreams provide personal guidance to one's spiritual state and development."[82] In keeping with popular notions of dreaming in the Islamic world, the Sufi approach assumes that dreams draw knowledge from the spiritual or metaphysical unknown. However, while popular dream interpretation generally focuses on divining the future, Sufism places the emphasis on the present. Furthermore, according to Sufi thought, dreams provide access to the *barzākh,* which itself can be a space of encounter with the dead or even with the Prophet Mohammed.

Hallaj's commitment to Sufism does not preclude an engagement with Freud, however. In midcentury Cairo, where the artist was educated, psychoanalysis was a hot topic of intellectual debate. As historian Omnia El Shakry convincingly argues, Sufism "provides a complex theory and topography of the human soul that resonates with psychoanalytic thought," and this consonance did not go unnoticed by Hallaj's contemporaries.[83] Indeed, notes El Shakry, the 1950s found Egyptian thinkers reading "classical Sufi philosophers such as Ibn ʿArabi,

[81] See Chapter 3, "Sadequain and Calligraphic Modernism," in Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[82] Jonathan G. Katz, "Dreams and Their Interpretation in Sufi Thought and Practice," *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies,* eds. Özgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012): 183.

[83] Omnia El Shakry, *The Arabic Freud: Psychoanalysis and Islam in Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017): 68-69.

alongside, in concurrence with, and in distinction to Freud."[84] Among the subjects of such comparisons was dream interpretation, a widespread interest in which no doubt fueled the eager reception of Moustafa Safouan's 1958 Arabic translation of Freud's famous treatise on the subject.

Perhaps the most basic point of contention between Islamic and Freudian conceptions of dreaming is the source of dreams themselves. Islam, broadly speaking, sees significant dreams as hailing from an otherworld,[85] opening onto a supernatural elsewhere (*al-ghayb*) if not directly sent by God or Satan. Freud, on the other hand, sees the human subconscious as the locus of dreaming, proof that the visions we see in our sleep do not originate outside the self. Islamic traditions of dream interpretation do acknowledge a kind of Freudian subconscious, a reserve of internal desires and conflicts in which certain dreams originate, but texts generally designate such dreams as "meaningless" in comparison with those that are divinely inspired. However, as Amira Mittermaier demonstrates, this canonical distinction is rarely clear-cut in practice. In fact, Mittermaier's Egyptian interlocutors often attribute a given dream simultaneously to personal drives *and* divine inspiration, operating on the assumption of what the author terms a "less sealed model of the self."[86] As a system rooted inside the human subject, Mittermaier asserts, the subconscious can be understood in dialogue with the Islamic framework as "a medium of communication" with *al-ghayb* rather than as "the sole and mechanistic source of dreams."[87]

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[84] El Shakry, *The Arabic Freud*, 29

[85] It should be noted that attitudes towards dream interpretation vary widely between schools of Islam and among individual Muslims. Many consider it nonsense, some consider it heresy, and still others believe it to be a sanctioned religious practice. Nevertheless, the kind of dream interpretation to which I refer remains a solidly Islamic practice, deriving its legitimacy and structuring principles from the Qur'an and the hadith.

[86] Mittermaier 190

[87] Mittermaier 187

The temporal implications of this synthesis are significant. If the dream is a place for the return of the repressed, the evaluation of one's spiritual *hal*, and the revelation of one's destiny, it assumes the prismatic potential to refract the past, present, and future at once. Such an approach sheds valuable light on Hallaj's 1965 linocut. The stratified composition, full of porous partitions and ghostlike figures, explicitly evokes the *barzākh* as a liminal space that both separates and conjoins incommensurate states. Its corresponding temporal affinity is with the present, conveyed in the profound stasis of the image: the reaching bodies remain grounded, the hand suspended in a state of decay. Like Palestine, however, the print remains haunted by the condition of this liminality—the past events of a Nakba that was, itself, a violent reconfiguration of historical time—through two objects arranged on a diagonal. The form that first commands the viewer's attention is the corpse, an afterimage of human life and the ultimate reminder of time's relentless passage. A physical manifestation of anteriority, the body guides the eye downward to the lower left-hand corner, where a half-buried sculptural form evokes the resurfacing of history as well as its erasure.

Where, then, is the "light of dawn" in Hallaj's work? The print is saturated with dark, macabre imagery, but it was made at the hopeful outset of the Palestinian Revolution. It seems to allude to this revolution through the subtle emblem of the grenade fuse/peace dove, and perhaps, in the precarity of the hand that covers it, suggests the imminent collapse of cyclical violence. Indeed, there is a sense of futurity embedded in the "almost" of the image, in the potential, however thwarted, for upward motion. There is also a coded optimism in its oneiric perspective, as dreaming provides a more promising context for the image of a corpse. Throughout the Arab world, dreams of dying are popularly interpreted as happy omens; to dream of a loved one's death is to give that loved one a "new life," heralding positive changes in the years to come.

Per his own description, Mustafa Hallaj drew inspiration for his work from the distinct cultural genres of folk art, history, and mythology. All of these vast and unwieldy categories are connected in some way to a sense of ancientness, and each bears its own relationship to truth. As subjects of inquiry, they offer different but connected lenses through which to approach the context I have defined in this chapter, in which the potent alloy of a national legend and the distant past forces Palestine into a liminal half-life. Yet these elements make their way into Hallaj's work subconsciously, through dreaming rather than direct engagement. Like Mona Saudi, Mahmoud Darwish, and Taha Muhammad Ali, Hallaj seizes upon the disorienting, hallucinatory valences of this context to access the dream-state of Palestine, working across spatial and temporal boundaries to conjure a place at once here and elsewhere, symbolic and concrete.

Chapter 2: Aspiration, Surrogacy, and the Art of a Gendered Future

At the outset of the novel *Umm Saad* (1969),[1] Ghassan Kanafani's middle-aged heroine presents her cousin with a dry, brown vine and announces plans to plant it. Soon, she remarks, they'll be harvesting its grapes. Less than two weeks have passed since the end of the June War, and Umm Saad's cousin is still reeling from the Arabs' crushing defeat. Seeing nothing in the plant but a useless twig, he asks bitterly if this is "really the right time" to be planting fruit. Umm Saad responds,

> You might not know much about the grapevine, but it's a generous plant that doesn't need a lot of water. Too much water will mess it up. "How?" you might ask. Well, I'll tell you: the grapevine gets its water from the humidity in the soil and the air, so it gives without taking anything.[2]

With *Umm Saad*, argues the celebrated Lebanese writer Elias Khoury, Ghassan Kanafani "created the Palestinian mother archetype."[3] While Khoury's attribution might lean slightly towards exaggeration, the novel's protagonist looms large in the Palestinian imaginary as an exemplar of motherhood in the time of the Palestinian Revolution. An illiterate peasant living in Beirut's Bourj al-Barajneh refugee camp, Umm Saad looks ahead unflinchingly, uninterested in dwelling on the pain of the past yet prepared to accept future burdens. Like the grapevine, she is evoked in symbiosis with the natural world. She, too, gives without taking anything.

Kanafani's novel ends with the plant's green sprouts pushing determinedly through the soil as Umm Saad looks on, triumphant. An unsubtle metaphor for an unlikely rebirth, the vine

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[1] "Umm Saad" means "Saad's mother." I have chosen not to translate it in-text because it is an example of a very common naming practice in the Arabic-speaking world and, despite the centrality of the character's motherhood to the story, should not be misconstrued as meaningful.

[2] Ghassan Kanafani, *Umm Saad* (Beirut: Dar al-Awde, 1969), 13.

[3] Elias Khoury, "Remembering Ghassan Kanafani, or How a Nation Was Born of Storytelling," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 87.

echoes Mona Saudi's paradoxical evocation of Palestine as both a mother nurturing a seedling and the seedling itself, a dream beseeched to return so it can be born within its own body. Published at a time when the "ostentatious, *sexy* and often reckless braggadocio" of the fedayee, or freedom fighter, had begun to shape Palestine's global image in distinctly masculine terms,[4] the text is nevertheless indicative of a much larger trend in the art and literature of the Palestinian resistance. Beginning with a brief look at *Umm Saad*, this chapter considers the ways in which artists and writers mobilized the maternal body and other overtly feminine forms in the service of the Palestinian Revolution. Focusing on the work of Beirut-based creators in the orbit of the Palestine Liberation Organization, particularly Ismail Shammout, I connect this proliferation of feminized imagery to an aspirational valence of the dream-state—and to the anxieties that shadow it.

In Chapter 1, I likened the Palestinian dream-state to the Islamic *barzākh,* a threshold between life and death where souls await their final judgment. In the Qur'an, the *barzākh* is described as an impossible barrier between fresh and salt water, a liminal space that paradoxically separates and conjoins incommensurate states. This chapter traces this affinity in the context of Beirut's Palestinian refugee camps, which during the 1960s and 1970s were also spaces where oppositional forces coexisted under surreal conditions. At once sites of collective despair and crucibles of radical hope, the camps engendered an aspirational mode of dreaming, the revolutionary optimism of which masked its preoccupations with failure and loss. This dream-mode animates the work of artists and writers affiliated with Palestinian resistance groups in Beirut, manifesting with particular force in the image of "Palestine as a woman."

[4] Aamir Mufti, "The Missing Homeland of Edward Said," in *Conflicting Humanities*, eds. Rosi Braidotti and Paul Gilroy (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 168. Emphasis in original.

Artists had begun to personify Palestine by the early 1960s, and by the 1970s her image competed with that of the fedayee as a popular expression of nationalism. On a 1979 poster for the Palestine Martyrs' Works Society (SAMED), she appears in traditional dress, holding the red roses of socialism in her left hand (Figure 2.1). On her head is the walled city of Jerusalem; beneath it, her long hair becomes the land from which fighters, workers, and farmers grow like trees. In a 1970 Fatah poster, she appears as a Bedouin woman crossed with vertical lines as though bound by a rope, and as a Madonna-like mother on the cover of a 1982 issue of *Palestinian Affairs* magazine (Figure 2.2, Figure 2.3). In a 1969 print, her hair flows into the landscape as she aims a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, at once a fighter for Palestine and an extension of its rolling hills (Figure 2.4).

This chapter situates this proliferation of images in the context of Beirut's refugee camps, arguing that their existence owes partly to the upheaval of gender norms in exile. Both the Nakba of 1948 and the *naksa* of 1967 brought questions of modernity into conflict with traditional attitudes towards masculinity, and I argue that depictions of Palestine as a woman work to reconcile this fissure. In exploring how they do so, I argue that these images demonstrate a relationship between the female body and the dream-state of Palestine that is more akin to surrogacy than to symbolism, carriage rather than representation. By operating in time-bound modes of substitution and gestation, these images embody the defiant hope for a future state in ways that tacitly affirm patriarchal social structures.

Following this discussion, I turn to the closely related phenomenon of *turāth*,[5] or cultural patrimony, in the visual arts. During this era, Palestinian artists in Beirut and beyond often

[5] On *turāth* in modern Arab art, See Silvia Naef, "Reexploring Islamic Art: Modern and contemporary creation in the Arab world and its relation to the artistic past" (*Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics,* 2003) and *A la recherche d'une modernité arabe: l'évolution des arts plastiques en Egypte, au Liban et en Irak* (Slatkine, 1996); Kanan Makiya, *The Monument: Art and Vulgarity in Saddam Hussein's Iraq* (I.B.

favored iconography based in folklore or heritage crafts, especially traditional *tatrīz* (embroidery). As the revolution spread beyond the confines of the camps, however, an increasingly invested global audience demanded a legible "combat art," especially from creators working with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Implicitly or explicitly, "combat art" was contrasted with *turāth,* especially as artists in other decolonizing nations moved away from a rigid emphasis on pre-colonial folk culture. Considering the fraught context in which *turāth* was then embroiled, however, I argue that artists' continued emphasis on cultural heritage not only constitutes a mode of combat in and of itself, but that, in its elevation of the gendered craft of embroidery, it constitutes a radically feminized mode of dreaming Palestinian liberation.

MOTHERS DESPITE EVERYTHING: *UMM SAAD* AND BEIRUT'S REFUGEE CAMPS

"Bullets were not enough," wrote Mahmoud Darwish in his elegy for Ghassan Kanafani. "They exploded you as they would demolish a battlefront or an army base, a mountain, a capital. They fought you as they would fight an army, because you are a symbol… because the homeland, in you, is clear and real."[6] The 36-year-old writer was assassinated in 1972, perishing with his 17-year-old niece in a Mossad-planted car bomb outside his home in Beirut. A

Taurus, 1991); Nada Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (University of Florida Press, 2007). For information on *turāth* in Palestinian art prior to 1948, see Nisa Ari's doctoral dissertation (MIT, 2019). Anneka Lenssen's reading of heritage in the work of Syrian painter Fateh al-Moudarres in *Beautiful Agitation: Modern Painting and Politics in Syria* (University of California Press, 2020) provides a refreshing counterpoint to the triumphalist narratives that tend to permeate analyses of *turāth* and related phenomena.

[6] Mahmoud Darwish, "Muhawwalat Ritha' Burkaan" ["An Attempt to Eulogize a Volcano"], 1972. Al-Jibha al-sha'ibiyya li-tahrir Filastin, fir'a Libnan, al-Maktab al-'alimi lil-jibha al-sha'ibiyya lil-tahrir Filastin. http://pflp-lb.org/newsg.php?go=fullnews&newsid=7704

prominent member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine,[7] he built a prolific career as a journalist and editor of Marxist periodicals such as *al-Hurriya* ("Freedom") and *al-Hadaf* ("The Goal"), though today he is largely remembered for his lucid, incisive fiction. At the time of his death, he had indeed become an emblem of Palestinian resistance, establishing through his writing an uncommon talent for "turning dark despair into the ferment of hope."[8]

Kanafani's *Umm Saad* focuses on the eponymous mother, a poor woman living in Beirut's Bourj al-Barajneh refugee camp, whose son has recently left to fight with the fedayeen. The protagonist—whose lips, "despite everything, are still Palestinian," whose hands, "despite everything, have spent twenty years waiting for a weapon"—is generally taken to represent the Palestinian proletariat, itself shorthand for Palestine writ large.[9] Kanafani describes her in his introduction first as "a real woman, whom I know well and to whom I am somehow related," but quickly clarifies that she is not one single person. She is, instead, a figure whose body, mind, and labor can be found "in the heart of the masses and at the center of their concerns, an inextricable part of their day's work." For the author, Umm Saad is "the voice of that Palestinian class that paid dearly the cost of defeat, and that now stands beneath the roof of national despair and at the frontlines of battle, still paying more than most."[10]

As an "archetype of Palestinian motherhood," Umm Saad embodies the virtues of resilience and self-sacrifice. She epitomizes the nationalistic image of the peasant woman, whose

[7] The PFLP (est. 1967) is a Marxist-Leninist political party and has been the second-largest member of the Palestine Liberation Organization since it joined the organization in 1968.

[8] Khoury 88.

[9] Kanafani, *Umm Saad,* 7.

[10] Ibid. 8

provincial culture and closeness to the land render her a symbol of anticolonial "authenticity."[11] Though ultimately a work of understated realism, the novel occasionally romanticizes its heroine in these terms, as when she arrives at her cousin's house directly from the camp yet somehow "fills the room with the fragrance of the countryside."[12] Furthermore, Umm Saad fulfills the nationalist function of woman as the womb of the nation, eager to provide her country with soldiers and citizens. When asked if she is sad or angry about her son's decision to join the fedayeen, she responds that she wishes she had ten more children to fight for the cause.[13] "That woman," laments her husband, "gives birth to children only for them to become fedayeen. She bears them and Palestine takes them away."[14]

Umm Saad is not Kanafani's first Palestinian character to be defined by her reproductive capacity. In *All That's Left To You* (1966), for example, the aptly named Maryam ("Mary") murders her lover rather than abort their illegitimate baby, placing herself in danger in order to protect the pregnancy (and, symbolically, the next generation of Palestinians). Maryam's decisive act can be seen as an investment in the future, but whatever hope it conveys remains secondary to its desperation. Umm Saad, in contrast, draws her strength not from desperation but from conviction. She is proud of her son, supporting him though she knows his path may end in death, and moves stubbornly forward even as others expect her to be stilled by grief. Her story begins a mere ten days after Israel's devastating victory in the June War, yet she does not share

[11] For more about this phenomenon in the Palestinian context, see Ted Swedenberg, "The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," *Anthropological Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (January 1990): 18-30.

[12] Kanafani, *Umm Saad*, 12

[13] Ibid. 24

[14] Ibid. 73

the dejected, defeatist attitudes of those around her. Looking to the future, she plants the vine and anticipates grapes, believing that her labor will bear (literal) fruit.

Umm Saad is a fundamentally hopeful story about a woman defined by goodness, generosity, and, as Arabic scholar Nancy Coffin observes, an almost prescient "ability to see beyond outward appearance and to perceive the worth in what another might unthinkingly discard."[15] Revealing rural origins through her speech, manner of dress, and talent for cultivating plants, Kanafani's protagonist evokes visions of a bygone Palestine, a lost homeland frequently eulogized through allusions to its agrarian prosperity. Her gaze, however, is definitively oriented towards the future; whether tending to her grapevine or worrying for her son, she is constantly concerned with growth. In one of the story's episodes, Umm Saad gets rid of a necklace that had been made for her by a sheikh in Palestine when she was a little girl—a relic of the old country, meant as a talisman of good luck—because she realizes that it has never actually protected her against harm. In its place, she wears one of her son's bullets, emptied of its gunpowder and strung on a chain.[16] Here, Umm Saad rejects the superstitious sentimentality of clinging to the past in order to invest in the vision of the revolution. Her status as an icon of Palestinian motherhood is two-pronged: she is a symbol of an idealized Palestinian past that rejects the very thing she represents, articulating a fundamental tension within nationalist conceptions of a victorious future.

The history of Palestinian refugees in Beirut sheds light on Umm Saad's resonance as an archetype. Like many displaced Palestinian women in the 1960s, Umm Saad works outside the home as a housekeeper, while her husband remains bitterly unemployed. That motherhood and

[15] Nancy Coffin, "Engendering Resistance in The Work of Ghassan Kanafani," *The Arab Studies Journal* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 113.

[16] Kanafani, *Umm Saad,* 79-83.

associated qualities—selflessness, nurturing—are foregrounded above and beyond Umm Saad's productivity or personal agency is indicative of a larger conundrum facing Palestinian refugees as they learned to negotiate life in exile. As I'll demonstrate, the dissolution of formerly rigid gender roles necessitated by conditions in refugee camps complicated perceptions of masculinity that had already been challenged in the events of 1948 and 1967. The ensuing tension between progressive, revolutionary national pride and adherence to traditional concepts of honor impacted the relationships between women and Palestine depicted by Palestinian artists in Beirut and beyond.

Beirut's large Palestinian community was established in the wake of the 1947-48 Nakba. During this time, the United Nations established its Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to manage some 750,000 Palestinians who had fled their homes under military pressure. Of these refugees, about 100,000 came to Lebanon,[17] the vast majority of whom were housed in a number of refugee camps administrated by UNRWA. These camps were already crowded in 1967, when the June War sent another massive wave of Palestinian refugees into the tiny country. At both junctures, most refugees came from the peasant or working class, having owned farmland or sharecropped in Palestine, and the life they found in the camps was brutal. While virtually all UNRWA refugee camps originated as tent cities, most in other countries were quickly replaced by sturdier structures; in Lebanon, a full decade passed before one- and two-room shacks took the place of fabric shelters. Palestinians were (and continue to be) prohibited from entering a long list of desirable occupations, could not own property, and were not entitled

[17] "Final report of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East," New York: United Nations, 1949. While this document specifies that approximately 97,000 entered Lebanon, it bears noting that statistics on Palestinian refugees are notoriously slippery due to the fact that a large number (some suggest a majority) did not register with authorities and thus were not granted official refugee status.

to basic social services such as sanitation. Their mobility was strictly curtailed and their camps patrolled by Lebanese police, who were known to suppress any political activity they encountered.

The combination of extreme poverty and severe employment restrictions frequently disrupted traditional gender roles for families living in the camps. Men who had been breadwinners since adolescence were suddenly unable to make ends meet. Many remained unemployed, while others found only poorly paid, illegal work for Lebanese employers eager to exploit their vulnerable status. For the first time, women left the home in large numbers to contribute to household income, working under the table in factories, agriculture, or, most commonly, as maids in Lebanese homes.[18] While interviewing inhabitants of Lebanon's refugee camps in the 1980s, anthropologist Julie Peteet noted that this practice was so pervasive that "women sometimes refer to the 1950s and 1960s as the time when Palestinian women worked as servants, underscoring their sense of powerlessness and shame."[19] Women who worked in the domestic sector often found their jobs debasing, while Palestinian men were demoralized by their dependence on the earnings of their wives and daughters. Worsening matters was the fact that the culturally esteemed role of mother was increasingly difficult to play, and not only because of long working hours: unsanitary conditions and inadequate medical care in the camps led to high infant and maternal mortality rates.[20] Such conditions led Edward Said to observe by the 1980's that women "everywhere in Palestinian life" appear to "exist between the syrupy sentimentalism

[18] Julie Peteet, *Gender in Crisis: Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 34.

[19] Peteet, *Gender in Crisis*, 36

[20] Ibid.

of roles we ascribe to them (mothers, virgins, martyrs) and the annoyance, even dislike, that their unassimilated strength provokes in our warily politicized, automatic manhood."[21]

The Cairo Agreement, signed by PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and Lebanese Army General Emile Bustani in 1969, changed circumstances on the ground considerably. This treaty is most often discussed in a military context, as a catalyst for the Lebanese civil wars. It legitimized the PLO's presence in Beirut, granting the organization the power to base its armed resistance in Lebanon and thus the ability to launch attacks on the Zionist state from the southern border. The impact of the Cairo Accords was not confined to the military sphere, however; the agreement also established the authority of the PLO over refugee camps in Lebanon, which thrived under its auspices. The resistance movement provided a vast network of quasi-governmental social services and badly needed employment opportunities for camp residents, especially after 1970, when, following the events of Black September,[22] it moved its leadership from Amman to Beirut. The PLO established its own police force, the Palestine Armed Struggle Command, to keep public order within the camps, while camp militias joined forces with members of various guerrilla groups to defend against external threats. Popular Committees, composed of representatives from the major political factions as well as camp elders and leaders, took charge of services such as garbage collection, sewage, electricity, and water. For camp residents, some of whom had been living in chaos for over two decades, the PLO's establishment in Lebanon marked a new era of agency, dignity, and self-sufficiency.

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[21] Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 77.

[22] "Black September" here refers to a series of military clashes, fought mainly between 16 and 27 September 1970, between the army of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian fedayeen. The conflict, caused by the increasing autonomy of the Palestinian contingent's "state within a state" and an attempt by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to assassinate King Hussein, ultimately resulted in the expulsion of the fedayeen from Jordan between October 1970 and July 1971.

The arrival of the PLO came with specific benefits for Palestinian women. The Palestine Red Crescent Society, sponsored by the resistance organization and staffed largely by camp residents, drastically improved available healthcare through such initiatives as sanitation programs, health education, and mother-and-child clinics. Seeking to stem the tide of economic exploitation and restore the dignity some felt had been lost during "the time when Palestinian women worked as servants," the PLO launched literacy campaigns and vocational training programs for women in industry, nursing, sewing, and clerical work. Through SAMED, the Palestine Martyrs Work Society,[23] they also opened factories and workshops that employed women.[24] Given new opportunities for social and economic mobility, women also began to organize privately, coordinating childcare centers as well as cultural and educational facilities.[25]

In addition to bringing some stability to the camps, these programs encouraged a change in attitudes about women's work outside the home. The PLO urged men who once viewed it as a temporary, perhaps shameful response to a period of crisis to consider it a nationalistic endeavor in the service of Palestinian economic autonomy.[26] The sheer scale of women's involvement in the PLO's programs suggests that the consensus had indeed begun to shift, but such radical realignments of traditional gender roles nevertheless provoked anxiety among the men of the camps. The Palestine Liberation Organization gave men more opportunities to provide for their

[23] SAMED is so named because it was initially established in order to help children of martyrs support themselves following the death of their parents. It should be noted that the term "martyr" refers to anyone who dies in the service of the Palestinian cause, including non-combatants. The common Western belief that Palestinian martyrdom necessarily entails suicide bombing is a misperception.

[24] For more on SAMED operations during this period, see Cheryl Rubenberg, "The Civilian Infrastructure of the Palestine Liberation Organization: An Analysis of the PLO in Lebanon Until June 1982" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12, no 3 (Spring 1983): 54-78.

[25] See Julie Peteet, "The Palestinian Women's Movement: Organization and Representation," in *Gender In Crisis,* pp. 38-63.

[26] See Peteet, *Gender in Crisis*, and Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestine," in *Third World Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (October 1983): 880-886.

families, but it did not send their wives home; if anything, women were growing *more* independent as life in the camps improved. Compounding matters was their increasing participation in the armed resistance, which was encouraged and eventually mandated by the PLO.[27] Even those who supported female fighters and other women working for the resistance were faced with the impact of their new roles on their domestic lives. "Our women are no longer women," noted one of Peteet's male interlocutors cynically. "I know they have to be this way because of our society, but even when they go home they are no longer women."[28]

On a larger scale, both the Nakba and the 1967 *naksa,* or "setback," have often been framed in terms of emasculation. Furthermore, as sociologist Frances Hasso has noted, the crises of masculinity surrounding both the Nakba and the *naksa* are intertwined with crises of modernity.[29] Arab critics and philosophers writing in the aftermaths of 1948 (e.g. Musa al-'Alami, Constantine Zurayk) and 1967 (e.g. Sadiq al-'Azm, Yasin al-Hafiz, Mustafa Hijazi) largely focused on *takhalluf* ("underdevelopment") and *ta'akhur* ("backwardness") in Arab societies as major causes of their decisive defeat.[30] The fraught, Eurocentric entanglement of modernization with the reform of traditional Arab patriarchy in nationalist discourse goes back at least to 1899, when Egyptian jurist Qasim Amin published the (in)famous *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (*The Liberation of Women*). A nuanced treatment of the subject is beyond the scope of this

[27] During a general mobilization campaign in 1981-82, the Palestine Liberation Organization mandated after-school and weekend military training for all young camp residents, including girls. See Julie Peteet, "Socio-Political Integration and Conflict Resolution in the Palestinian Camps in Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no. 2 (Winter 1987): 29-44

[28] Peteet, *Gender in Crisis,* 152-153.

[29] Frances S. Hasso, "Modernity and Gender in Arab Accounts of the 1948 and 1967 Defeats." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (2000): 492-510.

[30] See Hasso, "Modernity and Gender" and Manfred Sing, "Revisiting Arab Self-Criticism after 1967: The Normative Turn in Marxist Thought and Its Heuristic Fallacies" (*The Arab Studies Journal*, 2017)

dissertation, but it bears noting that this discourse often associates traditional gender roles with a resistance to modernization, and that this resistance was widely blamed for Arab military weakness. According to this logic, the technological advances that facilitated Western dominance –and that held the key to resisting it– required certain cultural advances as well, including, some believed, a more egalitarian society. In terms of repairing wounded masculinity, this seemingly amounted to a zero-sum game: the pride to be won in a "modern" society with an upgraded military might be lost to the erosion of patriarchy.

Many artistic depictions of Palestinian women contemporaneous with Kanafani's *Umm Saad* take a similar approach to the novel in navigating this predicament. In contrast to their male counterparts, who are generally depicted in contemporary dress, women in these canvases almost always wear traditional outfits associated with rural settings, evoking a nostalgic, unspecific Palestinian past. Simultaneously, they embody a resolute orientation towards the coming liberation of Palestine, inscribing themselves in the forward-moving rhetoric of the revolution. Dreaming in the aspirational sense of the term, they propel themselves towards a future imagined in the utopian vocabulary of an idealized past. Like all utopian projects, however, their forms reveal the conditions that created them, inevitably shadowing the imagined given with its corresponding real-world lack. In the following section, I will consider the ways in which images of Palestine as a woman responded to the loss of male agency in exile, enabling a tenuous reconciliation between the so-called "backwardness" of traditional Palestinian society and the revolutionary futurity of the Palestinian resistance. Focusing on the work of Ismail Shammout (1931-2006), who headed the PLO's Department of Arts and National Culture from its inception in 1965, I will examine the implications of the reproductive modes of representation at play in these canvases, which figure Palestine through the terms of surrogacy and gestation.

ISMAIL SHAMMOUT AND THE SURROGATE MOTHERLAND

The figure of Palestine is everywhere in the work of Ismail Shammout. She often appears in images directly analogizing her own fertility to that of the land, as in *Land of Plenty* (1970, Figure 2.5), in which four women in traditional Palestinian dress return from a bountiful harvest with baskets of produce. Frequently manifesting as a literal mother, she appears as a dedicated homemaker in images like *Until Dawn* (1963, Figure 2.6) and as a concerned caretaker on canvases such as *Motherhood* (1967, Figure 2.7) and *Tell Us We're All Right* (1970, Figure 2.8). In *Pledge Under The Tree* (1970, Figure 2.9), Palestine is the lover of a fedayee; she inspires and encourages him to fight, and he, the title implies, promises to return safely to her. In *Three Tales* (1970, Figure 2.10), the figure in the background rocks a baby, while the woman in the foreground stares solemnly past the viewer, as if looking out for an arrival. In the middle ground, a woman is bent over her sewing, working industriously. Here, we see the virtues embodied in Umm Saad: maternal care, diligence, and faith in the future.

This small sampling of images is fairly indicative of Shammout's work as a whole. The artist, who relocated to Beirut from Gaza's Khan Younis refugee camp in 1956, is known for a large corpus of oil paintings that overwhelmingly take Palestine as their subject, often representing the lost homeland through scenes of rural and/or family life. The son of a fruit vendor, Shammout joined Mustafa Hallaj in the small cadre of working-class Palestinian artists who received formal educations in the 1950s. Trained first at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cairo and later at Rome's Accademia di belle arti, Shammout became the director of the PLO's Department of Arts and National Culture in 1965. Nearly two decades after the artist's death, his work remains emblematic of Palestinian painting to an international audience.

Shammout's paintings are the focus of this analysis firstly because their widespread popularity suggests a resonance with contemporary Palestinian culture. Secondly, they represent the bulk of what remains following the 1982 Israeli assault on Beirut. During the months-long siege and subsequent invasion of West Beirut,[31] an enormous amount of cultural property was looted or destroyed, with items in the camps and in PLO buildings especially vulnerable. That the work of the artists who convened around the PLO in Lebanon largely harmonized with Shammout's painting is clear from exhibition catalogs, newspaper clippings, posters and other archival remnants, but most of the works themselves are gone or inaccessible. This group, which by the late 1970s included Abdel Hay Mossalam, Abdel Rahman Al-Muzayen, and Ibrahim Ghannam, among others, comprised largely self-taught male artists whose work reflected a bucolic, pastoral Palestine through images of women or agrarian scenes.[32]

The practice of representing Palestine as a woman became widespread in the years following the Nakba of 1948, especially in the growing corpus of resistance poetry.[33] By the early 1960s, visual artists had begun to similarly personify the homeland, with Shammout

[31] During the Lebanese Civil War, Beirut was separated into East and West sectors by the "green line," so called because of the vegetation that grew along the uninhabited demarcation zone. West Beirut is home to the refugee camps and a predominantly Muslim population, while East Beirut is predominantly Christian.

[32] While such imagery is typical in the work of these artists, it should not be interpreted as an "official" style, as it did not result from any formal strictures on the part of the PLO. Anecdotally, Shammout was known to encourage artists towards social realism and nostalgic iconography, but he did not do so programmatically or in an official capacity. The PLO, for its part, did not restrict its patronage to manifestly nationalist art, later establishing a Plastic Arts Division whose output was more diverse during its short existence (1974-1982).

[33] During the 1950s and 1960s, poetry was the primary means of artistic engagement with the Palestinian struggle. The explosive success of Mahmoud Darwish, who became an overnight sensation after a 1965 reading of his poem *Bataqat Hawiyya* (*Identity Card*) in a Nazareth movie theater, indicates the extent to which this poetry, though rooted in classical Arabic tradition, addressed and circulated among a popular audience. It was in this context that Palestine began to appear as a woman, materializing as an anthropomorphized motherland in works such as Fadwa Tuqan's 1954 *Nida' al-Ard* (The Call of the Land), and as a longed-for lover in others, including Mahmoud Darwish's famous '*Ashaq min Filastin* (Lover from Palestine,1966).

foremost among them. Art historian Tina Sherwell argues that Palestinian visual artists alternately imaged the body of their nation as maternal, beloved, and virginal, associated respectively with sustenance and protection, devotion, and purity.[34] These tropes are clearly apparent in the images discussed above and have informed my overall analysis, but their rigid delineation belies the slippery nature of female imagery in Palestinian nationalist art. Gender studies scholar Penny Johnson and artist Vera Tamari note that the woman in Palestinian paintings

> is usually a rural woman of child-bearing age… One speculates that, for these figures, child-bearing exists in endless potential, rather than actuality. It is extraordinarily difficult to determine a relationship with these women. Look carefully and enumerate possible relationships: mother, sister, wife, lover, friend, comrade, etc. None seem appropriate.[35]

According to Tamari and Johnson, the most stable attributes of these figures are their rural origins and their seemingly perpetual fertility. Their roles are much more elusive, blending together in a nebulous series of affiliations to men. Indeed, while some women did create visual art and poetry that figures Palestine as a woman, men were by far the most visible producers of this content as well as its primary consumers. Writing on early-20th-century Egypt, historian Beth Baron notes that nationalist iconography was largely produced for a male audience, and "representing the nation as a woman was meant to tap into notions of honor and instill into male viewers the sense that they had a duty to support, protect, and defend it."[36] Certainly, this explanation resonates with the post-Nakba Palestinian context, as do the implications Baron

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[34] See Tina Sherwell, "Imaging the Homeland: Gender and Palestinian National Discourses," in *After Orientalism: Critical Entanglements, Productive Looks*, ed. Inge Boer (Brill/Rodopi, 2003).

[35] Vera Tamari and Penny Johnson, "Loss and Vision: Representations of Women in Palestinian Art Under Occupation." *Discourse and Palestine: Power, Text, and Context,* eds. Annelies Moors, Toine van Teeffelen, Sharif Kanaana, Ilham Abu Ghazaleh (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis Publishers, 1995): 167.

[36] Beth Baron, *Egypt As A Woman* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 78.

draws from her analysis of Egypt. In depicting the nation as a woman, Baron argues, nationalists positioned the male citizen as "the actor, the speaker, the lover," while "the woman was acted upon, the listener, the beloved."[37] In imaging Palestine as a woman, then, Palestinian men reclaimed some of the agency lost to the emasculating experience of exile.

Ubiquitous in images of Palestinian women is traditional *tatrīz,* or embroidery, which generally adorns a long, tunic-like dress called a *thobe.* These garments, usually associated with the fellaha*,* or peasant farmer, can be seen in each of the Shammout paintings discussed above. While the embroidery is not clearly articulated in all of them, anyone familiar with Palestinian *thiāb* will read the red chest pieces, cuffs, and vertical stripes as suggestive of elaborate stitching. The significance of *tatrīz* to the visual culture of Palestinian resistance is complex and multi-layered, as I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, but a major aspect of its symbolic potency lies in its regional specificity. Customarily, the designs of a Palestinian wedding *thawb are* unique to the city or village of its origin; many Palestinians can identify the provenance of *tatrīz* because its colors and patterns anchor it to a particular place. Traditional costumes, as Tina Sherwell points out, have thus become a means "of mapping the lost homeland onto the bodies of women." Depicted in richly embroidered dresses, "women re-configure places lost to Palestinians, places that only exist in memories of the past as they are now inhabited by other people."[38]

Ismail Shammout's 1970 *A Flower from Majdal* (Figure 2.11) exemplifies the kind of "mapping" to which Sherwell refers. The "flower" in question is, of course, a Palestinian woman wearing a traditional, intricately embroidered *thobe*, positioned to exemplify and evoke her

[37] Baron 78

[38] Sherwell, "Imaging the Homeland," 133

homeland's natural beauty. Against a bucolic yet generic rural backdrop, the *thawb* is the element that ties this image to a particular place, displaying the designs associated with the town of Majdal. Once located north of Gaza on the Mediterranean Coast, Majdal no longer exists as a geographical entity; depopulated by Zionist forces between 1948 and 1950, its land was ultimately incorporated into the new Israeli city of Ashkelon. Rather than focusing on the subject's displacement from this town, the painting reorients the concept of Majdal itself, wresting it from the grip of its violent history and re-placing it onto the body of a beautiful woman.

In the transposition of a lost place onto the body of a woman, the dream-state again marks its difference from a territorialized nation. The relationship between Palestine and Shammout's "flower" is not that of a signified to a signifier, at least not in the straightforward way that, say, France relates to Marianne. Rather than a representation of the town –or of Palestine more broadly—*A Flower from Majdal* is an example of what I term "surrogate emplacement," a process by which absent land is mapped onto the body of a woman as a means of rendering it accessible to Palestinian men. The woman from Majdal is a *surrogate* for Palestine, a substitution or proxy for a conquered territory; dressed in attire commonly associated with weddings, she becomes, above all, *possessable* by the very men who lost her. Yet, crucially, she is merely a placeholder, playing a finite rather than eternal role. The proxy exists because the original does not, and the dream-mode of aspiration insists that the original will one day be redeemed. In other words, the woman who is now Majdal will be rendered obsolete once Majdal, as a geographical location, is born again through revolution.

GESTATIONAL FUTURITY: WAITING FOR MEN

Bound up with the idea of surrogate emplacement is a particular mode of futurity. The women who populate the canvases of the Palestinian resistance embody aspiration, looking always to a future implied to reward the travails of the present. Their roles are those of preparation, practice, waiting; they sew flags for the future state (Figure 2.6), they send their husbands to war and expect their return (Figure 2.9), they assure their children that things will be better soon (Figure 2.8). Significantly, they are not oriented towards the future in a general sense, but towards the specific future event of Palestine's liberation. This is apparent in the trope of the patient bride, seen in *The Pledge Under the Tree* and broadly popular in contemporaneous Palestinian art. Two further examples that elucidate this futurity are Ismail Shammout's *Until He's Back* (1969, Figure 2.12) and Abdel Rahman al-Muzayen's *Waiting at the Threshold* (c. 1977, Figure 2.13).

Shammout's *Until He's Back* features a young, loosely veiled woman who appears to be lost in thought. The title implies that the source of her daydream is her absent husband, presumably a fedayee who has left to join the revolution. She wears a white thawb with red embroidery, a common Palestinian bridal tradition, and the garment suggests not only her fidelity but that of her spouse; implied in the figure of this longing bride is a groom so devoted to his country that he left to fight for its liberation on his own wedding day. Rather than feeling jilted, however, the bride slings a hoe over her shoulder, dedicated to helping living things grow while her husband is away. She is patient and steadfast, working hard towards a future harvest, waiting for her lover as Palestine waits for its people to return from exile.

Al-Muzayen's *Waiting At The Threshold* (c.1977) depicts a young Palestinian woman in a colorful *thobe.* She is seated with her hands in her lap, relaxed but alert: her face wears a

content expression, but her eyes shine with a sharp lucidity as she gazes upward into the distance. The image is saturated with allusions to Palestinian folk culture, including the intricate *tatrīz* that decorates her dress and the motifs embedded in her jewelry. Framed by the *thobe's* neckline is a large gold pendant depicting Dagon, a Semitic god of crop fertility known in the Hebrew Bible as the god of the Philistines. Not only does this character evoke the seated woman's fertility in conversation with agricultural cultivation, but it also links contemporary Palestinian folk culture with that of an ancient civilization, suggesting regional roots that stretch back to 2500 BCE. In the background, masculine accessories hang on the wall, including an *'agal,* a dark cord used to keep a traditional headscarf in place, and a sheathed dagger called a *shibriyyeh*. Though she is not necessarily dressed as a bride, the presence of men's accessories suggests a husband, for whom she is presumably waiting. Supporting this interpretation is the checked *kuffiya* arranged on the woman's lap, an accessory that had become a symbol of the Palestinian cause by the 1970s because of its ubiquity among fedayeen. The shape of the rolled *kuffiya* suggests a shrouded corpse, which in conversation with the sitter's placid demeanor might imply that she has made peace with the possibility that her husband will be martyred.

One might read both of these women as personifications of Palestine. Both embody the virtue of *ṣumūd,* or steadfastness, that is a pillar of Palestinian resistance; their clothing connects them to a deeply rooted folk culture; their accessories draw connections between their own fertility and that of the land. In both cases, however, this personification is bounded by time. Their embodiment of Palestine is tied directly to the act of waiting, and therefore necessarily has an end point. Once their lovers return victorious, the wait will be over, Palestine will be free, and

their bodies will no longer represent a territory anticipating the return of its exiled sons. The surrogate's job ends with the birth of the nation.

The futurity at work in these images is productively limited, gestational. The paintings portray a moment of transition in anticipation of the emergence of something new, and their allusions to agricultural prosperity suggest this waiting period to be one of growth rather than stagnation. In the absence of their husbands, these women cannot have children within acceptable social mores, but their bodies still serve a maternal function; that their fertility has been displaced onto the soil they till is underscored by the hoe and the Dagon necklace. Their productivity, however, should not be mistaken for total self-sufficiency. Whether working the fields or sitting in the doorway, these women are *waiting*, defined by the anticipation of their husbands' return. One imagines Shammout's subject dropping her hoe to embrace a returning husband, Al-Muzayen's retreating into the home to usher hers in. The limitations on this productivity are as significant as the productivity itself, as the boundedness of the futurity at work in these images reveals the real-life anxiety it assuages. Our women, these paintings subtly suggest, need only work as hard as they're working until the homeland is won. The restoration of Palestine will itself restore the "natural order of things," reinstating traditional gender roles disrupted by exile. The fear of permanent emasculation lingers in this particular orientation towards the future, pointing to the questions that shadow the realization of a dream. What if we return to Palestine and it isn't enough? What if Palestine's resurrection reveals that "even at home, they are no longer women" –and, conversely, that even at home, we are no longer men?

This response to the anxiety of emasculation is inherent in the concept of surrogate emplacement and its gestational mode of futurity. Surrogacy, in the context of modern Palestinian art, does not only refer to the substitution of a woman's body for Palestine, but also

to the act of carrying Palestine as one would carry a baby to term. Crucial, here, is the distinction between surrogacy and pregnancy. If the term “pregnancy," however problematically, connotes a path to motherhood, the more sterile concept of surrogacy draws attention to the female body as a vessel rather than an agent; the child a surrogate carries is one to which she has no claim. The women who populate the canvases of the Palestinian resistance are, with few exceptions, anonymous tropes rather than individuals, defined largely by their reproductive capacity. Even in paintings that feature them in the midst of working or fighting, their agency is secondary or subservient to their motherhood. Mere placeholders for the motherland, they raise the boys who will ultimately regain the original and become its citizens, rendering the proxy obsolete.

A mother sews a Palestinian flag in the foreground of Ismail Shammout’s *Until Dawn* (1963, Figure 2.6). Behind her, her sons study diligently at a table, rapt faces lit by the glow of a gas lantern as they hunch over their books. The boys are watched over by their grandparents, whose forms are just visible in the shadows behind them. The woman in the foreground echoes the national symbol she creates, mirroring the colors of the flag in her white veil and black thawb with red and green stitching. Like her analogs in *Waiting at the Threshold* and *Until He’s Back*, she is a temporary substitute for Palestine, working actively towards the “dawn” of her own replacement by the nation. Unlike the other paintings, however, this canvas bears the first light of that dawn: her sons. The young boys are the future of Palestine, educating themselves in preparation for a state in which they will one day be active participants. Though the woman is ostensibly the subject of the painting, its composition’s emphasis on the children underscores their significance. The small radius of the lamp’s glow illuminates the boys and little else, casting their golden faces in striking contrast to their dark surroundings. Positioned as their

grandchildren's audience, the elderly couple lean towards them with interest, their gaze redirecting that of the viewer towards the brightly lit table in the painting's middle ground.

If not for the flag and the mother's conspicuously Palestinian clothing, this could be any allegory of generational betterment, with "dawn" referring hopefully to the children's escape, through education, from the poverty implied by the gas lamp. Instead, the children seem to represent the seed of an autonomous Palestine, their impending adulthood figured as the "dawn" that will end the darkness of exile. The mother, in such a reading, *carries* Palestine, incubates it, nurtures it until it gains the strength to free itself. Her sons are the future citizens of Palestine, while she is only its womb.

In a more militant canvas, *The PLO* (1965, Figure 2.14), Shammout portrays a strong woman staring straight ahead with an expression of fierce determination. She holds a weapon aloft with a steady, confident grip, her arms encircling six young boys. Five of these children regard the gun with something akin to awe while the sixth gazes steadfastly in the same direction as his mother. The woman wears a white veil whose folds subtly suggest the shape of historic Palestine, nearly glowing against a background painted in the smoldering hues of a hot ember. The fellaha turns towards what appears to be a barbed wire border fence, eyes trained on the future beyond it.

The matronly, commanding woman in this painting exudes solidity and resolve, white garments drawing the viewer's eye to her face. She is Palestine, holding her citizen-children protectively while she shows them the armed struggle to which they are destined. Only the young boy below her –the Palestine Liberation Organization– seems to understand her vision, gazing with knowing sobriety across the border while his brothers distract themselves. The PLO, this image insinuates, has stepped up as a leader to its people while remaining among them in

solidarity. Palestine, for all her might and dignity, is only pointing out the path that must be walked; once they have grown older, her children will be the agents of liberation. These sons will grow in her embrace, inspired and protected by her, and when the time is ripe they will follow the PLO into battle.

In both of these images, a maternal body moves the revolution towards a Palestine in which patriarchy endures. No daughters gather in the lamplight or turn longingly towards a gun, no women prepare for anything beyond their sons' adulthood or their husband's return. The personifications of Palestine that dominated Beirut's refugee camps in the 1960s and 70s celebrated women's bodies as relics of a mythical past and vessels of a liberated future, but they never envisioned them as citizens of a free state. Instead, the figure of the *fellah* rendered the dream-state possessable at a time when both land and women felt increasingly out of reach to Palestinian men. She eased anxieties about women's growing participation in the public sphere of the pseudo-state by centering motherhood and imbuing images of contemporary Palestine with the lush simplicity of bygone times. Faced with twinned crises of masculinity and modernity, she offered the compromise of gestation: women would do what was necessary to nourish the growing nation, but the "normalcy" of fixed gender roles would return with its longed-for birth.

This chapter has focused primarily on the work of Ismail Shammout. As I've demonstrated, this oeuvre is replete with images of *fellahāt*, family life, and agrarian abundance, themes that were similarly central to the work of many of his colleagues. In a New York Times article from October 1968, however, Shammout's artistic practice comes across very differently. "Palestinian's Art Reflects Arab Bitterness," barks the headline. "As a Result of War, He Now Dwells on Grim Fedayeen." The author suggests that the June War drove Shammout to express his "hatred" of Israel through the obsessive depiction of freedom fighters, providing snide,

sensationalizing descriptions of "muscular fedayeen in battle dress" and "grim-eyed portraits of commandos" to illustrate his point[39] Behind this lays a grain of truth: after the *inṭilāqa* of 1965 – and especially in the wake of the *naksa*– Shammout and his colleagues did often depict Palestinian militants in a heroic light. However, the article speaks more to international expectations of modern Palestinian art than to the content of the art itself.

Indeed, Palestinians were not the only people dreaming of Palestine in the era of Arafat. Whether lambasted as a terrorist or hailed as a freedom fighter, the fedayee had captured the global imagination by the revolution's heyday in the 1970s, and Palestinian culture was largely cast in his violent, masculine image. The plastic arts were no exception, with images of armed struggle implicitly, if not explicitly, dominating debates between artists and intellectuals throughout the Arab world on what constituted effective means of visualizing the Palestinian cause. The remainder of this chapter examines the relationship between ideals of "combat art," articulated by international critics through a Fanonian lens, as they aligned with notions of aesthetic "Palestinian-ness." Following an overview of Palestine's contemporaneous emergence as an anti-imperialist symbol throughout the Global South, I take critiques of Palestine's participation in the 1974 Arab Biennial as a case study of the disconnects between these ideals and the priorities of actual Palestinian artists, highlighting the gendered implications of such rifts. Specifically, I look at critics' negative responses to feminine-coded images of *turāth*, identifying their basis in a model of cultural decolonization that, drawing from interpretations of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* posits folklore as antithetical to combat. While this model works relatively well in the critics' home context of Morocco, I argue, it is ultimately ill suited to Palestine's atypical experience of colonialism. Though critics looked to the fedayee to articulate

[39] Eric Pace, "Palestinian Art Reflects Arab Bitterness." *The New York Times,* 27 October 1968, p. L5.

Palestine's revolutionary potential, the fellaha and her clothing provided Palestinian artists with a uniquely potent model for resisting Israeli imperialism, in which cultural appropriation played—and continues to play—a vital role. In their response to Israeli cultural conquest, these artists asserted a radically feminized form of "combat art" that articulated the paradoxical press of historical time on the reality of the Palestinian present.

PALESTINE, "BANNER OF OUR HOPES"

In July 1969, a young American sociologist attended the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers. This sociologist, Nathan Hare, had recently been hired to coordinate the first Black Studies program in the United States, and had made the trip from San Francisco to cover the festival for the inaugural issue of *The Black Scholar.* Writing in what would soon become one of the best-known American journals of Black culture and political thought, Hare describes the event as a coming-together of "African generals and footsoldiers in the war of words and politics," a gathering of minds to determine the role of culture in continental liberation.[40] Among the participants were people from every corner of the continent and its diasporas, including prominent representatives of the Black Panther Party, but only one group lacked a geographical or heritage-based connection to Africa. "Greeted by heavy applause," Hare describes, an unidentified "representative of the Palestinian movement (Al Fat'h)" approached the podium, where his polemical remarks "kindled revolutionary sentiment among the African delegates."[41]

[40] Nathan Hare, "A Report on the Pan-African Cultural Festival," *The Black Scholar* 1, no. 1 (November 1, 1969): 2.

[41] Hare 9

Hare's passing mention of Palestine's spirited participation in the PACF is a narrow window onto a zeitgeist. Through his article, we see the Palestinian resistance movement make contact with African American scholarship, the Black Power movement, pan-Africanism, and Third World cultural decolonization, all the while serving primarily to fuel the flames of anti-imperialism. When the aforementioned representative argued that Palestinians "pose the question of freedom" on the map of a world bitterly divided between despotism and revolution,[42] he gestured obliquely to an actual phenomenon that had taken root throughout the Global South.

In the years that followed the *inṭilāqa*, the Palestinian resistance began to play a significant symbolic role in decolonial imaginaries, serving as a rallying point, a metaphor, and a source of inspiration for oppressed peoples all over the world. In the wake of the June War, especially, international journals such as *Tricontinental,* published by the Organization of the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAL) and *Souffles-Anfas*, a radical Moroccan cultural periodical, shifted their attention to the Palestinian cause, with the Pan-African French weekly *Jeune Afrique* describing the post-1967 PLO as "the Palestinian FLN."[43] Black Power publications did the same in the United States, especially after the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee publicly declared their support for Palestine in 1967.[44] Palestinian artists and writers began to garner international attention; within months of Fatah's Algiers address, Mahmoud Darwish was awarded the inaugural Lotus Prize for African and

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[42] "Message du mouvement de libération palestinien « El Fath »" ["Message from the Palestinian Liberation Movement, 'Al-Fatah,'"]. *La Culture Africaine : Le Symposium d'Alger, 21 juillet-1er août 1969.* (Alger : S.N.E.D, 1969).

[43] Paul Thomas Chamberlain, The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40.

[44] For a thorough contemporary study of the attitudes of African American activists and organizations towards Palestine, see Lewis Young, "American Blacks and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1972): 70-85.

Asian Literature. The name of Palestine, insisted a Moroccan editorial from 1969, "becomes on the lips of our people a symbol of liberty and social justice… an aphrodisiac to our impotence, the banner of our hopes, the balm to our wounded flesh."[45]

Comparative literature scholar Olivia C. Harrison's *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* considers the figure of Palestine in North African cultural production during the second half of the twentieth century. Writing on *Souffles-Anfas,* Harrison argues that Palestine in the wake of the 1967 war became the journal's "principal source of inspiration for… sustained reflection on language and culture, culminating in the launching of an Arabic language journal, *Anfas*,[46] and the dissemination of Palestinian poetry in French translation."[47] In *Souffles-Anfas,* Palestine became a metaphor through which to process North Africa's colonial past as well as, crucially, its purportedly postcolonial present. In a collective appeal to Maghrebi writers,[48] Harrison notes, the editors draw "an explicit parallel between Israel's ongoing 'cultural annihilation' of Palestine on the one hand and the 'deculturation' of the Maghreb on the other," connecting "processes of colonial acculturation (the suppression of indigenous languages and cultural forms by French and Israeli colonial regimes) to more insidious forms of cultural imperialism, such as metropolitan control over Maghrebi cultural production through the insti tutions of Francophonie and French publishing and distribution

[45] J.B., "Nation Arabe," *Souffles* no. 16/17 (1969): 5.

[46] Prior to 1967, *Souffles-Anfas* was known only as *Souffles.* Both terms mean "breaths" (in French and Arabic, respectively).

[47] Olivia C. Harrison*, Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 17.

[48] Tahar Benjelloun, Bensalem Himmich, Abdelkabir Khatibi, Abdellatif Laâbi, Azeddine Madani, Ahmed Madini, Abdelaziz Mansouri, Ahmed Mejjati, E.M. Nissaboury, "Appel aux écrivains maghrébins," *Souffles* 15 (1969): 99-102.

circuits."[49] Indeed, throughout the decolonizing nations of the so-called Third World, Palestine was mobilized in analyses of culture *after* colonialism as well as in discourses of anticolonial liberation. This speaks to its image as "a nation in the making, an object of political desire and imagination" that was, in some ways, "more useful as a still realizable dream than as an accomplished fact."[50]

The future-oriented, aspirational dream-state of Palestine was thus the purview of a wide range of actors, many of whom were not Palestinian at all. Its use as a symbol was perhaps most visible in the context of pan-Arabism, of which it became a driving force following the defeat of Arab armies in the war of 1948. The defeat and subsequent loss of Palestine compelled Arab nationalists to re-anchor their self-image, formerly based in the shared inheritance of a glorious past, in the unifying reality of a vulnerable present. As political scientist Tareq Ismael argued in 1976,

> Liberal Arab nationalism had fed on the euphoria of Arab heritage; such euphoria appeared bankrupt indeed in the reality of Arab ineptitude in Palestine. Thus, a profound reappraisal of Arab society had ensued. Every aspect of Arab society has come under fire—social, political, economic, religious. Under the threat of extinction as symbolized by Palestine, Arab nationalism has reasserted itself, not in the glorification of the past but in the reform of the present.[51]

From the moment that Palestine shifted the terrain of pan-Arabism, its liberation became a central ideological tenet of virtually all political movements in favor of Arab unity. I refer to this as an ideological tenet rather than a goal because, to the frustration of many in the Arab world, it remains a rallying point rather than a practical priority for most Arab regimes to this day. An apt

[49] Harrison 23

[50] Harrison 77-78

[51] From *The Arab Left* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976), quoted by Elie Chalala in "Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographic Essay" (*Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate,* 1987).

articulation of this dilemma can be found in the art world, where in 1976 the Second Arab Biennial adopted Palestine as its explicit theme. Held in Rabat, Morocco, the show was conceived by as a show of solidarity but left much to be desired in its execution. As Iraqi artist Dia ʻAzzawi lamented at the time, very few of the participants stuck to the theme, revealing a disappointing "lack of commitment" among artists who were, in theory, advocates of the Palestinian cause.[52]

The second iteration of the Arab Biennial was also its last, and widely regarded as unsuccessful due to the dissonance between its aspirations and execution. The First Arab Biennial, however, was an event of significant cultural promise, consisting of over six hundred artworks contributed by representatives of fifteen national entities throughout the region.[53] Premiering in Baghdad less than a year after an attempted military coup failed to oust the six-year-old government of its host country, the Biennial brought artists from all over the Arab world together under tempestuous political circumstances. As art historian Amin Alsaden has pointed out, the biennial can be understood as "an Iraqi attempt to assume Arab cultural leadership – perhaps to revive the historical significance of Baghdad as the center of a unified Arab and Islamic world, an idea deeply ingrained in the Iraqi national psyche."[54] Under the slogan ʻOne

[52] Dia ʻAzzawi interviewed by unidentified correspondent, "Al ʻAlam al-Thiqaffi fi Hiwar Sakhin ma' al-Finaan al-ʻIraqi Dia' ʻAzzawi: Lam Yunjeh Ma'arid al-Sennatain al-Haali fi Khalaq Tasawwarat Mustaqbaliyya, Aghlab al-Finaan al-Musaahameen fi Ma'arid Rabat Lam Yeltazmu bil-Mawdu'a' al-Hadded l-Dowra al-Biennal 76: Filastin." ["Al-ʻAlam's Cultural Section in Heated Dialog with Iraqi Artist Dia ʻAzzawi: The Current Biennial Did Not Succeed in Creating Visions of the Future; Most Participants Did Not Adhere to the 1976 Rabat Biennial's Official Theme of Palestine"]. *Al-ʻAlam,* 31 December 1976, p. 7

[53] See "Nadwa al-ʻAdad: Ara' fi Ma'arid al-Sennatain al-Awwal" ["This Issue's Forum: Opinions on the Arab Biennial"] in *Attashkili al-ʻArabi: Revue Arabe des Arts Plastiques,* 2 (March 1975): 5-15.

[54] Amin Alsaden, "Baghdad's Arab Biennial: Regional Subversions, Global Ambitions," *Third Text* 33, no. 1 (2019): 129.

Arab Nation, with an Immortal Message,' the ruling Ba'ath Party mobilized pan-Arabist sentiment in the service of Iraqi nationalism.

Palestine's central position in the rhetoric of pan-Arabism ensured its place on the Iraqi cultural agenda, and indeed, at least two[55] of the artworks in the biennial's Iraqi pavilion took Palestine as their subject. One of them, Amer al-Obaidi's *Knights from the South* (1973), was even reproduced as a postcard by Iraq's Ministry of Information (Figure 2.15). The image depicts a group of fedayeen, clad as ever in *kuffiyat* and ammunition belts, leaving an encampment with their trademark Kalashnikovs. Originally created for the PLO,[56] the work points to the prominence of the fedayeen in the Arab imaginary, its title elevating fighters in southern Lebanon to the heroic status of knights. Its flat blocks of color and crisply defined shapes are typical of midcentury modern graphic design, while the mechanical stiffness of the fedayeen –their sturdy bodies balancing on spindly, tapered legs, the bucket-like heads from which their too-large eyes glow vivid red– lends them a distinctly robotic quality. The collective effect is a Jetsons-esque futurism that entwines the technological promises of robotics with the liberatory aspirations of the Palestinian resistance.

The science-fiction aesthetic of Al-Obaidi's work anoints the Palestinian Revolution with the metallic shine of the vanguard, its heroes poised as if to move the very boundaries of the possible. While these sleek, Space Age freedom fighters seem to inhabit the future already, their Palestinian counterparts at the Baghdad biennial were critiqued as anachronisms. Looking at coverage of the biennial in *Integral*, a prominent Casablanca-based cultural journal, one sees the

[55] This estimate is based only on titles listed in the biennial's catalog, which also notes an aluminum sculpture by Ahmed al-Sheikhly entitled *Two Fronts and Palestine*. Comments made by Ismail Shammout in "Nadwa al-'Adad: Ara' fi Ma'arid al-Sennatain al-Awwal" (*Attashkili al-'Arabi* no 2., 1975) also suggest that this catalog was incomplete due to late submissions.

[56] See Alsaden, "Baghdad's Arab Biennial," FN 53.

militant futurism of Al-Obaidi's painting reflected in the negative, an undercurrent to critics' disappointment in the work of the Palestinian delegation. Not only does this art fail to convey the vigor of the Palestinian struggle, *Integral* suggests, but it also fails to appear appropriately *new.*

FANON AT THE FIRST ARAB BIENNIAL, 1974[57]

The Department of Arts and National Culture of the Palestine Liberation Organization sent about fifty-seven artworks to the First Biennial of Arab Art in 1974. In a special edition of *Intégral* devoted to the exhibition, Moroccan painter Mohamed Chebaa reviewed these entries with contempt. Painting in the Palestinian context, Chebaa argued, should serve strictly documentary purposes, yet in Baghdad he was faced with a corpus of work that was burdened by nostalgia and fantasy. Why, he asked, was the majority of the Palestinian exhibition inspired by folklore? "To secure popular patrimony? To affirm the Palestinian character? To revive the traditions and morals of a Palestinian Palestine?"[58] Chebaa insisted that to fixate on these themes was to approach Palestine "like a tourist," to inevitably alienate oneself from the "profound reality" of Palestine even if one has "directly lived a certain Palestinian reality."[59] Chebaa ends his review with the assertion that Palestinian art should be "a rich and effective tool of the Revolution's propaganda" —a tool that the PLO's delegation had seemingly failed to sharpen.[60]

[57] An earlier version of this section will appear as an introduction to my translation of Chebaa and Maraini's *Intégral* texts in a forthcoming issue of *ARTMargins* (in press).

[58] Mohammed Chebaa, "Révolution palestinienne et peinture révolutionnaire." *Intégral* no. 9 (December, 1974): 41

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

As I have demonstrated, Chebaa's grievances came at a time when the guerilla tactics and charismatic leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization had captured international attention. "Palestine" had exceeded its geographical and cultural boundaries to become shorthand for anti-imperial struggle writ large, and the Palestinian cause had grown central to Third World solidarity movements. It seems odd, then, to see the art of the Palestinian delegation characterized as sentimental, superficial, and undedicated to the exigencies of propaganda, but Chebaa was not alone in his critique. Though Italian-Moroccan art critic Toni Maraini's overview of the exhibition was more generous in its assessment of the Palestinian contribution, it echoed many of Chebaa's concerns. Perturbed by the lack of written explanations, for example, Maraini argued that text should have been provided to inform the visitor "to what extent, or from what perspective, 'naive' landscapes and 'folkloric' scenes can be considered **combat art.**"[61]

That Maraini and Chebaa take issue with the search for "popular patrimony" in the "folkloric" and "naïve" seems strange, at first glance, given their history of association with the Casablanca School. The term denotes a literal place, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Casablanca, but is also used to refer to a cluster of artists and intellectuals in its orbit during the 1960s and 1970s. The ascent of well-known modernist Farid Belkahia to the position of director in 1962 ushered in a new era for the Casablanca School, which offered both Mohamed Chebaa and Toni Maraini positions as core faculty members. Chebaa taught calligraphy and later founded the institution's graphic arts department, and Maraini, who had only just finished her undergraduate degree, taught the history of art. Together with the artist Mohamed Melehi, the artists began a major project of pedagogical reform. Whereas previous arts education in Morocco, rooted in

[61] Toni Maraini, "Baghdad 1974: Première biennale arabe des arts plastiques: un compte-rendu." *Intégral* no. 9 (December, 1974): 11. Bolded emphasis in original.

European academicism, had been made in the image of the metropole by French colonial forces, the Casablanca School rebuilt its curriculum around Moroccan cultural patrimony, valorizing artisanal practices like pottery, jewelry, and textile arts, as well as traditional, workshop-based models of pedagogy.

While the Casablanca School championed the importance of folk traditions in artistic decolonization, its members did not do so uncritically. Indeed, as art historian Holiday Powers argues, Chebaa, Maraini, and their colleagues considered traditional Moroccan visual arts a springboard into the future, localizing international modernism and establishing an indigenous lineage of abstraction.[62] Though his curriculum foregrounded Moroccan cultural patrimony, Belkahia maintained that "experimentation must remain our principal concern."[63] Furthermore, many artists and intellectuals in the orbit of the Casablanca School also embraced a Fanonian critique of national culture. As critic Kenza Sefrioui notes, *The Wretched of the Earth* was both a major point of reference and an aesthetic influence for *Souffles,* a journal with which the faculty of the École des Beaux-Arts was closely associated.[64] Sefrioui argues that the journal's frequent engagement with the text and its author was more familiar than academic, however, and that articles often referenced Fanon's ideas in vague or general terms.[65] Quotations are rare and citations nonexistent; instead, authors liberally refer to "Fanonian frameworks" and "Fanon's

[62] See J. Holiday Powers, "Moroccan Modernism: The Casablanca School (1956-1978)." PhD. Dissertation, Cornell University, 2015.

[63] Farid Belkahia, response to "fiche et questionnaire," *Souffles* 7-8 (1967): 31.

[64] For more on the relationship between visual arts, cultural decolonization, and *Souffles*, see Clare Davies, "Decolonizing Culture: Third World, Moroccan, and Arab Art in Souffles/Anfas, 1966-1972," Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien 2. Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien 2015 (online).

[65] Kenza Sefrioui, "'Encore un qui a tout dit!': Le Groupe de Souffles, lecteur des 'Damnes de la Terre' de Frantz Fanon." Politique africaine no. 143 (October 2016): 73-91.

work," even mentioning Fanon in poetry.[66] Holiday Powers suggests that Fanon's influence was often indirect, which perhaps accounts for this vagueness.[67] Nevertheless, the theory of cultural decolonization Fanon puts forth in *The Wretched of the Earth* appears in various states of clarity throughout the journal.

Sketched in the broad terms of the *Souffles* authors, Fanon's theory has three steps. In the first, the "colonized intellectual proves his assimilation into the culture of the occupier," validating his cultural worth according to racist, Eurocentric norms. [68] In the second, he reclaims those customs and idioms deemed barbaric by the colonizer, defiantly asserting the intrinsic value of pre-colonial cultural forms. This impulse, though understandable and well-intentioned, inevitably results in a pastiche of backwards-looking folklore that borrows from the very colonial language it seeks to condemn. "In the visual arts," Fanon notes, "the colonized creator who wants at all costs to create national art confines himself to the reproduction of stereotypical details," limited by his insistence on returning to a past that is no longer relevant.[69] Finally, the colonized intellectual realizes his duty is not to lose himself among his people but to rally them to action, at which point he reaches the peak of anticolonial cultural evolution: the "combat stage." This is a future-oriented, radically new period of culture, based in immediate social realities rather than romanticized recollections of the past.

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[66] Examples of such references to Fanon in *Souffles* can be found in Abdellatif Laâbi, "Réalités et dilemmes de la culture nationale (I)," (no 4, 1966); Mario de Andrade, "Culture et lutte armée (no 9, 1968); René Depestre, "Les fondements socioculturels de notre identité," (no. 16-17, 1970). Sefrioui points to references to Fanon in poems by Abdelaziz Mansouri ("Le cauchemar occidental," *Souffles* 10-11) and Bernard Jakobiak ("Camus le colonisateur sublimé," *Souffles* 12).

[67] Holiday Powers, "Articulating the National and Transnational: Exhibition Histories of the Casablanca School." *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* no. 42-43 (November 2018): 136-153.

[68] Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (1961; reis. Paris: Éditions La Découverte & Syros, 2002), 209.

[69] Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, 213.

The language used by Chebaa and Maraini in their discussion of the Palestinian pavilion resonates strongly with this schema. Indeed, Fanon's three-part cultural model is interpolated, implicitly or explicitly, throughout contemporaneous arts discourse in North Africa, with the qualities of the second stage drawing particular ire. In his report on the Pan-African Cultural Festival, Nathan Hare observes with some skepticism that "Algerian leaders today seem rather concerned with the pitfalls of cultural attachment on the part of oppressed peoples," lambasting the "ultra-devotion" of many Black intellectuals to jazz, Black art and other "folkloric" forms. "This was conspicuously a view shared by Libyans and other Arabic and 'white African' nations," he notes.[70] As Olivia Harrison points out, the intellectual cadre that formed around *Souffles* and its editor, writer and activist Abdellatif Laâbi, not only "advocated in distinctly Fanonian terms for a radical rethinking of… cultural combat" but also situated Palestine at its center.[71] The Palestinian Revolution, according to an appeal to Maghrebi writers published in *Souffles* 15, "evidences the need that we have always professed to reexamine the ossified contents and forms of our traditional culture and the mystifying processes of bourgeois Western culture that have, to this day, constituted the major intellectual and psychic obstacles in the Maghreb."[72]

If an inclination towards folk idioms hindered the development of a truly revolutionary art, what factors enabled it? Clues nestle amidst Chebaa's passionate disavowals of modern Palestinian art, particularly in his uniquely positive mention of Ismail Shammout's *The Green Hand* **(**Figure 2.16**)**. This painting, the critic argues, differs from much of Shammout's work

[70] Hare 4.

[71] Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb*, 35.

[72] Benjelloun et al, "Appel aux écrivains maghrébins," 100.

insofar as it does not depict "mere tears and lamentations, nor 'official' themes," but instead constitutes "a painting in which one sees the true dignity of the Palestinian militant."[73] The canvas depicts the head of a fedayee, amber eyes framed by a white *kufiyya,* strong fist holding his rifle close to his face. Climbing the rifle is a lush green vine. Above the fighter's right eye emerges the head and shoulders of another man. His raised arm disappears into the vines that climb the gun, morphing naturally into snaking leaves, while his opposite shoulder becomes the fighter's brow. The line of the fighter's nose –which is also, one imagines, the arm of the smaller figure– ends abruptly at a strong horizontal line connecting the vine to another body. This figure appears to be a girl, arms extended in a T-shape evocative of a crucifix. Like the man who emerges from the fighter's brow, her face is an expressionless sketch, the barest suggestions of eyes, nose, and mouth only just visible. Below her outstretched arm are two children, one of whom appears to be shackled and missing an eye, and the body of a martyr, draped conspicuously like Jesus Christ in many depictions of the pietà. Two women frame her diagonally, one at her feet and the other over her shoulder, wearing dark *thiāb* embroidered in traditional red patterns. Their white veils morph into other shapes; the upper woman's becomes the freedom fighter's *kufiyya,* while the lower woman's evokes a dove of peace.

As in *Three Tales* (1970, Figure 2.10), the composition's repetitive use of archlike forms that overlap and nest within each other gives the canvas an eerie, uneven depth, which here adds an aura of surreal sobriety to the chaotic composition. Like many of the posters Shammout designed for the PLO, the fluidity between bodies, plants, animals, weapons, and fabric connotes the unity of the Palestinian people and their land in their quest for liberation. The painting is formally dynamic in comparison to most of Shammout's other work, which conveys its messages

[73] Chebaa 41

primarily though narrative images in a social realist mode, but it is, ultimately, a painting of a fedayee. One can hardly imagine themes more "official" in the context of the PLO than armed struggle and martyrdom, yet even with its allusions to rural craftsmanship the painting strikes Chebaa as more indicative of Palestinian "reality" than anything else on display. Like the cover Chebaa himself designed for *Souffles'* special edition on Palestine (1969, Figure 2.17), its appeal as revolutionary art seems to come from its literal militancy, its ability to convey the "true dignity" of the freedom fighter.

Maraini's assessment reveals a similar inclination. Though she does not give explicit examples of the "combat art" she seeks, Maraini shows her hand in highlighting the omission of political posters from the exhibition, particularly those pertaining to Palestine. She was surprised that there was not "at least one room dedicated to poster art… not least because it represents a first-rate solution to the ideological problem of **communication through images** (immediate, intelligible, and effective messaging)."[74] A cursory look at the "immediate, intelligible, and effective" imagery of contemporary Palestinian posters—with the understanding that, for Chebaa and Maraini, the goal was to produce "combat art"—yields a visual field dominated by straightforward symbols of armed struggle, especially images of militants brandishing Kalashnikovs (see Figure 2.18 -Figure 2.20). Many of these posters were designed by the same artists whose work the critics found lackluster in Baghdad and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a number of the works exhibited in the Biennial employed the same militaristic iconography.

Two oil paintings by painter Tamam Al Akhal that appeared at the Biennial—one of which is reproduced in the *Intégral* special issue— constitute a particularly salient example. Entitled *The Camp no. 1* and *The Camp No. 2,* (1974, Figure 2.21-Figure 2.22) each of the oil

[74] Maraini 8. Bolded emphasis in original.

paintings stretches across a long horizontal canvas in an angular, irregular shape vaguely reminiscent of a spider's web. In the foreground, masked fedayeen keep vigilant watch, shoulders tensed, each wrapped in a *kufiyya* and ammunition belts. Behind them are people of indeterminate gender, their veils indicating that they are *muhajibāt*, militants, or both, flanked by women in white '*abāyāt*. The figures meld into a field of fractured shapes and colors that, however abstracted, is plainly evocative of a refugee camp. In Al Akhal's paintings, as in *The Green Hand*, the bodies and clothing of people blend seamlessly into cloth tents, narrow alleyways, utilitarian housing structures, panels of corrugated metal, and, of course, the iconic rifles of the Palestinian freedom fighter.

Certainly, these images cannot be called didactic in any direct sense, nor do they communicate with the ease and efficiency of a political poster. It is nevertheless curious that Al Akhal's work did not garner any positive attention from Chebaa—who ignores it entirely despite its engagement with precisely the sort of "Palestinian reality" that interested him, in a visual language not dissimilar to Shammout's *The Green Hand*— and that Maraini chooses to categorize it as an instance of "serene realism." Al Akhal's "fine, well-balanced paintings," Maraini notes, exemplify this stylistic trend alongside the "naive" landscapes of Ibrahim Ghannam (Figure 2.23), Jumana Husseini's "hieratic statuettes and dream-landscapes" (Figure 2.24), and Laila Shawa's "meticulous, almost embroidered" images of knights and cityscapes (Figure 2.25). According to the critic, all of these works share "a tendency towards… a poetic rendering of the visual," as opposed to the "tormented realism" exemplified by the work of their counterparts Mustafa Hallaj and Ismail Shammout.

What might have prompted someone, especially someone so invested in the idea of "combat art," to compare the sober militarism of Al Akhal's canvases to Ghannam's soft, bucolic

scenes of peasants harvesting wheat? The gendered implications of the comment begin with the artist—Maraini identifies three out of four exhibiting female artists as painters of "serene realism," compared to one of seventeen men—but extend to the stylistic and symbolic vocabularies Maraini had likely grown used to seeing from painters in the orbit of the PLO. Indeed, the language through which Chebaa and Maraini engaged with the work of Al Akhal and her colleagues was not grounded in visual analysis so much as entangled in the feminized, familial terms through which Palestine took shape on many Palestinian canvases. These terms, however widespread in the works of Shammout, Ghannam, Muzayen and others, were at odds with the brazenly masculine image of the fedayee that dominated dreams of Palestine elsewhere in the Global South. Nevertheless, the reception of feminine, "folkloric" images as weak, apolitical, or otherwise unsuited to the needs of the revolution should be evaluated in relationship to conflicting experiences of colonialism. A brief comparison between Morocco and Palestine sheds light on the extent to which the "art of combat" is contingent on its battlefield.

The Casablanca School colleagues came from a context that did not always map easily onto Fanon's model of cultural decolonization.[75] Nevertheless, in the wake of colonial rule, Moroccans reclaimed traditions and idioms that had been subjugated, belittled, and regulated by the all-encompassing reach of French bureaucracy.[76] Indigenous visual traditions played a major role in newly independent Morocco, where they enacted a reclamation of cultural heritage

[75] In "Réalités et dilemmes de la culture nationale (I)," Abdellatif Laâbi argues that Fanon's tripartite vision is more applicable to African than Arab contexts because of its emphasis on rediscovering precolonial culture and demonstrating it to the colonizer. Because traditional education persisted, to some degree, in Morocco despite colonial meddling, "the effort to rediscover a culture proper to the colonized does not have equal status in [the Arab world and] Black Africa. Moroccan and Arab culture did not require such exhibitionism in order to assert its presence. It existed" (7).

[76] For more on the development of Moroccan visual culture under French rule, see Hamid Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912-1956.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

alongside that of the Moroccan state. In Palestine, though, the "folkloric" elements that Chebaa and Maraini critique were not yet free for this kind of celebratory repossession. In fact, they were directly entangled in a vicious discursive web around legitimacy, indigeneity, and imperialism, central to the Palestinian struggle against erasure in ways both rhetorical and concrete. The Fanonian model assumes a colonizer who relates to indigenous culture with primitivizing disdain, often through "civilizing" reformation efforts. The Israeli relationship to traditional Palestinian idioms is far more complicated, for while elements of the Zionist project resonate with classical European colonialism, its approach to Palestinian *turāth* does not. If, for Maraini and Chebaa, traditional folkloric idioms were the antithesis of "combat art," for Palestinians they were weapons in a battle that began with the entrenchment of Zionism in Palestine during the early 20th century.

Turāth and Palestinian Resistance: What's Old is Ours Again

In the era of the Biennial, Palestinian artists responded to a history of cultural conquest that began nearly seventy years earlier with the establishment of Bezalel Academy. Founded by European Zionists in 1906, the first art school in historic Palestine set out to foster the development of a national Jewish style in the fine, decorative, and applied arts. Boris Schatz, the Lithuanian sculptor who established the school, bemoaned the inability of such a style to develop in diaspora, where the Jewish artist was forced to "gradually estrange himself from his people, without even realizing it himself."[77] Only "under the blueness of the Palestinian sky," Schatz asserted, could Bezalel's students "bring forth a new spirit and show the whole world that the

[77] Boris Schatz, *Bezalel: Programm und Zweck,* [*Bezalel: Program and Objectives*]. (Jerusalem: Unknown press, 1906): 22.

Jewish people, too, are possessed of a national taste and a Hebrew imagination."[78] On a practical level, the goal of developing a distinctively Jewish visual language for the ascendant nation was accomplished by combining stylistic elements of contemporary European art movements, notably Jungendstil, with those appropriated from traditional Palestinian handicrafts.[79] Beginning with the establishment of Bezalel, Zionists used local folk idioms to connect themselves to their environment, deploying them to bolster the myth of Israel as a timeless, inalienable Jewish homeland and to obscure the realities of colonialism. The excavation and display of archaeological artifacts were also used to connect Zionists to their new home; the recovery of relics purportedly linked to a Hebrew past went hand in hand with the destruction of Palestinian antiquities in the campaign to Judaize the Holy Land.[80]

As is evidenced by the histories of Bezalel Academy and Zionist archaeology, the fledgling Israeli state leaned heavily on visual culture to corroborate its claims to the land. The extent to which this was perceived as both offensive and threatening is illustrated by *Palestinian National Art*, a book published by the PLO's Department of Arts and National Culture in 1980. Although it was written by Ismail Shammout, who is perhaps the best-known Palestinian easel painter of his generation, the book contains no trace of objects traditionally categorized as "art" by Western criteria. In lieu of paintings and sculptures, embroidery, glasswork, baskets, and ceramics fill its pages. The didactic and polemical tone that dominates Shammout's canvases is wholly absent from the images displayed here, but the text that accompanies them is direct in its

[78] Schatz 22

[79] For more on the development of a "national style" in Bezalel's early days, see Nurit Shilo Cohen, "The 'Hebrew Style' of Bezalel, 1906-1929," in *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, v. 20 (1994).

[80] For more on the relationship between antiquities and imperialism in Israel/Palestine, see Nadia Abu el-Haj, *Facts On the Ground*: *Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

condemnation of Israel and assertion of the Palestinians' right to their cultural patrimony. Following a very brief explanation of the Palestinians as a national entity, it laments that "the Zionist-imperialist conspiracy has not confined itself to expropriating the land, displacing most of its people and obliterating its villages," but "has consistently endeavored to steal the Palestinian national heritage and to claim possession of that heritage or efface it altogether because it is an integral part of the Palestinian cultural struggle."[81]

What follows is a sketch of Palestinian national art that includes only "handicrafts… music, songs and folk dancing."[82] As Shammout well knew, "fine arts" were also important and influential in Palestinian national culture, but here he chose to focus only on the forms of creative production under threat of Zionist appropriation. The bilingual (English-Arabic) book is effectively a glossary of different kinds of crafts and performances, each of which is explained with regards to its form, function, and regional variations. These descriptions give way to examples of Israeli abuse, notably the use of a *thawb* as an El Al Airlines stewardess uniform and as an example of "traditional Israeli dress" for foreign diplomats (Figure 2.26). That the *thawb* should serve as a locus of outrage is unsurprising, as is the decision to adorn the cover of *Palestinian National Art* with its signature embroidered chest piece (Figure 2.27). The stakes of cultural appropriation are perhaps most visible around *tatrīz,* which remains a source of controversy to this day.

The political significance of *tatrīz* does not derive from any one source, but rather from the confluence of events both catastrophic and mundane that established the state of Israel. The story of Majdal, the small city referenced in Shammout's 1970 painting, and its neighboring

[81] Ismail Shammout, *Palestinian National Art*. (Beirut: Palestinian Liberation Organization Dept. of Information and Culture, c.1980): 7

[82] Ibid.

town is one among many that might illustrate this point. In October 1948, Israeli forces completed the depopulation of Bir Sabi'a (Beersheba), forcibly relocating the remainder of its 3,000 Palestinian residents to refugee camps in Gaza. Days later, as Israelis began to settle into the recently vacated homes of Bir Sabi'a, the troops moved on to Majdal (now Ashkelon). Due to a confluence of factors, including the resettlement of other displaced Palestinians, about 2500 Palestinians remained in Majdal despite an order to evict the city's entire Arab population. They lived in a state-sponsored ghetto at the outskirts of the city, separated from their new Jewish neighbors by a barbed wire fence. Over the summer of 1950, they too were transferred to camps in Gaza.[83] Moshe Dayan oversaw the operation.

Majdal and Bir Sabi'a were gone, eulogized through the objects that their scattered former residents had taken as they left. As Shammout's *Flower from Majdal* attests, *thiāb* were among the most precious of such objects. Not only were they laboriously produced, often by the women who wore them, and worn on such major occasions as weddings, but their colors and patterns testified directly to the places they came from. It was precisely this indigeneity that Moshe Dayan's wife, Ruth, hoped to capitalize upon when she founded the design house Maskit in 1954. Seeking to create explicitly Israeli aesthetics while providing jobs for new Jewish immigrants, the government-sponsored fashion brand began to produce clothing that bore stunning similarities to Palestinian *thiāb,* rising to fame alongside contemporaries like Rikma for garments that appropriated *tatrīz* and traditional fabrics (see Figure 2.28**,** Figure 2.29). In 1966, Miss Israel won "best native costume" at the Miss Universe pageant in an outfit borrowing

[83] Using previously unpublished photographs culled from Israeli state archives, Ariella Azoulay's *From Palestine to Israel* (Pluto Press, 2009) documents the depopulation of Majdal and Bir Sabi'a, among many other atrocities committed between 1947 and 1950. See also Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains* (IPS, 1992) and Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).

heavily from the designs of Bir Sabi'a.[84] The contestant, Aviva Israeli, had been born Vivian Del Bianco in Italy.[85]

The embroidered dress of an Italian-born pageant queen is inextricable from a history of violent dispossession. The symbiosis between claims to native status and territorial expansion at the heart of the Zionist project requires a staggeringly *total* mode of conquest, and one in which culture plays a pivotal role. The idea that the Jewish people are the land's natural occupants justifies the seizure of territory, but the seizure of territory alone does not prove native status. The erasure of Palestine cannot stop at the expulsion of its people nor at the destruction of its physical infrastructure but must also entail an absorption of Palestinian cultural elements that suggest indigeneity. *Tatrīz*, embedded as it is in regional craft practices, is one such element. By branding it as traditionally Israeli, the state normalizes its presence in the Middle East, obscuring Zionism's colonial character and European origins.

The proliferation of *tatrīz* in Palestinian art, perhaps most apparent in the meticulous work of Abdel Rahman Al-Muzayen (Figure 2.30) and the Jersualem-based artist Sliman Mansour (Figure 2.31), must be understood in this context. Contrary to the interpretation of Fanon's model that dominates the critiques of Chebaa, Maraini, and Boullata, embroidery and other folk idioms in Palestinian art were not suspended in a state of saccharine nostalgia or teenage rebellion against colonial norms. Indeed, the perceived potency of Palestinian folk idioms in the 1970s lay at least as much in their challenge to Israeli claims to native status as it

[84] Reem Farah, "Heritage is to Art as the Medium is to the Message: The Responsibility to Palestinian Tatreez," *Third Text Online*, 28 January 2021. www.thirdtext.org/farah- tatreez1

[85] Julie Grimmeisen, *Pionierinnen und Schönheitskönigginnen: Frauenvorbilder in Israel 1948-1967* [*Pioneers and Beauty Queens: Female Role Models in Israel, 1948-1967*] (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017): 192.

did in their ability to unite a people around a shared heritage. In 1975, Mustafa Hallaj observed to critic and poet Izzeddine al-Munasira that

> the role of the Palestinian artist, who carries his ancient cultural heritage [*turāth*] within him […] is inseparable from armed struggle. In the circumstances of self-denial to which the Palestinians are exposed –through the replacement of various institutions on their land, their expulsion, and the suffocation of their historical heritage, memory, presence, and future– this past awakens in that same Palestinian artist, in every fiber of his being and every form of his work.[86]

Central to Fanon's theory and Chebaa's critique is the belief that the language of the past is irrelevant to contemporary reality. To excavate nostalgic, pre-colonial forms and drag them into the present is, Fanon argues, to ignore the ways in which colonialism has irrevocably transformed a colonized society, thus failing to respond to its most urgent needs. In the case of Palestine/Israel, however, the artist confronts a present whose irrevocable transformation has been perpetrated, in part, by those very same nostalgic forms. In asserting a direct link between *turāth* and contemporary combat, Hallaj acknowledges the entanglement of cultural appropriation and physical violence that has forever altered Palestine. He argues that the emergence of the historical past in the work of Palestinian artists arises naturally in the "conditions of self-denial" to which they are exposed, in response to the suffocation not only of Palestinian memory but also of Palestinian futures. The path forward, Hallaj suggests, is obstructed by the historical amnesia imposed upon Palestine by its occupiers.

[86] Quoted in Izzeddine al-Munasira, "Mustafa al-Hallaj (ra'id fann al-nahet w fann al-grafīk): hafār al-hiyā w al-jedhūr w al-ihtirāq w fatna al-hūwās al-khamis," ["Mustafa Hallaj (Pioneer in Sculpture and Graphic Arts): Engraver of Life, Roots, Fire, and Enchantment of the Five Senses"]. *Mawsū'at al-fann al-tashkīlī al-Filasṭīnī fī al-qarn al-'ishrīn : qirā'āt tawthīqīyah tārīkhīyah naqdīyah*. Amman: Majdalāwī lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī, 2003: 161.

CONCLUSION

Twentieth century cultural movements from Lebanese Christian Phoenicianism to Mussolini's *romanità* instrumentalized folk culture in the service of nationalism, drawing strength from the ancient past through music, handicrafts, and related popular forms. Israel, too, turned to these forms to realize its biblical origin myth, its investment in which, as I demonstrate in Chapter 1, has had devastating consequences for Palestinians since the early days of Zionism. The use of folk idioms in Palestinian modern art responds to a long history of cultural appropriation that itself is inextricable from the violence of displacement. It must thus be understood as *combative* in addition to constructive, as much a weapon as a token of national pride. As the primary bearers of folkloric knowledge and producers of handicrafts like *tatrīz*, Palestinian women are intrinsically bound up with this particular weapon.

The *tatrīz*-covered fellaha, then, is a quieter female analogue of the lionized fedayee in the art of the Palestinian Revolution. Where the fedayee crosses borders, symbolically reclaiming territory through his clandestine raids, the fellaha is a time-traveler, laying claim to historical memory through her mastery of heritage craft. If the male freedom fighter's gun is a warning to those who would harm his body, the rural woman's *thawb* is a promise to remain, despite everything, stubbornly Palestinian, to erode the cultural narratives that legitimize the colonial state. Both of these figures arose in response to the exigencies of the present, but only one caught the eye of the whole Global South. The figure of the fedayee was an action-hero answer to the towering villain of imperialism, cheered on by audiences in every corner of the globe where an empire had left its dark footprint. The fellaha, on the other hand, was an anachronism outside of Palestine.

Ultimately, these gendered modes of combat art are bound by the limitations they place on aspiration. The appeal of the fedayee as a symbol of the decolonized future relates to the radical presentism of a person who does not fear death. Having severed ties with an impotent past and surrendered his future to fate, he is defined by the immediate action of his fight for liberation. His promise remains a promise, neither broken nor fulfilled, and he thus embodies a dream-state of infinite speculation. The fellaha, by contrast, is tethered to time and place. She is an anchor to comforting memories and a bridge to the state to come, armed only with a weapon that loses its power when cut from its context. Bound by the limits of surrogacy, she assuages the revolutionary's latent fear of change in heralding a future that belongs to her sons.

Chapter 3: The *Barzākh* of Beirut

In a 1965 portrait, Croatian-Lebanese painter Cici Sursock[1] depicts Juliana Seraphim as a modern-day Circe (Figure 3.1). Ensconced in a palette of ashy neutrals, the Palestinian-born artist appears serene but vigilant, a stately figure whose dark, billowing robes underscore the golden shine of the amulet on her chest. Atop her elegant, Mannerist neck, her face is framed by a severe modern coiffe that accentuates the sharpness of her cheekbones, her brows slanting steeply below a creaseless forehead. Her gaze meets the viewer's; despite the warmth of her eye color relative to the surrounding palette, there is nothing inviting about it. Her arms are bent and crossed at the wrist as though cradling a baby, but between them is only the portrait's darkest shadow. The painting exudes an unsettling grace, presenting Seraphim with a sinister touch of the supernatural.

Sursock's portrait shows a woman who, in her early thirties, had firmly established herself as both an artist and a personality among Beirut's élite. While her peers in the camps were rallying around the *inṭilāqa*, Seraphim was styling herself as a kind of eccentric sorceress-about-town, adopting the flowing caftans, "gargantuan" laugh, and "Hollywood-star cigarette holder" for which she would be remembered.[2] "She captivated people," notes critic Joseph

[1] Justina "Cici" Tommaseo Sursock (1923-2015) was born and raised in Split, Croatia (then Yugoslavia) before the Second World War instigated her move to Cairo in 1944. In Cairo, she met and married Habib Sursock, a member of the wealthy Lebanese Christian family whose villa and collections later became the basis of Beirut's Sursock Museum.

[2] Edgar Davidian, "Disparition Juliana Séraphim, une grande dame de la peinture Libanaise" ["Juliana Seraphim, Grande Dame of Lebanese Painting, Passes Away"], *L'Orient-Le Jour* 24 May 2005. https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/502793/DisparitionJuliana_Seraphim%252C_une_grande_damede_la_peinture_libanaise%2528photos%2529.html

Tarrab. "She dressed in a very particular style, she was alluring in the way of a strong, independent woman. People were kind of afraid of her. She didn't realize that the way she presented herself made people mistrust her." According to Tarrab, Seraphim's tenacious independence alienated her from her conservative Christian family and precluded the possibility of marriage, lending credence to her reputation as a *femme fatale* and sparking widespread speculations of promiscuity. "I don't know to what extent [these speculations] are true," he concedes. "It was a myth to which I certainly contributed. Facts get so exaggerated in the rumor mills of artistic circles and Lebanese society." Tarrab articulates Seraphim's notoriety with neither schadenfreude nor disdain, expressing remorse about his small role in building the artist's public persona. Indeed, one is struck by the solemnity with which he recounts her life. "She was an unhappy woman," he repeats several times. "Her funeral was poorly attended." [3]

Tarrab's remarks are not merely idle gossip, at least not in their broader context. Instead, they incite what Sara Ahmed might call a feminist sensation,[4] a persistent, gut-level sense of unease that eventually reveals a larger, gendered pattern. In conversations with artists, curators, gallerists and librarians in Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon, the subject of Juliana Seraphim elicits sighs, shrugs, and dismissive allusions to a certain lack of substance. Over and over again, one encounters the same facts—"she never married" foremost among them—proffered as corroborating evidence of some unnamed wrong. Tarrab's account of Seraphim's life arranges the offhand comments like instruments in an orchestra, unnerving in the fullness of their harmony. The chorus gives shape to the fable of a fairy queen, blunt and predictable as any other

[3] Joseph Tarrab, former arts writer for Beirut's premier francophone newspaper, *L'Orient-Le Jour,* in conversation with the author, Jounieh, December 6th, 2018. Translation from French.

[4] See Chapter 1, "Feminism is Sensational," in Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017).

children's story: Juliana was a beautiful, vain creature who lived up to her improbable surname, every bit as frivolous and ethereal as her luridly whimsical paintings. Unmarried and untethered to allegiances of kinship or nationality, she possessed an independence that engendered both attraction and contempt. She died alone and unhappy. How else could the tale of a selfish woman possibly hope to end?

The mythology of Juliana Seraphim (1934-2005) is key to understanding her work, its reception, and the broader fractures between Palestinian artists in a city at the precipice of civil war. The affective compound of wary, mystified, covetous fascination that followed her like a shadow was specific and culturally situated, as meaningful as it was intangible. Attending to it reveals that Seraphim was less a Circe than a Scylla, a creature with the upper body of a woman and the thrashing tail of a sea serpent, ringed at the waist with the snapping jaws of dogs. In likening the artist to a monster, I mean only to signal her cultural position as a "harbinger of category crisis," analogous to the creature "whose externally incoherent body" is "full of rebuke to traditional methods of organizing knowledge and human experience."[5]Her power—to enchant as well as to frighten—derived from her occupation of multiple opposing subjectivities. In refusing to perform either nationality or womanhood within acceptable cultural boundaries, Seraphim made space for her own experience of exile, expressed through artwork whose eerie transmutations "gleefully violate" the "too-precise laws of nature" in a way that is itself visibly monstrous.[6]

This chapter begins with the leading model for understanding the continued development of modern Palestinian art in Beirut, posited by the late Kamal Boullata over the course of his

[5] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses) in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture,* ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 6-7.

[6] Cohen, "Monster Culture," 7.

career as a critic, artist, and historian. This model separates artists into two categories, the distinction between which can ultimately be distilled into the opposition of (empty) cosmopolitanism and (meaningful) political engagement. These groups, which Boullata calls "Ras Beirut" and "the camp artists" based on their respective centers of activity, are constituted more by geography, circulation, and systems of patronage than by questions of form or content. Boullata aligns Seraphim with the "Ras Beirut" camp, but like any good monster, she resists his criteria of inclusion and unearths their buried implications. Indeed, a conversation between Boullata's model and Seraphim's life is mutually elucidating, illustrating the extent to which the city of Beirut shaped the conditions of Palestinian artmaking in the mid-twentieth century.

Examining Seraphim as a historiographical irritant opens onto the larger question of her cultural liminality as a Palestinian Christian in Lebanon. Simultaneously illegible within the cultural matrices of Palestinian nationalism and Lebanese sectarianism, Seraphim inhabited her own *barzākh,* an interstitial intersection of incommensurate subjectivities that she channeled into both her artwork and her outlandish persona. In this context, I consider how her experience of exile takes shape as a double consciousness in the fantastical, hybrid forms of her canvases. Through a close read of *Eye on the City* (1980), I argue that the combination of this exilic sensibility with the monstrous mediation of memory yields a different kind of dream-state, divorced from nationalism and indicative of experiences marginalized in the dominant discourse of the Palestinian Revolution.

I then examine the relationship between the artist's career-spanning fixation with the grotesque and the centrality of 'the feminine' to her oneiric aesthetic. Some saw Seraphim's pastel palettes and costumed women as puerile and saccharine, others lauded the artist's work for its delightful flights of fancy, and many in both camps noted the nightmarish quality at the edges

of her female figures. Most intriguing, however, is a transgressive quality lost in the seemingly automatic relegation of Seraphim's work to the realm of "fantasy." Through a visual vocabulary of hyperfemininity, Seraphim mobilizes established tropes of normative womanhood in order to unsettle them, articulating a fundamentally nonreproductive female sexuality that adds further dimension to her radical ambiguity. Finally, I place this work in conversation with a drawing by Palestinian artist Samira Badran (b. 1954), arguing that their resonance speaks not to an essential "Palestinianness" but to the feminized terms in which Palestine is imagined.

A Body Without a Soul

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Fanon's model of cultural decolonization shaped the perception of Palestinian art by Moroccan critics, arguing that the Martinican theorist's work was more applicable to the Moroccan context than to its Palestinian counterpart. The power of folklore in Palestinian art derives from an immediate, continuous act of erasure, making its idioms combative in ways that their equivalents in other decolonizing societies are not. That many of the nationalist artists working in Beirut's refugee camps seized on this potential, however, is not indicative of its monolithic endorsement. Indeed, Palestinian artist and critic Kamal Boullata, who in 1970 had explicitly evoked Fanon's second category as applicable to most contemporary Arab art,[7] remarked a year later that

> Much of the Palestinian art you see is simply traditional art leeching off the revolution; it belongs ultimately to the Old World because it has only traditional visions to offer. It is a superficial art rather than a transformative, revolutionary artistic activity that encompasses both art and society. Most of the Palestinian artworks we have seen so far

[7] Kamal Boullata, "Towards a Revolutionary Arab Art," in *There Where You Are Not: Selected Writings* (Munich: Hirmer, 2019), 156. Originally published by Fatah's information office in Fatah bulletin 2 no. 5 (English version), 14 March 1970.

> profess an art of 'return' to Palestine. For us to call this revolutionary art is contradictory, because return is a retrograde motion, whereas revolution propels us forward.[8]

Following Fanon, Boullata sees a return to (a bygone) Palestine as fundamentally antithetical to the forward motion of political revolution. He, too, disparaged the preponderance of folk-art motifs in Palestinian art, articulated as they were "with a feminine concern for decorative purposes,"[9] and called for artists to "blast away" the aesthetic standards of the bourgeoisie.[10] His comments indicate a moment during which many of the people who looked to Palestine as the vanguard of anticolonialism were also dissatisfied with the paintings that so often represented it, finding images of rural women and placid landscapes out of sync with its potential for "cultural combat."

Though Boullata, Chebaa, and Maraini shared a belief in Fanon's "combat art," Boullata departed from his Moroccan colleagues in his vision of what that art might look like. Celebrating "radical changes" in Palestinian art since the 1967 *naksa*, Boullata clarifies that "we do not mean painting a commando instead of a refugee like Ismail Shammout."[11] Indeed, the meaningful shift Boullata identifies in the work of his peers lies in the fact that

> the Arab artist, and especially the Palestinian artist in exile, has had to reevaluate his very place in society. Means of expression took on a new purpose and their languages were exchanged. Some poets exchanged their typewriters for machine guns; others abandoned poetry to write novels and those who formerly wrote love poems started writing about social and political struggle. The experimental movie-maker became a mere photographer of events for documentary purposes. A professional painter became a graphic artist, an illustrator, or a social worker. The painter who used to be seen through the window of his studio was no more seen there because he descended to the street. Posters hang everywhere, but no one knows their creators. Verses of poetry appear on posters but the

[8] Kamal Boullata, "Art in the Time of the Palestinian Revolution" in *There Where You Are Not*, 172. Originally published 1971.

[9] Boullata, "Towards a Revolutionary Arab Art," 162.

[10] Boullata, "Art in the Time of the Palestinian Revolution," 172.

[11] Boullata, "Towards a Revolutionary Arab Art," 167-168. "We" here is rhetorical and is not in reference to a specific group of people.

> name of the poet remains anonymous. The paintings that used to hang in the galleries of Beirut are reduced now to the size of a greeting card or a poster to be sold by the hundreds for the benefit of those who suffered through the war. […] The galleries of Beirut are becoming a body without a soul for the soul was set free in the streets and in the camps.[12]

Beyond expressing his skepticism regarding Ismail Shammout's recent embrace of the *fedayee*, Boullata's only direct engagement with subject matter is his passing mention of poetry eschewing love for political issues. Here, as Iftikhar Dadi has argued in the context of Muslim South Asian modern art, "the social and the historical are usually enacted…in new patronage and addressee relationships, rather than depicted as theme or content."[13] The true revolutionary, Boullata insists, has forsaken the elite art of painting to reach the people through posters, abandoning the rarified spaces of art exhibitions to showcase his work in the street. His goal is not to live lavishly off the sale of his paintings to wealthy art collectors, but to turn his work into mass-produced, accessible graphic art whose sale will benefit those truly in need.

In this stirring 1970 essay, entitled "Toward a Revolutionary Arab Art," we see Boullata begin to draw lines of demarcation. Revolutionary art exists "in the street and in the camps," leaving Beirut's empty galleries to become "a body without a soul." Reading Boullata's words, one imagines artists ripping their works from the clean white walls of trendy spaces in Achrafieh or Ras Beirut, streaming in droves from the double doors of the Sursock Museum to deliver their art to the cause. Such a vision, however heartening, ignores the fact that few Palestinian artists ever made it through those doors in the first place. Entwined in the sectarian politics that paved Lebanon's path towards civil war, Palestinian artists encountered numerous obstacles to

[12] Boullata, "Towards a Revolutionary Arab Art," 168.

[13] Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 18.

participation in Beirut's cosmopolitan art world. These obstacles were unevenly distributed between Christian and Muslim Palestinians, the latter of whom disproportionately occupied the UNRWA camps,[14] due largely to the efforts of the Lebanese Christian ruling class to maintain its wavering command.

Lebanon's parliamentary government is based on a confessional system, with representation for each officially recognized religion—Christianity and Islam[15]—determined by population. By the time Palestinians began arriving en masse, it was well known that the Christian claim to majority had slipped since the controversial 1932 census on which the allocation of power was based. In order to give its outsized influence the thinnest veneer of legitimacy, the Maronite Catholic executive branch needed to shift the country's demographics. While Muslim Palestinian refugees are, to this day, barred from obtaining Lebanese citizenship, President Camille Chamoun began quietly awarding it to Palestinian Christians during the 1950s, hoping to tip the scales in his party's favor.[16] Non-citizen Palestinians face enormous disadvantages, barred from a host of activities including owning property, working without permits that are difficult to obtain, entering a long list of desirable professions, and enrolling in Lebanese schools. Christian Palestinians—especially those of the middle and upper classes—were thus able to rebuild their lives in Lebanon on a scale that was effectively impossible for their Muslim counterparts.

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[14] For more on religious demographics and dynamics in Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps, see Julie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

[15] The Lebanese government classifies its significant Druze population as a sect of Islam for the purposes of political representation, although the Druze do not self-identify as Muslims, and Muslims do not consider the Druze members of their faith.

[16] Ingrid Jaradat Gassner, ed. *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2008-2009*. (Bethlehem: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, 2009), 112, 139.

In keeping with overall religious demographics, the vast majority of Palestinian artists in Lebanon during the 60s and 70s were Muslim. With the exception of a small number from wealthy, influential families, they lacked access to the opportunities for travel, education, exhibition, and general stability available to their Christian counterparts. The posters of the Palestinian Revolution lined Beirut's streets with the work of artists from a plethora of backgrounds, including foreign artists with impressive international reputations,[17] but especially where Palestinian creatives were concerned, there was no actual flow of work from the center to the periphery. Beirut's galleries remained full, its modern art museum still buzzing with visitors. As a Palestinian artist who frequented Beirut in this era, Kamal Boullata knew this. For him, the galleries of Beirut were emptied not by the disappearance of their contents but by the proliferation of meaning in the streets, rendered irrelevant by the non-engaged, purportedly apolitical art they continued to display and the capitalistic systems of exchange in which they were enmeshed.

In the following decades, Boullata continued to develop his views on art, politics, and commercialism in revolution-era Beirut. In a 1977 issue of *Mundus Artium*, Boullata refers disparagingly to Arab artists whose "products mirror every major current in the Western world today."[18] Beirut, he notes, is the regional "souk" of this kind of artwork.[19] Art historian Sarah Rogers rightly observes that this choice of wording, with its connotations of intercultural mercantilism, "substantiates an aesthetic characteristic through a perceived national one—

[17] See Zeina Maasri, *Cosmopolitan Radicalism: The Visual Politics of Beirut's Global Sixties,* Chapter 5, "Art Is in the 'Arab Street': The Palestinian Revolution and Printscapes of Solidarity." (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 163-210.

[18] Kamal Boullata, "Modern Arab Art: The Quest and The Ordeal," *Mundus Artium* 10, no. 1 (1977): 121.

[19] Here Boullata is writing in English, intentionally using the Arabic term "souk" rather than "marketplace."

cosmopolitanism—that is, in turn, construed as a liability in its risk of superficiality."[20] To this I would add that, especially in conversation with his previous writings on Palestinian art in Beirut, Boullata's phrasing explicitly paints the Lebanese capital as a haven for sell-outs, a marketplace in which colonized devotees of Western art can hawk their "products." Here, the means of circulation and display are problematized alongside the aesthetic "superficiality" of the work itself. Beirut, the "body without a soul," is defined by the commercialism and frivolity he attributes to galleries in "Towards a Revolutionary Arab Art."

Boullata's best-known English-language work, *Palestinian Art from 1850 to the Present,* features his most developed model for understanding Palestinian art in Beirut.[21] According to this influential formulation, Beirut is

> invisible in the works of the Palestinian artists who lived there for almost three consecutive decades… Seemingly oblivious to Lebanon's landscape…Beirut's Palestinian artists were haunted by the experiences of their displacement and the memory of a birthplace that was overnight rendered beyond reach. Thus, the inspiration of their art could not well from the immediacy of their own environment as much as from the artist's 're-membered' world. And though the seven visual artists selected for this study…came from different social classes and cultural and denominational backgrounds, all their work seems to reflect the 'putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.'[22]

His study divides these seven artists, united though they are by the shared ghost of exile, into two groups, each named after the area in which their activities were concentrated. In keeping with the conditions described earlier in this dissertation, he describes the "camp artists" as largely self-taught males from poor or working-class backgrounds, whereas "Ras Beirut"

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[20] Sarah Rogers, *Modern Art in Cold War Beirut* (London, New York: Routledge, 2021), 11-12.

[21] Chapter 2, "Artists Re-Member Palestine in Beirut," was published in virtually identical form in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 4 (Summer 2003), 22-38.

[22] Kamal Boullata, "Artists Re-Member Palestine in Beirut," in *Palestinian Art from 1850 to the Present* (London: Saqi, 2009), 123. Quotation from Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge 1994).

comprised artists of both genders from wealthier, usually Christian families, who had essentially integrated into the city's vibrant arts scene. The camp artists, exemplified in Boullata's text by Ismail Shammout, Ibrahim Ghannam, Naji al-Ali, and Mustafa Hallaj, generally produced figurative art that "reflects the explicitly narrative imagery popularized by the nationalist rhetoric of the time."[23] By contrast, the styles and subjects favored by Ras Beirut varied considerably, and its individual artists—Juliana Seraphim, Jumana Husseini, and Paul Guiragossian—traveled their own paths through the social circles of the city. The term does not denote a collective in any meaningful way, notes Boullata, but is rather a broader catchall to describe Palestinian artists in Beirut who did not work in the camps.

Per Boullata's admission, these are broad categories, and somewhat porous, as a handful of artists were able to successfully operate in both spheres.[24] In fact, many of Boullata's criteria for distinguishing the two groups from one another fall apart under scrutiny. Cursory comparison of Shammout's placid orange groves and Hallaj's violent dreamscapes calls claims of their aesthetic coherence into question. Distinctions between the privileges of the two groups are valid and significant to understanding their art, but Boullata's characterization of the camp artists as self-taught neglects the formal arts educations Hallaj and Shammout received in Cairo. Sarah Rogers argues that Boullata's model is a neutral means of understanding how modern art continued to develop outside of Palestine, with neither set of artists "considered to be superior,"[25] but patterns of qualitative judgment emerge even in his articulations of similarities between the

[23] Boullata, *Palestinian Art*, 125

[24] Two representative examples are Jumana al-Hussayni and Laila Shawa, women from wealthy, politically influential Muslim families. As members of "Old Guard," elite Palestinian families as well as of the dominant Palestinian religious group, they had sufficient social currency to engage with the camp artists, but their wealth and educations enabled them to exhibit their work in Beirut's galleries alongside prominent Lebanese artists.

[25] Rogers, Modern Art in Cold War Beirut, 121.

groups. For example, both Ibrahim Ghannam and Jumana Husseini provide visions of Palestine in a "naïve" style, but Ghannam's work is "rendered with the precision of an Islamic miniature" in order to "summon with his brush every detail of his lost homeland and to document what to photographer had ever captured."[26] In contrast to the documentary impulse somewhat perplexingly assigned to Ghannam's idyllic genre scenes (see Figure 2.23), Husseini captures with "childlike freshness" a Jerusalem that "seemed to emerge from a fairy tale, free from any concrete reference to the experience of a real place" (Figure 2.24). [27] Lingering below a softening of rhetoric is the same framework Boullata had been developing since 1969,[28] contrasting meaningful, revolutionary artwork with soulless cosmopolitanism. The distinction, here, remains mostly about geography and systems of patronage, rather than content or form.

Perhaps it seems obvious that geography should be the distinguishing factor between two groups named after places, but the designation of Ras Beirut as common ground between Seraphim, Husseini, and Guiragossian is less straightforward than it at first appears. It is true that Ras Beirut was widely considered the center of Beirut's art world prior to the civil wars (1975-1991), its small area packed with nearly 30 galleries and cultural centers by the mid-1960s.[29] However, Seraphim and Guiragossian—two-thirds of the "Ras Beirut" artists cited in Boullata's article—exhibited at least as often in Achrafieh; Guiragossian also lived and worked in the Armenian suburb of Bourj Hammoud, about 8km east of Ras Beirut. This seemingly minor geographical elision suggests two things about Boullata's analysis. The first is that "Ras Beirut"

[26] Boullata, Palestinian Art From 1850 to the Present, 139

[27] Boullata, Palestinian Art From 1850 to the Present, 149

[28] As noted in a blurb in its original publication (*Fatah* 2 no. 5, March 1970), "Towards a Revolutionary Arab Art" began as a paper presented at the Convention of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc., held in Detroit in December 1969.

[29] Rogers, Modern Art in Cold War Beirut, 71.

was, for Boullata, more a synonym for cosmopolitanism than a physical location. Home to the prestigious American University of Beirut and teeming with cultural life, Ras Beirut emblematized a liberal, affluent, Western-facing city where cafes bubbled with the bourgeois philosophizing of Christians and Muslims alike.

It is this religious juxtaposition that bears emphasis, for the second implication of Boullata's analysis is its conspicuous cultural position vis à vis the Lebanese civil wars. In describing anything that occurred during the 1970s according to a Beirut neighborhood, one stakes a claim to part of a sharply divided city. The wars that tore through Lebanon between 1975 and 1991 are too complex to explain in full here, but a very basic sketch of the city's wartime geography elucidates the significance of Boullata's formulation. With the outbreak of fighting in 1975, a line of demarcation (the "green line") split the city in half along a preexisting fault between two broad cultural sectors. To the west of the line were predominantly Muslim neighborhoods of both Sunni and Shi'a confessions, as well as the Palestinian camps.[30] To the east of the line were predominantly Christian neighborhoods. The causes of tension between the two halves are beyond the scope of this project, but the basic cultural connotations of each are salient. West Beirut was associated with a leftist, pan-Arab agenda that supported the Palestinian Revolution and considered the Westward-facing, Christian-dominated government effectively a relic of colonialism. East Beirut was associated with a more conservative ruling class that was culturally and economically aligned with Europe and had a vested interest in maintaining the political status quo. Many in East Beirut blamed the Palestinians for Lebanon's political woes and wanted them expelled from the country, with several major Christian factions adhering to the

[30] At the beginning of hostilities in 1975, there were two Palestinian refugee camps in East Beirut, Karantina and Tel al-Zaatar. By the end of June 1976, both had been destroyed by Christian militias in massacres that collectively claimed between 3,000 and 4,500 lives.

belief that Lebanon was not an Arab nation and should be preserved for its native "Phoenician" sons. These views ultimately prompted massacres of Palestinians in refugee camps beginning early in 1976, which in turn incited reprisals from Palestinian militias.

Ras Beirut is firmly located in West Beirut, but somehow emerged from the war with the same reputation for multi-confessional cooperation with which it had entered it. Known to this day as a place where people of all faiths congregate, the neighborhood provided Boullata with a convenient setting for Palestinian artists who were "seemingly oblivious to Lebanon's landscape." In naming his grouping of non-camp artists after Ras Beirut, he retains the sense of bourgeois, Eurocentric cosmopolitanism connoted by Achrafieh without adding a religious dimension to its constitution. In this way, he is able to include Jumana Husseini alongside the two Christian artists and avoid signaling an ideological orientation completely at odds with the ethos of the camps (figured here as the locus of "true" Palestinian-ness). Most importantly, Ras Beirut enables Boullata to portray Palestinian artists as largely unaffected by "the immediacy of their environment," left undisturbed by Lebanon's volatility in order to contemplate the injustices of their common past.

Ultimately, Boullata undermines the argument for Beirut's invisibility in the work of Palestinian artists by evoking the city so strongly in his own. Developed over decades peppered with long stays in the Lebanese capital, Boullata's model groups artists according to a binary of cosmopolitanism and engagement, effectively mirroring the broad cultural currents that opposed each other in the civil wars. However he chooses to mobilize the coded map of the city, his analysis echoes the stand-off between East Beirut's glossy, globalized, capitalist urbanity and West Beirut's radical Arabist socialism. His reluctance to engage directly with the city's cultural

politics appears to arise from a desire to maintain a fundamental "Palestinian-ness" in his analysis, as though the "haunting" of artists by Palestine could occur only in isolation.

Across three decades of writing, Boullata sketches the parameters of Palestinian-ness for Beirut artists as a set of concentric circles. In the innermost circle are those artists associated with the camps, whose work is not only explicitly "about" Palestine but that, in its circulation, also challenges the bourgeois, capitalistic modes of valuation epitomized by Beirut's art scene. In the outer circle, separated by a thin and occasionally permeable barrier, are artists whose cosmopolitanism puts them at odds with the "true" art of the Palestinian Revolution, but whose relationship to Palestine demands inclusion nonetheless. Theirs is a diluted Palestinian-ness, Boullata implies, personal but not political, uncommitted.

What Boullata reveals in his "Ras Beirut" analysis is that this diagram, in its entirety, is located in West Beirut. The hard boundary is the Green Line, meaningful affiliation with the Christian East the clearest condition of exclusion. In refusing to engage with the deadly polarity of Beirut's landscape, he avoids reckoning with Juliana Seraphim's unsettling place in it. As a cosmopolite, she is a "second-tier" Palestinian, but the place of Palestine in her work remains legible within a framework of personal memory. As a denizen of East Beirut, she raises suspicions that could not be easily quieted. Whereas Paul Guiragossian, the other Christian "Ras Beirut" artist, belonged to the avowedly neutral Armenian sector of the East, Seraphim's political inclinations are murkier and more difficult to reconcile with the fact of her exile from Palestine. In her simultaneous affiliation with Palestine and East Beirut, Seraphim represents the "monstrous" combination of two irreconcilable categories.

THE BRIGHTNESS OF LONELINESS IN 'OTHERS'

Juliana Seraphim (1934-2005) was exiled from her home in Jaffa in 1948, fleeing with her family to the southern Lebanese city of Sidon before settling in Beirut in 1952. There, the young artist worked for a time in an UNRWA office to contribute to her household's income, but this was effectively her closest tangible connection to her peers in the refugee camps. Granted Lebanese citizenship by the machinations of the sectarian state, Seraphim experienced a very different Beirut from that of the artists discussed in Chapter 1. She began her artistic training as a student of modernist painter Jean Khalifé before traveling to Paris, Florence, and Madrid to complete her education, her parents' reluctance the only obstacle to her mobility. A paragon of cosmopolitanism, she was also commercially successful in all the "soulless" ways Boullata might find suspect. Her oil paintings and ink drawings appeared in the Sursock Museum's inaugural Salon d'Automne in 1961 and in many subsequent iterations thereafter, selling in Beirut's top galleries for sums large enough to enable the artist to live off her work.

In the few assessments of Seraphim's work that mention her origins,[31] Palestine is always discussed in intensely personal terms. In contrast to the collectively oriented art of Shammout et al, Seraphim's paintings, drawings, and prints engage with intimate, individual memories of the homeland. The artist claimed especially to have been influenced by the sea at Jaffa; as a child, she nurtured a fascination with the ocean through hours of play on the beach, which she later connected to her ongoing fixation with marine imagery. Another major source of inspiration came from a family home in Jerusalem. Her grandfather, an architect, lived in a former convent

[31] Kamal Boullata's *Palestinian Art, 1850-Present* and Helen Khal's *The Woman Artist in Lebanon* are the two main publications that contend with Seraphim's Palestinian heritage beyond a passing reference to her birthplace.

covered in 19th-century Italian frescoes. This was her first exposure to painting, and she claimed later that "the mysterious, mystic world" of animals, people, trees and cosmic bodies they portrayed likely "dominated her subconscious."[32]

In Seraphim's work, Palestine materializes "as in a dream," manifesting in the way "impressions from a Jerusalem ceiling dissolve into seashells collected by the Jaffa shore." This indirectness is not a mode of engaging with Palestine per se, but rather informs Seraphim's art practice as a whole. The artist was vocal about her interest in psychoanalysis and attendant belief in art as a means of accessing the subconscious, claiming that "the images in [her] paintings [came] from deep within" her,[33] their themes arising autonomously, "without [her] control or design."[34] In the Spring 1967 issue of *Ḥiwār*, a bimonthly cultural periodical edited by Palestinian poet Tawfiq Sayigh, Seraphim was profiled as part of a series on contemporary Lebanese artists. In the article, she described art as "talking about oneself in one's own language" and did not shy from the reputation she had developed as singularly self-absorbed. "Of course I'm a narcissist," she exclaims. "Is any creative person not a narcissist?"[35] Indeed, Seraphim espoused the cultural necessity of narcissism, arguing that art provided an essential mode of psychological escapism for its audience and that the artist's duty was to look deep into herself in order to bring that "alternate reality" to her viewers. According to Seraphim, this navel-gazing ultimately made a person more empathetic. Artists who engage with such "alternate

[32] Seraphim quoted in Helen Khal, *The Woman Artist in Lebanon* (Beirut: Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, 1987): 74

[33] Khal, *The Woman Artist in Lebanon*, 71.

[34] Quoted in "Al-Rasimun al-Libnaniyun Yutahadithun 'an Fannhum," ["Lebanese Painters Discuss Their Art"], *Ḥiwār: Majallah thaqafiyyah 'ammah* 5 no. 26/27 (Spring 1967): 139.

[35] Quoted in "Al-Rasimun al-Libnaniyun," 139.

realities" are "lonelier than most," she muses, but also uniquely able to "see the brightness of loneliness in others."[36]

An untitled painting from 1961 (Figure 3.4) provides a rare glimpse into Seraphim's early career, at a time before she had fully honed her oneiric aesthetic. Lacking the chaos characteristic of her later canvases, Seraphim's sparse, neutral-hued composition features none of the garish colors or ornamental flourishes that would later define her career. It does, however, layer thin blocks of paint over subtle, ghostly shapes, pointing to Seraphim's lifelong fascination with translucency. The result evokes the architectural landscape her grandfather helped build, conjuring the flat-rooved limestone buildings that comprise Jerusalem's Old City with touching solemnity. Through the "window" in the center of the composition, the golden Dome of the Rock appears to shine through the darkness, its newly restored roof[37] reflecting a crescent of bright light.

More in sync with her broader stylistic and thematic priorities is an untitled painting from 1965 (Figure 3.5). This bears little resemblance to the stoic "Jerusalem" painting and seems the very antithesis of the proud, maternal women through which Shammout dreamed Palestine. In it, we see a woman's face peering out from within a dense tangle of red shapes, all seemingly interconnected. Whether these shapes are elements of the woman's body or form an entirely separate structure is unclear. Emerging from either side of the eerily pale face is a similarly ambiguous headpiece; it evokes both hair and horns, but seems to be neither, appearing most clearly as a soft, rubbery loop on the left side of the frame. On top of the specter's head is a

[36] Quoted in "Al-Rasimun al-Libnaniyun," 141.

[37] The iconic golden dome of the Qabbat al-Sakhra (Dome of the Rock) was actually sheeted in black lead prior to Hashemite-led restorations, which replaced the lead with gilded aluminum in 1959 and then the gilded aluminum with a sturdier gold-colored aluminum-bronze alloy.

saddle-shaped form on which a salamander-like creature is resting; from under it, another mysterious form settles into the forehead, evoking, at once, lips, labia, or a nipple. The orifice, whatever it might be, seems to be dripping blood.

The shapes making up the rest of the composition are painted in a range of reds, emerging from the dark background in forms that evoke the human body. In the upper right corner, a swirl of paint seems to make the silhouette of a naked woman arching her back, below which two vulva-like shapes lead the eye downward. The outer edge continues according to a similar theme; soft, fleshy forms suggest genitals, uvulas, breasts, organs. Towards the center of the canvas, however, these forms begin to take on sharp edges, shifting the tone from organic to mechanical, overripe to harsh and dangerous. A smaller, red face with feathery eyebrows peers out from above the shards.

In contrast to the maternal themes taken up by many of her Palestinian peers, Seraphim gives us a model of female sexuality that is neither reproductive nor comfortable. Indeed, it's vaguely threatening, full of sharp corners and dark magic, organic forms that bleed and rot. Looking at this painting, it's hard not to think of the artist's own interest in art as a form of psychoanalytic catharsis. If we take her claims for the autobiographical functions of art at face value, we can see this as a self-portrait through which Seraphim's subconscious makes itself visible. Most significant to this interpretation is the presence of the abject, as articulated by Julia Kristeva in her pivotal essay, *Powers of Horror.* The abject, according to Kristeva, is that which occupies a space between internal and external, self and other, thus threatening a breakdown of meaning caused by the collapse of the subject and the object; a corpse, which reminds us of our base physical materiality, is the primary example. Seraphim's fleshy, ambiguous forms, at once

incongruous objects, dismembered body parts, and constituent parts of a whole, here evoke the abject, and the painting itself as a means of processing abjection.

Abjection, notes Kristeva, is an "unstable [territory] where an 'I' that is taking shape is ceaselessly straying," a moment of horror fundamentally based in its erosion of one's sense of self as a subject.[38] Notably, the locus classicus of this experience is a key moment in a child's psychosexual development, similar to the Lacanian "mirror stage." The moment at which an infant realizes the nature of its body as separate from the mother is marked by abjection, and while it is requisite to the development of subjective identity, it is also accompanied by a sense of loss; the child is forever separated from the maternal plenitude that once sustained it. The desire to be reunited with that maternal oneness is retained in the gruesome allure of the abject, a desire that is, by definition, accompanied by a threat. To reunite with that oneness is to extinguish individual identity; to regard the abject, therefore, is to teeter between desire and disgust, to feel the foundations of selfhood crack and sway.

That this painting suggests the abject is particularly intriguing in light of one detail, a black expanse pierced by a golden light (Figure 3.6). This dark space stands out against the surrounding pinks and reds; it is a focal point, a patch of black and yellow like a window looking out onto the moon.

Or, perhaps, onto a golden dome.

Does this small detail evokes Jerusalem, perhaps through a reference to the 1961 painting? Executed consciously, it's certainly consistent with Seraphim's ethos; what could be more narcissistic than quoting one's own work? In keeping with a psychoanalytic reading of this

[38] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 11.

painting, one might interpret it in the context of its visceral frame as something Seraphim associates with the experience of abjection. Palestine, here, is neither internal nor external to Seraphim, and its appearance provokes a repulsion underwritten by a crisis of selfhood. In this painting, the abject converges with the wholly personal trauma of exile, expressing the transient, dystopic bifurcation of the diasporic experience through the push-pull dualism of abjection, characterized at once by familiarity and horror. The unsettling duality of exile is the condition of the *barzākh,* a liminality that seems to have colored many aspects of Seraphim's life and work.

If Palestine's latent position in Seraphim's artistic practice suggests an emotional attachment to her birthplace, that attachment itself is destabilized by ways in which she fit into her adopted country. In addition to discussing their work, the artists solicited to participate in *Ḥiwār's* 1967 series were asked to provide a definition of "Lebanese art." Juliana Seraphim responded that Lebanese art was influenced by too many different sources to constitute a single fixed thing, suggesting that the true "Lebanese mindset" lay in the ability to "draw inspiration from ancient arabesques and new American trends at the same time." Besides, "in the twentieth century, art is a universal language. We don't need nationalistic art." Seraphim conceded nevertheless that "we cannot make globally significant art without heritage, and in Lebanon, we have an actual heritage from which we can benefit: Phoenician heritage. Not the artificial folklore we made up recently, but the real, ancient legends."[39]

Her evocation of this particular historical lineage is significant in the context of Lebanese politics, where it is incongruous with her apparent dismissal of nationalist art. Taking root in Lebanon during the early twentieth century, "Phoenicianism" flourished under French

[39] Juliana Seraphim in "Al-Rasamun al-Libnaniyun Yutahadithun 'an Fannhum," ["Lebanese Painters Discuss Their Art"], *Ḥiwār* 26/27 (Spring 1967): 139.

influence[40] as a means by which Christian nationalists distanced themselves from Muslims seeking pan-Arab unity. Lebanon, they argued, had never been an Arab country, but had merely been *invaded* by (Muslim) Arabs, with its true "Phoenicians" living on in its Christian community. Tracing their lineage back to the ancient Mediterranean civilization, Christian nationalists conceived of Lebanon as an essentially European country, naturalizing their symbiotic relationship with France even after the end of its mandate in 1943. In 1967, less than ten years before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil wars, claiming affinity with Phoenician heritage was not a neutral act, but one that aligned the claimant with an increasingly anti-Arab, anti-Muslim political orientation.

A generous read of Seraphim's remark is as an offhand comment made earnestly, with the proviso about "artificial folklore" implying a cautious disavowal of its nationalist applications. A 1960 painting (Figure 3.2) suggests that her interest in the Phoenicians was a sustained one, but it is by no means a major preoccupation of her work. There is little in the public record that pins Seraphim to particular political parties or positions, but she did speak tellingly in a 1970 *Le Jour* interview when she expressed a very favorable opinion of former president Camille Chamoun.[41] Seraphim cited Chamoun's patronage of the arts, which was holistically significant notwithstanding its own nationalistic inclinations,[42] as the reason for her

[40] Lebanon was an official mandate of France from 1922 to 1943, but the French began exercising outsized political and economic influence in the region in the 1860s, facilitated in part through relations established with Lebanon's Maronite Catholic community. For more on this history, see Fawwaz Trablousi, *A History of Modern Lebanon,* 2nd ed. (Pluto Press, 2012).

[41] See "Qu'attendent-ils du nouveau chef de l'état?" ["What Do They Expect from the New Head of State?"] in *Le Jour,* 25 April 1970. Page number unknown (accessed via clipping in archives of the Sursock Museum, Beirut).

[42] Chamoun's major cultural legacy is the Baalbak International Festival, which he established in 1955. A Westward-facing event that took place among ancient Roman ruins, the festival's early iterations involved music and theatrical performances entwined with Christian nationalist narratives about Lebanon's origins. Lebanese ethnomusicologist Nour El Rayes sheds light on this topic in a forthcoming article, "Hearing

praise, but it remains unlikely that anyone in a position of solidarity with the Palestinian cause would regard the former president with any enthusiasm. Conditions in the refugee camps were especially bad during his tenure, with police brutality peaking as the government sought to repress the spread of Arabist political ideologies. Though the political party he founded, the National Liberal Party, did not begin its literal slaughter of Palestinians until 1976,[43] it was by 1970 firmly entrenched in the fiercely anti-Palestinian Helf Alliance.[44]

Seraphim's ambiguous position resists the essentializing impulse of much Palestinian art history to ascribe exclusive significance to national origins. Exemplifying this tendency, Kamal Boullata has suggested that Seraphim—a native of Jaffa who frequently identified as Lebanese, rarely engaged with her Palestinian heritage, and spoke the cultural language of the Lebanese Christian right proficiently—was merely "keeping her Palestinian identity in the shadows," presumably due to the anti-Palestinian sentiment common in her Christian-dominated milieux.[45] While these social circles were certainly unwelcoming to Palestinians, Boullata's suggestion ignores the fact that, for Palestinian Christians, Lebanese citizenship was not only an opportunity to "hide" one's "true" origins but also to identify with a group that shared common interests. The passionate, organized opposition of Lebanon's Christian political parties to Arab nationalism has been unparalleled in the region to this day. However, by the 1970s, Christians throughout the

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Cosmopolitan Nationalism in the Work of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers," *Yearbook of Traditional Music* (July 2022).

[43] The party's militia, the NLP Tigers, were instrumental in several camp massacres during the Lebanese Civil Wars (1975-1991). The first was that of the Tel al-Zaatar Refugee Camp in 1976, in which 1500 to 3000 Palestinian refugees were murdered.

[44] The Helf Alliance (est. 1968) was a right-wing coalition of the three major Christian parties in Lebanon that pushed a Lebanese nationalist agenda which opposed Arabist movements and sought the removal of the PLO from Lebanon. It was the precursor to the Lebanese Front, which represented Christian nationalists through the civil wars.

[45] Boullata, *Palestinian Art,* 146.

Arab world had often found themselves at the peripheries of nationalist movements, wary of the encroachment of Islam on their freedom of religious expression and of anti-Western cultural orientations.[46] Seraphim came of age in an environment that overwhelmingly pitted cosmopolitan Christianity against the Palestinian cause, leaving her vulnerable to alienation from both; there is no reason to assume she was naturally inclined to identify with Palestine over Lebanon.

Indeed, the difficulty with Seraphim is that she occupies two irreconcilable cultural positions within the context of civil-wars-era Lebanon. On one hand, as I have demonstrated, the artist's Palestinian childhood loomed large in her work, and Seraphim herself cited the culturally central cities of Jaffa and Jerusalem among her major aesthetic influences. On the other, Seraphim affiliated with a segment of Lebanese society whose anti-Palestinian sentiments ultimately contributed to the deaths of thousands of unarmed refugees who, like her, had been driven from their homes in Palestine. These factions were not only opposed on the basis of the Palestinian question, but also aligned with contradictory cultural orientations. The revolution that purported to represent *all* Palestinians was an anti-imperialist, anti-Western, Arab-identified movement, whereas the Phoenicianist Christians of Lebanon sought to establish themselves as a bastion of European sensibilities in a hostile Arab region. From her liminal space between and across the two, Seraphim inhabited her own *barzakh,* an experience of exile characterized by the impossible union of incommensurate things.

Press coverage of Seraphim between 1962 and 1982 is telling of the artist's liminal subjectivity in both its content and its audience. Appearing overwhelmingly in French-language

[46] See Rais A. Khan, "Religion, Race, and Arab Nationalism," in *International Journal* 34, no. 3 (Summer 1979): 353-368.

newspapers, rather than Arabic or English ones, Seraphim's reviews, interviews, and exhibition announcements reached a readership comprised mostly of middle- and upper-class Christians. In countless articles published during this period, Seraphim appears as a jet-setting sophisticate, defined as much by her lifestyle as her artistic output. Interviewing the twenty-eight-year-old artist on her return from Madrid, journalist Jalal Khoury contemplates the "menacing cigarette-holder" that is "constantly between her fingers…for a long time, as if it were full of secrets." She tells him that she uses the instrument—which eventually became so closely associated with Seraphim that it made an appearance in her obituary—"not for pleasure or for fantasy but because it reminds [her] of [her] paintbrushes."[47] Twenty years later, in 1982, art critic Edgar Davidian celebrates Seraphim's arrival in Beirut after several years in Paris, noting that she "sparkles brighter than ever in her… grand, gold-threaded *'abaya,* as if to maintain the trademark image she's always safeguarded and to reanimate the legend she's always cultivated." Writing in *Le Reveil,* the Francophone mouthpiece of the far-right Kataeb (Phalangist) Party,[48] Davidian describes a "daughter of the Levant" returning to "her native shores to recount her timeless dreams."[49]

As Edgar Davidian's commentary on her "grand, gold-threaded '*abaya*" suggests, Seraphim's iconic look was rather self-Orientalizing. Not only was she fond of caftans and

[47] Jalal Khoury, "Les femmes conquièrent, pinceau en main, les cimaises de Beyrouth" ["Paintbrushes in hand, women conquer Beirut's gallery walls"], *L'Orient Littéraire,* 24 February 1962, p. 8.

[48] Established in 1937, the Kataeb Party, sometimes known in English as the Phalanges or Phalangists, is a Maronite Catholic political party explicitly modeled by its founder, Pierre Gemayel, after Italian fascism. During the time period examined by this dissertation, they were the primary proponents of a Western facing, "non-Arab" Lebanon. The Kataeb rose to international notoriety six months after the publication of the cited article, when in concert with the Israel Defense Forces they perpetrated the massacre of thousands of Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

[49] Edgar Davidian, "Juliana Séraphim: Un tenace narcissisme," [Juliana Seraphim: Tenacious Narcissism], *Le Reveil,* 28 March 1982.

'abayat, but she was often photographed in turbans or other forms of headwrap, with large amulet-like jewelry (Figure 3.3). Her head coverings were never in the form of hijab and indeed rarely resembled anything one might see in the region, projecting the image of a "daughter of the Levant" through a European pastiche of "Eastern" signifiers rather than an effort to embody an "authentic" identity as Lebanese, Palestinian, or Arab writ large. In Paris, this strategic essentialism perhaps allowed Seraphim to control the terms of her otherness, enabling her to brand herself as a painter of "the Orient." In Lebanon its connotations were more complicated. Unlike, for example, the Palestinian *thawb,* Seraphim's garments did not express affinity with a political or cultural project to which the Francophiles of Lebanon's upper classes might object. On the contrary, they projected a kind of eccentric, rootless cosmopolitanism that aligned Seraphim with the West. At the same time, as Tarrab suggests, the "way [Seraphim] presented herself made people wary of her." Though Davidian's review brims with praise for Seraphim's "absolute frankness" of expression and "intrepid, audacious self-disclosure," its emphasis on the artist's role in the cultivation of her own image implies a critique of Seraphim as contrived and self-absorbed. Especially in Lebanon, where it did not risk misconceptions of "authenticity," Seraphim's image was theatrical in its artificiality, broadcasting its carefully constructed nature.

Seraphim's cultural liminality did not just violate the borders between Christian Lebanon and revolutionary Palestine, but also those between self and other. Seraphim performed an Eastern-ness that was Western by design, simultaneously affiliating with European Orientalism and reclaiming representational agency as the subject of its gaze. The discomfort elicited by this performance in "the East" owes in part to its theatrical nature, but it also points to a destabilizing difference in sameness. Seraphim's self-presentation situated her amidst Beirut's cosmopolitan, European-affiliated upper echelon, but the way in which it did so evoked the power structure

masked by that same affiliation. At a time in which Lebanon's Christians eschewed Arab cultural touchstones in favor of French ones, her nebulously "Eastern" attire conjured a European discourse that flattens *all* "Oriental" subjects beneath the rubric of "Other," highlighting the chasm between Lebanon and its former occupiers that many sought to elide.

In her "monstrous" refusal to inhabit a single, legible subject position, Juliana Seraphim occupied her own *barzākh,* a realm of perfect contradiction without negation, a condition of simultaneous "being and not-being, widening and delimiting."[50] Her experience of exile was not defined by estrangement from a specific, longed-for homeland as much as it was by estrangement itself, an inability or refusal to settle into an identity despite her performance of a larger-than-life persona. Indeed, it was through this persona that Seraphim embodied an eerie double-consciousness, forged not only through displacement from Palestine but from the vicissitudes of religion and colonialism that had inexorably shaped the entire region. Whereas her milieu in Lebanon conceived of cosmopolitanism as an additive, multicultural phenomenon, Seraphim's double consciousness was productive in the negative, in the ways in which, to borrow from literary scholar Samir Dayal, it "denies the subject's sovereignty and stresses the performativity of the subject." Departing from W.E.B. Du Bois's famous formulation of double consciousness as "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others,"[51] Dayal argues that such doubleness "is more productively conceived as the interstitiality of entering (or leaving) and destabilizing the border zones of cultures, as fracturings of the subject that resist falsely comforting identifications and reifications." [52]

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[50] Stefania Pandolfo, "The Barzakh of the Image," 171.

[51] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; reis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 9.

[52] Samir Dayal, "Diaspora and Double Consciousness," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 48

Eye On The City (1980, Figure 3.7) speaks to the place of this hybrid, interstitial sensibility in Seraphim's work. The painting depicts a beam of light radiating downward from below the upper lid of an enormous, disembodied eye, which itself hovers over a city's bustling crowds. In the background, a cloudless, electric blue abyss fades into the arcs and spires of a pink-tinged white skyline, its keyhole windows and delicate, colored tracery evoking well-known idioms of Islamic architecture without referencing a specific place. In the foreground, the city's denizens mill about, weightless, gliding along the glassy surface of deep teal water or floating just above it. Everything in the image appears to belong to the sea. The eye's lashes are flat, ribbonlike lengths of green that evoke fins or seaweed, their mossy hue creating a sickly contrast with the eyelids' fleshy peach. The human-adjacent figures in the composition bear ships on their heads, melt into the landscape, become sphynx-like vessels sailing amiably alongside sea monsters. All of them are female. The figure highlighted by the central ray of light is crowned by a conch-shell-like headpiece, the gossamer folds of her voluminous gown revealing the whorl of a different shell. A fin-like cape floats behind her, studded with clusters of pearls between its pink seams. Painted with Seraphim's usual attention to transparency, the figure is slightly ghostlike, simultaneously three-dimensional and insubstantial.

Like many of Seraphim's women, this figure develops in the viewer's mind like a photograph revealing itself in a chemical bath. One first sees a whimsical sea-princess, draped in the storybook finery of an undersea kingdom. Rendered in cotton-candy hues of blush pink and powder blue, the theatrical physics of her dress just border on the possible, like an image lifted from the fantastic portfolio of a stage costume designer. She seems almost parodically feminine, laden as she is with giant shells, massive pearls, layered sheets of silken ruffles. The longer one

looks at her, though, the greater the sense of unease. The nose, mouth and chin of a woman's face emerge from the gown's base, disappearing below a green form that increasingly looks like some kind of cocoon. The "pearls" between the seams of her cape could be larvae, eggs, or barnacles, the seams themselves like veins pulsing toward the red spines at the edge of her "cape." As the impression of a saccharine princess dress yields to the drooping weight of the polyp-like teardrop shapes that hang from her chest, the distinction between her body and her clothing becomes more and more unclear.

The rest of the image is similarly full of shapes that challenge boundaries, with ships becoming snails and hair becoming seaweed, columns assuming the silhouettes of dancing women, shells liquifying into sharks or sea slugs. Soft curves become menacing points, shadows carve cavernous, mouthlike hollows into floating, ethereal forms. More disembodied faces emerge from different structures within the composition, all of them conspicuously eyeless beneath the sky's looming gaze. Indeed, the giant form dominates the canvas to such a degree that one might easily miss the other eyes hidden within it, tucked into the dark mass coiled behind the central figure. Remarkable in its relative solidity, the shape curls around a pinkish center, its textured green surface seemingly reptilian and foliate at once. The ray of light slices across it, forming a triangle with the lines of the sea-queen's headdress and cape. Two eyes lie within that triangle (Figure 3.8). They are not positioned next to one another but superimposed, layered transparently to bleed into each other like a double-exposed photograph. Set firmly into the dark green form is a round, front-facing, lidless green eye with a long, thin pupil, like a cat's or a snake's; atop it—and *of* it—is a lidded, vaguely hominid eye that is set at an angle, its reddened white visible near the sea-queen's collar. Perhaps most remarkably, this morphing,

hybrid eye reflects the veins of the figure's cape, which stretch across its glistening, convex exterior.

The eyes are rendered with greater detail and subtlety than anything else in this painting, the hallucinatory play of transparencies heightening the impact of their lucid, attentive gaze. Easily missed by the casual observer, they are not the painting's focal point, overshadowed by the enormous single eye that looms over the composition. In comparison, this eye seems dull and wan, but the scope of its sight seems suddenly significant. If, at first, the image's largest form evokes the omniscient Eye of Providence, the presence of the double-eye reframes its scope from one of omniscience to one of multiple perspectives, imbuing its power with an element of confusion. Like its counterparts in the green coil, the blimplike oculus gazes in multiple directions at once; its pupil stares out at the viewer, but the bright ray that emanates from it seems to scan the city like the searchlight of a helicopter, implying its ability to perceive what lies below.

This multiplicity of gazes engages in animated conversation with the constant mutations of the mysterious creatures in Seraphim's work. If the "disorienting" erasure of boundaries between humans, plants, and animals here "borders on the nightmarish,"[53] the knotting of numerous sightlines situates that sense of unease within an exilic "fracturing of the subject." The evasive, illusory nature of the city and its inhabitants is linked to the fundamental instability of eyes severed from their bodies and equipped with the capacity to see in numerous directions at once, paradoxically exceeding themselves while incomplete. The coexistence of contradictory conditions in this oneiric, hybrid space once again evokes the *barzākh*, while the overwhelming

[53] Y.A., "Juliana Séraphim, Vision des Rêves," *Le Soir,* 7 June 1966, n.p. (press clipping, Sursock Museum archives, Beirut).

presence of marine imagery recalls the artist's childhood on Jaffa's coast. Here, Palestine emerges through the scraps of individual memories collected and reshaped into something new, as latent rather than manifest content in the artist's brightly colored dream.

The dream-state of Palestine materializes in this painting as something altogether divorced from nationalism, estranged from the aspirational projections discussed in the previous chapter. Palestine, conjured through the image's aquatic aesthetic vocabulary, is neither the lost paradise of nostalgic reminiscence nor the longed-for future state, but is instead a space where the trials of unbelonging are negotiated and expressed. Like the *barzākh*—and the Freudian conception of dreaming— the painting's bizarre imagery "is not illusion and error, but the lieu of an encounter with truth."[54]

AGAINST THE IMMACULATE WOMB

In May 1980, Juliana Seraphim's exhibition at the Gab Center garnered an excoriating review in Beirut's leading Francophone newspaper, *L'Orient-Le Jour.* "Here is an art," laments the author, Joseph Tarrab, "that considers itself fabulous and metamorphic" but that, despite "aspiring to a mythic status," is only "confusing, imprecise, pseudo-oneiric and infantile."[55] The works' hyperfeminine eroticism is, somehow, neither feminine nor erotic; "Seraphim's women are… wax dolls, content to be mere morbid appendages to their sexual organs," trapped in a "profusion of corals and petals [that] reeks of desire's absence."[56] The oeuvre under review,

[54] Pandolfo, "The Barzakh of the Image," 171

[55] Joseph Tarrab, "Juliana Seraphim au 'Gab Center': Repertoire pour Repertoire," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, May 6th, 1980, p. 6.

[56] Tarrab, "Juliana Seraphim au 'Gab Center'"

"encumbered" by "gratingly dissonant colors" and "incoherent compositions," ultimately represents "Thanatos in the mask of Eros, the triumph of death" thinly veiled by a veneer of sensuality.[57]

Perhaps the greatest insult levied by this injurious piece of art criticism is the fact of its reprinting. The review was actually written in response to Seraphim's exhibition at the Samia Tutunji gallery two years prior;[58] *L'Orient-Le Jour* republished it verbatim in 1980, with the sole addition of a terse preamble that clarifies the author's intent. Repetition begets repetition, he argues. If Seraphim insisted on giving her audience "the same worm-eaten décor [and] the same decrepit masks" as she had in her earlier paintings, there was simply no reason to revisit her work.[59] The review itself stands out as one of few deeply critical engagements with Seraphim's art, but even as other critics celebrate her distinct aesthetic, the uniformity of their writing justifies Tarrab's indictment of Seraphim's repetition. The language used to describe Seraphim's work changes little over the decades in its evocations of fantasy and femininity. Juliana Seraphim's paintings are "dreams haunted by…outrageously beautiful women," declares a 1974 exhibition review. [60] Numerous headlines describe the "fantastical universe" (1974), "visions of dreams" (1966), and "oneiric world" (1980) of Juliana Seraphim, "an enchantress" whose work transports the viewer to "a romantic, delirious" realm. [61] Her work is "a poetry that bewitches

[57] Tarrab, "Juliana Seraphim au 'Gab Center'"

[58] Joseph Tarrab, "Thanatos Sous Le Masque d'Eros," *L'Orient-Le Jour,* March 17th, 1978.

[59] Tarrab, "Juliana Seraphim au 'Gab Center'"

[60] Y.A., "L'Univers fantastique de Juliana Séraphim," *Le Soir* November 1974 (full name of author and exact date unknown, accessed as press clipping in the archives of the Sursock Museum, Beirut).

[61] Y.A., "L'Univers fantastique de Juliana Séraphim"

and seduces,"[62] and, as with most things deemed supernaturally tempting, it is explicitly gendered female. Seraphim's "marshmallowy, artificially feminine"[63] canvases overflow with ponies, fairies, and flowers, lacelike patterns and ethereal fabrics rendered in pastels and jewel tones. The female body is everywhere. Whether "sensual, solitary feminine nudes" [64] or women in extravagant costume, "crowned by hennin headdresses and draped in crinoline greatcoats," her female figures are the center of her strange universe, "unparalleled flourishes of ornamentation refined for the explosive expression of wild, unbridled lyricism."[65] In every work, notes a review of a 1980 exhibition, "we see the same type of woman: young and pretty."[66]

"Young and pretty" though they may be, these women are also key to the darker elements of Seraphim's oeuvre. "Juliana Seraphim's world is two-faced," writes critic Edouard Lahoud, a contradictory realm of nightmares and dreams governed by an "ambiguous feminine charm that can be total malice, but delectable malice, or even vileness and depravity."[67] *Dragonfly Woman* (1974, Figure 3.9) exemplifies this "two-facedness," though the "delectability" of its malice is debatable. In a limited palette of pale pinks and earth tones, the painting shows a fairylike woman isolated in the exaggerated pose of a runway model. Though evocative of fashion photography in both her body language and her elaborate ensemble, her state of dress is somewhat ambiguous. Bubbles and leaflike forms are arranged over her body like the skirt and

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[62] Nicole Malhame-Harfouche, "Juliana Séraphim à la galerie Gab-Canter: Un art qui envoute et séduit," c. 1980 (newspaper unknown, accessed as a press clipping in the archives of the Sursock Museum, Beirut).

[63] Joseph Tarrab in conversation with the author, Jounieh, December 6th, 2018. Translation from French.

[64] Y.A., "L'Univers fantastique de Juliana Séraphim"

[65] Edgar Davidian, "Juliana Séraphim: Un tenace narcissisme," [Juliana Seraphim: Tenacious Narcissism], *Le Reveil,* 28 March 1982.

[66] Nicole Malhame-Harfouche, "Juliana Séraphim à la galerie Gab-Canter"

[67] Edouard Lahoud, *Contemporary Art in Lebanon*, trans. Philippe M. Michaux, René Lavenant (Beirut: Dar El Machreq, 1974), 265-266.

decorative neckline of a party dress, and the shape of her torso suggests a structured, if close-fitting, garment. However, there are no seams nor shifts in color to distinguish a dress from her skin. The ornamentation across her collarbone gives the impression of a flower flanked by large leaves, but the work's title urges us to look more closely.

The "flower" at the woman's sternum is actually the head of a dragonfly, its "leaves" wings that frame the macabre corsage in a manner almost evocative of a skull and crossbones. The thin, wiry stems that emerge from below the dragonfly's head evoke the feelers of some unspecified insect. A root grows over the jaws of the dragonfly's head and into the woman's chest, its dark brown tendrils fading to grey as they spread, veinlike, under what seems now unequivocally the skin of her breasts; no fabric is disturbed or distorted by the creeping root. The presence of this plant further blurs the boundaries between clothing and skin, calling the fleshy orbs of her skirt and headdress into question. Behind her is a hybrid form that evokes both an insect, legs forking upward from its body, and a sprig of mistletoe, fanning out in a flare of thick, teardrop-shaped leaves. It appears to be impaled through the center, affixed to an unseen surface outside of the picture plane. Thin drips of paint melt alongside it, echoed by similar drips in the foreground of the image, which issue from a delicate branch that curves along the woman's ribcage. The woman's face is framed by a voluminous headpiece with a butterfly at the center, its bulbous pink forms covered in brittle cracks like eggs fossilized at the moment of hatching. Her face itself is perfectly emotionless, dead eyes staring beyond the viewer from leaflike frames that seem to sprout from either side of her pinched nose, unsmiling lips the same frosted color as the rest of her skin. Her entire body glows with an eerie, airbrushed halo, her bright, even skin somehow connoting lifelessness more than youth.

Indeed, *Dragonfly Woman* recalls Joseph Tarrab's 1978 complaint that "Seraphim's women are not at all human" but mannequin-like creatures that "ice over with the incorrigible frigidity of Medusa." These figures, Tarrab argues, are cut off "from all reciprocity, from all relation of communication or exchange" by a frosty affect that "might be moving if it weren't for their stuffy insincerity, which deprives them of all magnetism, all charm, and finally, all presence."[68] Despite her elaborate performance of conventional femininity, the *Dragonfly Woman* is "incorrigibly frigid," devoid of the "magnetism and charm" one expects from a beautiful woman. If there is malice here, it is not "delectable" but inert, disinterested, a transient emotion in the listless gaze of a "window-display woman."[69]

If Tarrab's evaluation of "Seraphim's women" seems apt here, its tone does not. His repudiation implies that the grotesque lifelessness of Seraphim's work is the result of conceptual laziness or poor execution, rooted in the assumption that its true purpose is to be pretty, warm, and inviting. Instead, I propose that Seraphim's paintings deliberately refuse the equation of femininity with accessibility and accommodation. In *Dragonfly Woman,* the artist combines idioms of high fashion with such girlish motifs as butterflies and flowers in a bubblegum-hued composition, conjuring a femininity that is exaggerated to the point of camp. Amidst this powdery, garish display of female-coded frivolity, the death mask of her subject's blank face is conspicuous. Not only does it refuse the frothy pink melodrama of the painting's hyper-gender, but it also declines to turn it into something "delectably malicious." In the fairytale lexicon of Seraphim's "oneiric universe," the *Dragonfly Woman*'s neutrality is neither the nefarious action of a villainess seducing her victim, nor the saintly passivity of princess awaiting true love's kiss.

[68] Tarrab, "Thanatos Sous Le Masque d'Eros"

[69] Tarrab, "Thanatos Sous Le Masque d'Eros"

Instead, it is the radical indifference of a woman whose position is not determined in relation to a man. She is empty in a way that resists projection, a vessel that refuses to be filled.

The darkness of this painting, embodied in the dismembered insects and sickly drips that tuck themselves into its composition, is thus distinct from the alluring danger of a *femme fatale.* It derives from a subtler monstrosity, rooted in the repulsive no-man's-land between sweetness and rot. The painting's palette calls to mind a rose that has started to wither, the encroachment of browns muddying the youthful bloom of pink. The unnatural smoothness of its subject's face is countered by the aged, broken surface that surrounds it. The stiff insincerity that troubles Tarrab is present not only in the woman's indifference, but also in the "crisis of category" she incites. The *Dragonfly Woman* dwells in the uncanny valley, straddling the division between nature and artifice with an "outfit" that is, in some places, literally rooted to her body. Like Seraphim herself, she provokes discomfort simply by being illegible, confronting viewers with the mutability of states considered permanent and inviolable.

Joseph Tarrab describes Seraphim's fantasy realm as "a nightmarish world dreaming of the abolition of sexual difference, of the leveling and confusion of man and nature."[70] The critic makes clear that the malignant chaos of Seraphim's work comes not only from its erosion of boundaries between species, but also between sexes, a transgression he appears to consider threatening to civilization's very bedrock. Seraphim, for her part, wouldn't entirely disagree. "When I'm drawing, I'm androgynous, a man and a woman at the same time," she notes in her 1967 *Ḥiwār* profile. Readers of the journal would likely find this flippant statement unsurprising, as they would be familiar with the ink drawings she had published in its pages since the early 1960s. One such drawing, from *Ḥiwār*'s eighteenth edition in 1965, is representative in form and

[70] Tarrab, "Juliana Seraphim au 'Gab Center'"

content (Figure 3.10). In the drawing, the bodies of a man and a woman curl together in a pseudo-erotic tangle. Their limbs are distorted as if liquified, and their boneless, vaporous forms interpenetrate each other with no regard for physics, layered like transparencies in such a way that it becomes difficult for the viewer to discern where one body ends and the other begins. The union of their bodies seems less sexual than metamorphic, as if they are a single being in a state of flux, neither male nor female.

Seraphim's interest in androgyny dovetails with her propensity for liminal states and spaces, but at first glance has no direct relationship to her personal life. By all accounts, the artist was a glittering exemplar of femininity, a painter of floral dream-worlds with a carefully honed sense of (gender-normative) fashion. Yet Seraphim resisted the constraints of gender in deeper, if slightly less visible, ways, notably in her oft-cited refusal to marry. The cultural currents that converged in her life—conservative Christianity, Arab social mores, and the quasi-aristocratic expectations of Lebanon's *haute société*—contradicted each other in many ways, but shared a belief in marriage and motherhood as the *sine qua non* of appropriate womanhood. In celebrating love and sexuality in both her work and her life while openly declaring herself "incompatible with marriage," Seraphim espoused a bachelor-esque sensibility deeply at odds with normative gender expression. This nonconformity resulted in salacious rumors, and likely encouraged the interpretation of her work as containing a distinctly dangerous variety of femininity. Seraphim's female figures, argues Edouard Lahoud, are "bewitching and vindictive as certain species of charming flowers that entice insects and butterflies only to entrap and devour them."[71] This description immediately calls to mind the image of the Venus flytrap, the myth of *vagina dentata* to which it is inextricably linked, and an untitled etching of Seraphim's from 1975.

[71] Lahoud, Contemporary Art in Lebanon, 266.

This etching (Figure 3.11) combines a cityscape with the female body in an unruly, shapeshifting composition. In the background is a split skyline, its towering buildings morphing into more ambiguous forms as they move from the edges of the page towards the sun shining at their center. The sun casts light on the chasm between the two groups of buildings, from which faces turn towards the light at approximately symmetrical points. Below them, larger, incomplete faces look away from one another, attended to by tiny fairylike creatures above a menacing, jagged arch that evokes the silhouette of cranes in a crowded port. Disembodied eyes emerge, the larger of which is centered under the arch while the smaller floats to its left like a satellite. At the very center of the composition, the viewer confronts the unmistakable form of a vulva. In a composition where so much appears unclear, it is remarkably undisguised.

A pathway recedes from the bottom of the image towards the vulva in sharp one-point perspective. Lining the path on either side are tall characters in patterned robes, a corridor of bodies that appear mostly female. The characters closest to the front display the elaborate costumes typical of Seraphim's work, covered in organic forms evocative of scales, feathers, and wings above sumptuously decorated skirts. Below them, arranged on the whimsical approximation of a daybed, is another, much smaller female form, whose neck curves unnaturally from her naked, elongated body. Both the woman and the furniture on which she rests are transparent, with the frame of the daybed seemingly suspended from cobwebs or delicate flowers.

The dense crosshatching of the image adds to its ambiguity and invites close scrutiny, encouraging the viewer to wander through its many details. From a distance, however, larger figures emerge from within the disorienting, low-contrast composition. Directly below the sun, the two partial faces fade into ellipses of roughly even size, their lips positioned slightly below

the center of each. In the foreground of the composition, the two front figures incline slightly towards each other, the tapered, cylindrical forms of their long skirts outlined by dark shadow. Evoking breasts and calves respectively, these shapes situate the vulva within a larger body, giving form to the image of a headless woman sitting upright with her legs spread. Competing with this image is that of a face, articulated in the relationship between the smaller, free-floating eye, the nose-like iris of the larger one, and the vulva, which descends from an ovular orifice towards the pathway below as a gaping, ravenous mouth.

The print combines many layers of images that, taken individually, are difficult to parse, their carnivalesque ornamentation so whimsical as to verge on the absurd. As a whole, however, its tone is foreboding. The characters assembled at the edges of the path stand at attention, sentinels seemingly tasked with ushering the viewer onward. Their rigid bodies are close together, creating a tunnel-like structure with a single, obligatory direction. If the position of the woman's body connotes a sexual invitation, any aura of enticement is undermined by the militaristic formation of these figures and obliterated altogether by the giant, looming face. The hybrid creature at the end of the path has one intention: to devour.

The myth of the *vagina dentata* is found in folklore from virtually every corner of the globe, from India to England, New Zealand to Japan. As religion scholar Jill Raitt aptly observes, "it does not take a great deal of psychological sophistication to understand what is at work in these stories. Men fear women. They fear that in intercourse with women they may be castrated, that they may be laughed at, that they may die." Raitt contrasts the trope of the vagina dentata and its iterations in Christian theology with that of the *immaculatus uterus divini fontis,* "the immaculate womb of the divine font," arguing that the equation of the Marion womb and the baptismal pool in Christian liturgy posits passivity as the feminine ideal. She describes the

notion of woman as an "immaculate bowl, waiting to be filled" as "the ecclesiastical dream to offset the nightmare of the *vagina dentata,*" showing that the concepts are ultimately two sides of the same, patriarchally-minted coin. [72] Divorced from its religious context, Raitt's dichotomy maintains its shape: if the vagina dentata expresses male fear of castration or humiliation via 'monstrous' female sexuality, passivity and pregnancy are its soothing counterparts, assurances of male dominance and virility.

It is the second part of this dichotomy that seems most salient to an analysis of Seraphim's etching. To frame the print's voracious implications solely within the bounds of castration is to center the male body, to assume that Seraphim addresses an audience without speaking about herself. Such a perspective is not only antithetical to her practice, but also obscures the print's engagement with the norms of womanhood that she herself famously shirked. In articulating female genitalia as desirous and predatory, she resists a narrative that sanctions female sexuality only within the confines of passive procreation. The work's subversive nature lies not in its provocative shock value but in its thoroughly nonreproductive sexuality, its rejection of puritanical production in favor of hedonistic consumption.

SAMIRA BADRAN'S MECHANICAL MONSTER

In its transformation of something constructive into something destructive, Seraphim's 1975 etching evokes the roughly contemporaneous work of Samira Badran (b. 1954). Born in Libya to a family of prominent Palestinian artists, Badran moved back to Jerusalem as a young child when her father, Jamal, was commissioned to work on restoring the monuments of the

[72] Jill Raitt, "The 'Vagina Dentata' and the 'Immaculatus Uterus Divini Fontis,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48, no. 3 (September 1980): 418, 425.

Haram al-Sharif.[73] As such a prestigious commission would suggest, Jamal was an artist of considerable renown, with expertise in Levantine ceramics, woodcarving, and leatherwork as well as Western traditions of draughtsmanship. In the 1940s, following study abroad in England, Jamal and his brothers Khairi and ʻAbdel Razzaq had founded a studio in Jerusalem with the intent of bringing the spirit of the British Arts and Crafts Movement to indigenous traditions in Palestine. Though the Nakba cost the Badrans this exciting endeavor, it is indicative of the rich aesthetic milieu in which Samira grew up.

After finishing her higher education in Cairo in the mid-1970s, Samira Badran returned to Ramallah for a year and taught art to refugees at the UNRWA Women's Training Center there. During this time, she made a series of mixed media drawings that were inspired by the environment she observed in the refugee camps and by the abandoned construction equipment she saw on her short, frequent trips between the cities of Jerusalem and Ramallah.[74] Many of these exceptional drawings, discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, turn scraps of the built environment into eerily sentient beings. In *Waiting* (1977, Figure 3.12), for example, a rusty, red machine takes the form of a predator. Atop a metal base replete with knobs, springs, and cranks, a menacing series of gears rise one after the other, their jagged edges evoking circular saws or sprockets. The circular form set into the panel above these gears could be the hand wheel of a valve or the clockface of a pressure gauge, ambiguously offering control or proffering a warning. A huge, bundled form arcs across the base to hang off of one corner, overstuffed and too large to fit comfortably onto the machine. Behind it, the apparatus rises up like a giant insect, its "head" bolted to its "body" like Frankenstein's monster, screws emerging from its "neck" like spines.

[73] The *Haram al-Sharif,* or "noble sanctuary," refers to the location of the Dome of the Rock and the adjacent Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

[74] Samira Badran in conversation with the author, 8 May 2020.

The sharp points of a toothed chain gleam, vulturine, from the machine-creature's jaw before draping downward to disappear behind its body, its shape reminiscent of an ammunition belt. Above it, a cylindrical form bolted into a wide circular base gives the appearance of a roving, oversized eye, lidded partly by a gauzy wisp of fabric.

Like Seraphim's work, Badran's *Waiting* owes its chilling quality in part to its disregard for the laws of nature and science. Its hulking, insectoid frame blurs the boundary between the organic and the mechanical, simultaneously registering as a piece of old construction equipment and a hostile, threatening animal. The danger it poses is also hybrid, drawing at once from the sharp, sooty edges of the machine's many parts and the uncanny autonomy connoted by its zoomorphic form. An ambush predator poised to attack, it "waits," one assumes, for prey. The bunched, bulging bundle slipping from its platform suggests another kind of wait, however, evoking an enormous egg sac and the subsequent, horrific possibility that this creature awaits its hatchlings. Cobbled together from the very machines that build—and raze—the environment of Palestine, this mechanical beast threatens to release its hybrid spawn into the motherland, unleashing countless unknowable contaminants into its beloved landscape.

With this mother-monster, Badran, too, contravenes the ideal of the immaculate womb, though she does so in a very different context than Seraphim. Seraphim's *vagina dentata* redeems itself in its seizure of agency, because the "womb" it "defiles" is the very designation of the "weaker sex." Badran, on the other hand, conjures this tainted, hybrid pregnancy within the "immaculate womb" of Palestine, injuring the virginal purity projected upon it by nationalist rhetoric. As I discuss in the following chapter, *Waiting* is one of several artworks that contest the dominant paradigm of Palestinian landscape painting, which envisions the Palestinian interior as a timeless paradise, by exploring the vulnerability to which that paradigm responds. In

conversation with Seraphim's work, it serves to underscore the different stakes of engaging with the dream-state as a Lebanese citizen in Beirut and as a Palestinian in the West Bank.

Chapter 4: The Bride of Your Arabness

An elderly Palestinian looks to the viewer, his stance comfortable and confident though he leans on a cane for support. Shaded by a *kufiyya*, his face wears an opaque expression, a smile that contradicts itself in its simultaneous pride, playfulness, and sobriety. Dressed in earth tones, he seems almost knit into the olive grove behind him, as though he himself is a part of this vast, terraced hill of gold and green. This is an image of resilience. It is the portrait of a man who has endured the indignities of the Israeli occupation and remains steadfastly rooted in Palestinian soil, belonging to the land of Palestine as much as the land of Palestine belongs to him.

This sense of belonging is complicated by the fact that this painting—Sliman Mansour's *Memory of Places* (2009, Figure 4.1)—does not actually depict a man standing in his olive grove. Instead, its subject poses in front of a landscape painting in a museum or gallery, surrounded by the anonymous white expanse of the exhibition space. This man could be anywhere, and indeed the act of reminiscing implied by the title suggests that the painting represents a place to which he cannot return. Whether this foreclosed return is spatial, temporal, or both is unclear; the longed-for olive grove might be beyond an uncrossable border or buried beneath the very gallery in which the painting is displayed. Regardless of why the orchard is beyond the subject's reach, it is clear that he can wander it only in his mind, transported by the daydream of an evocative painting.

The painting before which the Palestinian man stands recalls scores of canvases created between the 1960s and the present day, including many by Mansour himself. The natural beauty of Palestine has been a key inspiration for modern visual artists since the turn of the twentieth century, and the olive tree in particular has gained specific relevance since 1967. In the wake of the *naksa*, Palestinians articulated the strategy of *sumūd*, or steadfastness, as a crucial element of

resistance, stressing the primary importance of holding onto the land at all costs. With this strategic and ideological emphasis, agriculture gained prominence in artistic depictions of Palestine, and the fellaheen, already imbricated in authenticating discourses of nationalism, came to represent the centuries-old connection between the land and its people. The olive tree itself became a symbol of *sumūd,* representing the rootedness of the Palestinians and the organic, indigenous nature of their claim to Palestine.

Here, though, Mansour gives us a very different kind of *sumūd,* one that reflects the reality for too many Palestinians all over the globe. There is an important steadfastness, this painting seems to suggest, inherent in keeping the memory of the land alive, even when the land itself has been usurped by the occupier. Art becomes a vehicle through which Palestinians may still "hold onto" that which has been taken away. It is also a place of comfort, where rolling hills of fertile crops are not cut violently by red-roofed settlements or destroyed in acts of collective punishment. A painting, in other words, might provide a momentary escape from the drastic changes Israel has wrought upon the Palestinian environment.

Painted several decades after the period with which this dissertation is concerned, this image is nevertheless relevant in its singular conveyance of the significance and complexity of Palestinian landscape painting. The painting within this painting can be seen to serve many roles at once. To the man who stands before it, it might conjure memories of happier times as well as of painful loss, engendering sorrow as well as the hope that the serene natural landscape it depicts can one day be restored. Insofar as it commemorates an inaccessible place, it is an object of both mourning and celebration, and may even provoke anger and action, as a call to arms in defense of the Palestinian homeland. Moreover, its specificity is unknown to the viewer. This could be a snapshot of a particular place, known to the man in the picture, the painter of the

landscape, or both; it could also be a fabricated, idealized image, meant to represent Palestine in synecdoche.

The layered and sometimes contradictory signifiers one might attach to Mansour's painting are present, in some way, in all artistic representations of the Palestinian landscape. A recent exhibition at the Palestinian Museum in Birzeit, *Intimate Terrains: Representations of a Disappearing Landscape,*[1] treated many of the themes that inevitably emerge in the discussion of this topic: negotiations of collective and personal memory, alienation and exile, artistic engagements with identity as it relates to the land. Curated by Tina Sherwell, the show began with a section entitled *Motherlands and Dreamlands,* and also posed a question largely absent from wider conversations on the topic: how does the changing reality on the ground contour artistic representations of Palestine?[2] In its effort to answer this question, Sherwell's exhibition focused largely on themes of disappearance and loss, rather than on the actual transformation of Palestine's physical infrastructure. Here, I ask how Palestinian artists in the 1970s and early 1980s mobilized landscapes to grapple with—or refuse to acknowledge—rapidly changing political realities.

In what might be termed "traditional" land- and cityscapes from this period, the dream-state appears as an unsullied utopia, untouched by the encroachment of the Israeli occupation. By contrast, the dream-state that emerges in the disorienting prints and drawings of Mustafa Hallaj and Samira Badran is one of nightmarish inversions and hybrid forms. Though these "phantasmagorical" landscapes are rich in the outlandish vocabularies of fantasy and science

[1] *Intimate Terrains: Representations of a Disappearing Landscape,* held April 2nd to December 31st 2019 at the Palestinian Museum, Birzeit.

[2] Exhibition announcement, *Intimate Terrains: Representations of a Disappearing Landscape.* Palestinian Museum website. https://www.palmuseum.org/ehxibitions/intimate-terrains-representations-of-a-disappearing-landscape

fiction, they ultimately engage more directly with the material conditions of Palestine's topography than their more "realistic" counterparts. Taken together, these two differing approaches to depicting the Palestinian environment ultimately constitute elements of a larger cultural dialectic, in which a feminized Palestinian territory is envisioned as a virgin body under constant threat of rape. The fear, here, is not only or even primarily one of violent defilement; equally important is the danger of wrongful maternity, positing Palestine as a womb capable of (re)producing its own enemy.

This chapter begins with an analysis of purity in the paintings of Ibrahim Ghannam (1930-1984) and Jumana Husseini (1932-2018), arguing that the idyllic serenity of these works surpasses nostalgia to reflect anxieties about the violation of Palestinian territory. I situate these images in relation to discourses of conquest, colonialism, and sexual violence that circulated in the literature and political rhetoric of the time, pointing specifically to the threat of contamination posed by the (metaphorical and literal) products of forced pregnancy. These discourses raise the specter of hybridity that, I argue, becomes a potent means of grappling with post-1967 territorial changes in the work of Mustafa Hallaj and Samira Badran. If Ghannam and Husseini draw from the past to conjure an ideal future, bypassing the present in the meantime, Hallaj and Badran create images that are radically rooted in the immediacy of the present. Having discussed images of places upon which characteristics of the maternal body are projected, I finally turn to images of bodies made up of bits and pieces of the Palestinian landscape. These bodies, brought to life in two drawings by Samira Badran, can be seen to inhabit a different intersection between dreaming and futurity than works considered elsewhere in this dissertation, positing the dream-state as a site of divination rather than aspiration.

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Ibrahim Ghannam (1930-1984) grew up in Yajur, which was once a village near Haifa. Israeli forces destroyed and depopulated Yajur in 1948, leading Ghannam to resettle in Beirut's Tel al-Zaatar refugee camp. When, at the age of twenty, Ghannam was paralyzed by polio, he returned to his childhood hobby of sketching to pass the long hours of his convalescence. His work was noticed by an UNRWA nurse, who supplied him with paints and encouraged him to continue.[3] Ghannam became a known personality in Tel al-Zaatar, where he played the 'oud and carved wooden toys for camp children in addition to painting prolifically, but tragedy continued to follow him. By the mid-1970s, Tel al-Zaatar was the only refugee camp left in Christian East Beirut, where many saw Palestinians as a foreign element that needed to be "cleansed" from the Lebanese landscape. In August 1976, Lebanese Forces militiamen besieged Tel al-Zaatar and massacred its residents, killing upwards of 2,000 people and completely destroying the camp. While Ghannam survived the siege to resettle in the Mar Elias camp, the vast majority of his work was lost, surviving only through reproductions in posters, greeting cards, and other graphic materials produced by the PLO.

Kamal Boullata suggests that Ghannam sought sanctuary in painting, escaping his daily hardships by immersing himself in memories of Palestine. Confined to a wheelchair, he "evoked the village where he once walked barefoot," painting sprawling, bucolic landscapes and scenes of abundance that stood in sharp contrast to the cramped living quarters where he looked out on open sewers and lived on meagre rations.[4] In a typical harvest scene (undated, Figure 4.2) a

[3] Ibrahim Ghannam, interview with *Al-Balagh* magazine, 1975 (Lebanon, issue unspecified). Excerpted in Izzeddine Al-Munasira, *Mawsu'at al-Fann al-Tashkili al-Filastini fil Qarn al-'Ishrin,* 375-376.

[4] Boullata, *Palestinian Art*, 142-143

wheat field blankets the majority of the composition in a sea of cheerful yellow ochre, punctuated only occasionally by the gentle slopes of haystacks and the white-clad heads of harvesters. Rolling hills frame the scene, their verdant forests giving way to the ivory buildings of villages as they approach the edges of the field. In the foreground, a man dressed in a *sherwāl* and a *kufiyya* held in place with an *'agal* pauses to drink water supplied by a woman in similarly traditional dress; their clothes, like those of the surrounding workers, are all in the palette of red, white, green, and black that adorns the Palestinian flag. In another characteristic genre painting (undated, Figure 4.3), equally anonymous fellaheen go about their daily activities. A man draws water from a cistern, the sparkling, aquamarine contents of which tumble out of a horse-powered pump. Another man swings a hoe, presumably shaping the soil into the neat rows of rich umber at his feet, while behind him a white-veiled woman carries a basket into a lush green field of crops that extends horizontally until it meets a receding line of cypress trees. An irrigation ditch separates the fenced trees from a distant village of stone and mud-brick buildings, whose boxy geometry is echoed by the silhouette of a city set into the distant hills.

It is easy to see how these paintings construct Palestine as a refuge from the conditions in which they were created. Ghannam's disability and refugee status compounded to ensure that his world remained small, his existence within its claustrophobic parameters almost totally dependent on outside aid. In the camps where he lived his entire adult life, his visual field was dominated by the greys of ad hoc urban sprawl, concrete and corrugated metal glazed in the inevitable filth of overcrowding. In his paintings, rural Palestine is a place of maternal plenitude, its vast tracts of fertile land teeming with the saturated colors of life-sustaining orchards, wheat fields, and olive groves. Beneath open blue skies, his fellaheen form a self-sufficient community, working in symbiosis with each other and the homeland to put food on their collective table.

Boullata's interpretation of this refuge as memory-based is supported by Ghannam's fastidious attention to detail. In the harvest scene, a faraway bus grounds the otherwise atemporal work in the decades of the British Mandate, contemporaneous with the artist's childhood. In the second image, the careful placement of the hill city's silhouette and the organic arrangement of the village's differentiated buildings suggest the laborious transcription of a conjured past. Liana Badr also argues that Ghannam "turns to the reservoir of memory in order to restore [Palestine's] intimate particularities,"[5] but here she refers to something more complex than the artist's personal experiences. Ghannam never received formal training, and like many so-called "naïve" artists has been celebrated for the "sincerity of expression" apparent in his simplistic but meticulous style.[6] His work, argues Badr, is unpretentious and pure, eschewing "falsehood and distortion in favor of the popular consciousness and folkloric atmosphere that shaped village life in Palestine."[7] Badr insists that Ghannam's untrained eye "protects his painting" not only from external influences but also from the intrusion of the artist's personal interpretations, mediating directly between this 'reservoir' and the canvas. In presenting the artist's own beliefs as obstacles to be circumvented in the "transparent" representation of memory, Badr suggests that the cache of memories from which Ghannam draws is itself collective.

The assumption that untrained artistic practice is inherently "honest" or "pure" plays into reductive, primitivizing paradigms of art history, but in this case its use as a synapse between the canvas and a reserve of collective experiences also points to a framework through which Ghannam understood his own work. Asked why his oeuvre seemingly exclusively comprises

[5] Liana Badr in *Al-Huriyya*, 17 March 1985, excerpted in Al-Munasira, 375.

[6] Ghazi Inaim in Dafātir Thiqafiyya no. 20 (February, 1999), excerpted in Al-Munasira, Mawsu'at al-Fann al-Tashkili al-Filastini fil Qarn al-'Ishrin, 377.

[7] Badr in Al-Munasira, 375.

images of the past, the artist responded, “I have only painted the past for the sake of the present and the future. I want everyone to live in Palestine as I have lived there, to experience it as I experience it to this day.”[8] Of course, the Palestine of Ghannam’s youth was long gone by the time he answered this question in 1975, but this extraordinary comment suggests that the artist saw his work as a kind of alternate dimension in which that past lived into the current moment. Moreover, he envisioned this dimension as an open world rather than a self-contained fantasy, expressing his desire to make it available for Palestinians everywhere. More than a backwards-looking nostalgia, Ghannam’s practice is a mode of access to a utopian dream-state, envisioned both as something to experience in the present and aspire to for the future. In the words of artist and critic Ghazi Inaim, Ghannam’s paintings “embody…the power to imagine, to dream a vision of the future with the clarity of a poet.”[9]

While Ghannam’s work depicted Palestine as a land of unspoiled agricultural riches, the reality on the ground looked very different by the 1970s. Since its embattled establishment in the late 1940s, Israel had drastically altered most of the territory within its purview. Farmland, in particular, was given pride of place in the cultural imaginary because of Zionism’s ideological emphasis on agriculture as both a “return to the land” and “the basis of material provision for the Jewish community (several slogans in pre-state days called for preference to be given to a "Hebrew product" or to "the land's product").”[10] Zionist farmers emptied Palestine’s golden wheat fields of their remaining fellaheen, who crowded into the hills in order to cultivate rocky

[8] Quoted in Al-Munasira, 376

[9] Inaim in Al-Munasira, 377

[10] Aharon Kellerman, *Society and Settlement: Jewish Land of Israel in the Twentieth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 12.

slopes unfit for the European machinery and farming techniques preferred by Jewish settlers.[11] "Empty" parcels of land that had been farmed seasonally were among the first to be declared property of the state, later cultivated by a brutally exploited labor force of the very Palestinians to which they once belonged. When Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during the 1967 war, the Zionist enterprise gained control of historic Palestine's entire area and quickly nationalized its natural resources. As Ghannam painted harvest scenes from his desolate home in Tel al-Zaatar, Israel bulldozed wheat fields, uprooted vineyards, cut down orchards and passed laws prohibiting Palestinian access to water for the irrigation of crops.[12]

The urban dimensions of Israel's post-1967 territorial expansion were nowhere more apparent than in Jerusalem. As an outcome of the 1948 war, the city had been divided into Palestinian East Jerusalem and Israeli West Jerusalem. Though, at 38 square kilometers, West Jerusalem was substantially larger than the Jordanian-administered East (6 km^2), the latter encompassed the Old City and its religious monuments, including the hotly contested Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount). Following the June War of 1967, Israel defied international law by annexing Arab Jerusalem as well as 64 square kilometers of vacant land belonging to 28 West Bank villages in the surrounding area.[13] Almost immediately, the city was subjected to an urban planning campaign whose guiding principle was its unification. In order to prevent any future repartition, the occupying government commenced the construction of twelve Jewish neighborhoods in the newly expanded municipality, "laid out to complete a belt of built fabric

[11] See Rosemary Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (1979; reis. London: Zed Books, 2007), 21-24.

[12] See Ibrahim Matar, "Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 1 (1981): 93-110.

[13] Nahed Habiballah, "The Unmaking of Arab Jerusalem Through Settlement Construction," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 65 (Spring 2016): 112.

that enveloped and bisected Palestinian neighborhoods and villages" and connected to one another by industrial zones.[14] This "belt" kept the majority of Palestinians outside of Jerusalem itself, though permits enabled them to spend working hours in the city exchanging grueling labor for meager pay. The Old City was occupied and rearranged, most famously by the wholesale destruction of the Maghrebi Quarter in order to create a plaza in front of the Western (Buraq) Wall,[15] as well as the reconstruction of its adjacent Jewish Quarter.[16] When environmental hazards led to restrictions on quarrying in Israel proper, pit mines rapidly pockmarked the West Bank in order to meet the demands of these construction projects. Israelis usually owned these mines, but Palestinians worked them, toxic stone dust settling on their clothing and in their lungs. Faced with severely limited employment options, Palestinians not only hewed the stones but often set them in place. An IDP[17] expelled from the Maghrebi Quarter might have applied for a work permit to re-enter his own city, accepting a pittance to pave the vacant lot where his own home once stood.

In many ways, the hopes and anxieties of the Palestinian dream-state are concentrated in Jerusalem, the symbolic importance of which is inextricable from futurity. Steeped in millennia of history as a site of religious significance and cultural interchange, the city has long been

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[14] Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London, New York: Verso, 2007), 25.

[15] The Western Wall refers to the exposed section of retaining wall believed to have encircled the Second Temple (516 BCE – 70 CE) in Jerusalem. It is a site of Jewish prayer because it is considered to be the closest accessible place to the original location of the temple's inner sanctuary, in which God was present. It is called the Buraq Wall in Islam because it is traditionally understood as the place where the Prophet Mohammed tied his winged steed, the Buraq, during his miraculous night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem.

[16] For a detailed study of the post-1967 transformation of Jerusalem's Old City and its ideological ramifications, see Simone Ricca, *Reinventing Jerusalem: Israel's Reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter after 1967* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

[17] Internally Displaced Person, as defined by the United Nations Refugee Agency.

viewed as the natural capital of Palestine, and since its 1967 conquest has been mobilized as the ultimate symbol of a future state. Five decades of aggressive Judaization efforts have made the holy city increasingly difficult for Palestinians to access, but the extent to which its restoration is considered integral to any viable Palestinian future is apparent in its insistent, material imposition upon the present. In Ramallah, for example, visitors to Yasser Arafat's stately mausoleum are immediately reminded that the tomb is only temporary; the leader's remains will be transferred to a permanent resting place in the country's rightful capital after its liberation. A free Jerusalem is envisioned as the end of Palestinian transience, the dream of homecoming distilled into a single city. In the years after the *naksa* of 1967, Jerusalem emerged in print media as the goal of (and synecdoche for) a Palestinian state.

Two examples can be found in posters published in the late 1970s by Dar al-Fata al-'Arabi, a pan-Arab children's publishing house founded by PLO affiliates, and the Palestinian National Commission on the Celebration of the 1500th Anniversary of the Beginning of the Hejira, respectively. In the first, designed by Egyptian artist Helmi al-Touni, a Palestinian woman and her young child look towards the monuments of the Haram al-Sharif (Figure 4.4). The heavily stylized, two-dimensional composition isolates the Qabbat al-Ṣakhra (Dome of the Rock), the Qabbat al-Mir'aj (Dome of the Ascension), and the arcade-topped steps for which the monument is known at an unclear distance from the onlookers. The woman raises her hand to her forehead, shading her eyes; she seems either to be squinting in the bright sunlight glinting off of the dome or peering into space, trying to make out something far away. The path ahead may be ambiguous, but the destination—Jerusalem—is not. "Righteous struggle is our path to Jerusalem," the poster reads in Arabic. The second poster, designed by Jumana Husseini, features a watercolor representation of Jerusalem's architecture and a hedgerow of prickly pear

cactuses, commonly used throughout historic Palestine to demarcate plots of land (Figure 4.5). The buildings represented are not Jerusalem's grand monuments, but a selection of shapes generically evocative of typical door, window, and roof types found in the holy city. The cluster of houses, mosques, and shops are painted in deep, warm ochres, whereas the cactuses appear in a ghostly, ethereal spectrum of jades. In Arabic, French, and English, the poster promises that Jerusalem's sun will rise again.

If Ibrahim Ghannam channeled memories of rural Palestine into a pristine dream-world, Jumana Husseini was his urban counterpart. Husseini (1932-2018) rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s for her evocative, serene cityscapes, most of which depicted her home city of Jerusalem. An untitled painting from 1970 (Figure 4.6) is emblematic of her style during this period. Here, Jerusalem crowds behind the wall of the Old City, its famous monuments unnaturally close together. The Qabbat al-Ṣakhra presses against the wall to the left of the gate, while the Church of the Holy Sepulcher appears as a cross-topped dome behind it. Husseini's restricted color palette gives the painting a dreamlike feel, calm and almost reverent in whites and pale blues, evoking a stillness like that of falling snow. Adding to this feeling of calm is the total absence of people—indeed, there are essentially no signs of life here, none of the hustle and bustle one has always found in the narrow, crowded streets of this holy city. Despite this palpable absence, however, the image is not entirely melancholy. Husseini's use of metallic gold gives the composition a warm glow, its buildings lit from within in a way that is both ethereal and entirely earthly.

Set into the scene is an excerpt from a poem by renowned Palestinian author Samih al-Qasim. Translated, the text reads: "you are with me, in my heart and my eyes and my voice, with

me from the first tremor of birth to the last tremor of death."[18] By incorporating this poem into the landscape of the city, the painting seems to identify itself as a means not only of remembering Jerusalem but of asserting its continuous presence; as in Ghannam's rural scenes, Husseini's Palestine is a living organism, accessible in the present. Recalling Sliman Mansour's celebrated 1974 painting *The Camel of Heavy Burdens* (Figure 4.7), the Palestinian landscape is portable, something a Palestinian carries from place to place in exile. Where Ghannam's Palestine is accessed through the canvas, however, Husseini's is embodied, inextricable from the very "heart and eyes and voice" of the Palestinian. The implication is bittersweet. On one hand, Jerusalem is inalienable from its people, unable to be lost or conquered in totality. On the other, the revered symbol of longed-for permanence itself becomes transient, its status as a fixed point in space and (future-) time destabilized.

Displaced by the Nakba as a teenager, Jumana Husseini settled in Beirut in the late 1940s and remained there until the Israeli invasion of 1982. Though Muslim, the artist had the means and social cachet necessary to engage with Lebanon's art world by virtue of belonging to one of Palestine's wealthiest and most influential political families. In Beirut, Husseini exhibited alongside artists like Ghannam, Shammout, Hallaj and Al-Muzayen in popular spaces like cultural centers and universities, but her work also appeared in prestigious venues like the Sursock Museum. In keeping with her exhibition practices, her cosmopolitan lifestyle did not preclude a fierce identification with Palestine and its struggle. Correcting errata in a 1995 catalog, Husseini fired back at a section that misquoted her as having called herself "Westernized." "I never remember saying anything like that," she wrote to the exhibition

[18] Text from Samih al-Qasim, "Fi Dhakira Al-Mu'taṣm" ["In The Memory of Al-Mu'taṣm/The Refuge-Seeker"], originally published in *Dammi 'ala Kefi,* 1967. Reprinted in *Al-'Amāl al-Kāmila lil-Shā'ir Samīh al-Qāsim*, v.1 (Cairo: Dar al-Sa'ād al-Ṣabāḥ, 1993): 209.

director. “I am an Arab, a Palestinian Arab, and very proud of my Palestinian, Arab, and my Middle Eastern heritage. Please omit the whole sentence.” Of the four errors she identifies in the text, Husseini singles out this reference to Westernization as the most egregious. “It is just not me,” she states, beseeching the director to “wipe-out that phrase from the catalog.”[19]

Given her obvious resistance to his binary of cosmopolitanism and political engagement, Kamal Boullata invokes Jumana Husseini as a “bridge” between the two categories of artists he creates in his foundational work. Nevertheless, Husseini continues to erode those categories, exposing the ideological scaffolding of Boullata’s work as established in Chapter 3. The author attempts to contain her within the category of “Ras Beirut” while exceptionalizing her vis-à-vis her (Christian) peers, claiming that “Husseini never exhibited in [Beirut’s] modish galleries.”[20] **CITE**. This distances her from the *locus classicus* of the empty, capitalist artwork he contrasts with the authentic engagement of the refugee camps, but it belies the artist’s involvement with at least two galleries that routinely displayed work by the city’s most in-demand painters.[21] Likewise, the contrast Boullata draws between the documentary “precision” of Ghannam’s work and the “childlike freshness” of Husseini’s Jerusalem, a “fairy tale” place “free from any concrete reference to the experience” of reality, continues to create artificial divisions between the “truth” of the “camp artists” and the superficiality of their bourgeois peers.[22] Furthermore,

[19] Jumana Husseini, letter to Salwa Mikdadi, 8 March 1995. Accessed in the Salwa Mikdadi Papers, archives of New York University, Abu Dhabi

[20] Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art 1850-Present,* 149.

[21] Husseini exhibited at the Delta and Antiquaire galleries during the 1970s, which during that time also exhibited work by popular, cosmopolitan artists like Juliana Seraphim, Stélio Scamanga, Huguette Caland, and Saloua Choucair.

[22] Boullata, Palestinian Art From 1850 to the Present, 139

these artificial divisions obscure the fact that the oeuvres of Husseini and Ghannam relate to the reality of the Palestinian landscape in fundamentally similar ways.

Alienated from its physical territory and faced with the knowledge of its ongoing dismemberment, both Husseini and Ghannam represent Palestine with virginal tranquility. Neither Husseini's peaceful city nor Ghannam's bountiful fields bear a trace of the devastation wrought upon the landscape by Israeli aggression; instead, they conjure Palestine as an eternal paradise, collapsing its past, present, and future into romanticized tableaux devoid of the occupation. In many ways, this work embodies "the sense in which landscape is all about forgetting, about getting away from the real in ways that may produce astonishing dislocations."[23] Rather than simply prompting nostalgic reminiscence, though, the images insist on the ability to experience the past and the future from the present, openly defying both the laws of physics and the worsening conditions of the Occupied Territories in order to forcefully construct the world they wish to manifest. The purity of this world is not limited to its undisturbed physical state, for the absence of the occupation is also the absence of the occupier. Implicitly or explicitly, these works present the same promise: that of a homogenous Palestine, populated only by indigenous Palestinians.

The halcyon images of Palestine produced by Jumana Husseini and Ibrahim Ghannam, in their polyvalent emphases on purity, evoke the virgin body of an anthropomorphized, feminine-coded territory. Especially in the case of Ghannam's wheat fields, they also call to mind the history of such "purity" in Euro-American landscape painting, where it served imperial interests by conferring, through its purported emptiness, "a presumptive right of conquest and

[23] WJT Mitchell, "Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness." *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 196.

colonization on the Western observer."[24] Painting from the perspective of the colonized rather than that of the colonizer, Palestinian artists both defy these representational norms and engage with them in the negative, haunted by their implications. Just as the concept of virginity is defined by the threat of its violation, the image of the virgin landscape evokes a fear of its own ability to "serve as an aesthetic alibi for conquest, a way of naturalizing imperial expansion and even making it look disinterested in a Kantian sense."[25] As the following section demonstrates, anxiety surrounding Palestine's vulnerability to "contamination" runs far deeper than landscape painting, taking root in literature and political rhetoric that implicitly or explicitly likens the conquest of Palestine to sexual violence.

AL-DĀKHIL AND THE VIOLABLE BODY

Among Palestinians, the term *al-dākhil*— "the inside" —means something at once explicit and diffuse. It refers firstly to the interior of the state of Israel; to live *fil-dākhil* is, in a post-1967 era, to reside anywhere in historic Palestine, whereas Palestinians elsewhere are *fil-khārij,* "in the exterior." Its second meaning, as Edward Said points out, "is slightly more complicated. It refers to privacy, to that region on the inside that is protected by both the wall of solidarity formed by members of the group, and the hostile enclosure created around us by the more powerful."[26] A relational structure rather than a physical space, to be *fil-dākhil* is to "have evolved special languages—sometimes evasive, always idiosyncratic—that only you and others

[24] Mitchell, "Holy Landscape," 198.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky* (1984; reis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 52

like you can understand."[27] In other words, *al-dākhil* is accessible, though only fleetingly, wherever there are Palestinians to recognize each other within the shared experience of exile. Furthermore, as both a physical space and a relational structure, *al-dākhil* is a locus of safety and connectedness constituted by the very conditions that threaten its integrity. Being "inside," Said clarifies,

> …is a privilege that is an affliction, like feeling hemmed in by the house you own. Yes, an open door is necessary for passing between inside and outside, but it is also an avenue used by others to enter. Even though we are inside our world, there is no preventing others from getting in, overhearing us, decoding our private messages, violating our privacy. That is how we read the history of Palestine, from the Crusades to Balfour and Weizmann: that it was entered despite us, and lived in despite us.[28]

Said goes on to discuss how a desire to reconstruct "the inside" shapes the interiors of Palestinian homes in exile. With wry self-awareness and obvious affection, he describes the banal domestic rituals by which Palestinians tether themselves to their homeland, cluttering every available space with the same nostalgic tchotchkes. He enumerates the actions "–tables are set, living rooms furnished, knickknacks arranged, photographs set forth–" without mentioning the actors, but conjuring an image of these tenacious preservationists is hardly a feat of the imagination.[29] "Present in the background of any account of the inside," observes Aamir Mufti, "is the figure of woman as custodian of the interior, its memories, and inheritance."[30]

Palestinian women join the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of so many decolonial movements as the anonymous guardians of cultural treasure, sentinels of households construed

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[27] Said, After the Last Sky, 52

[28] Ibid. 53

[29] Ibid. 58

[30] Aamir Mufti, "The Missing Homeland of Edward Said," in *Conflicting Humanities,* eds. Rosi Braidotti and Paul Gilroy (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 176.

as fortresses of autonomy from the colonial regime. In Algeria of the 1950s, where the Westernization of indigenous women was central to French colonial strategy,[31] the Front de libération nationale conceived the feminized domestic sphere as its own kind of battleground. A 1957 article in *Résistance algérienne,* the FLN's official Francophone publication, commends Algerian women for their steadfastness in maintaining traditional homes despite the repudiations of colonial society. The text argues that colonialism disrupts the "dual current" by which the family and society reciprocally legitimize each other, and that the Algerian woman resists colonialism by protecting the interior (family) realm from the pressures of exterior (colonial) forces. In withdrawing "into the fertile nucleus of a restricted but coherent existence, [which] has long constituted the life-force of the occupied… the housewife maintains the effervescence and spirit of the revolution."[32]

Half a century before the beginning of the Algerian Revolution, Indian nationalists also cast women as defenders of the nation's cultural "coherence" against the rising tides of Westernization. Here, as political theorist Partha Chatterjee has articulated, nationalists under British rule adopted a bifurcated model of national culture as they began to negotiate their sovereignty "from a position of subordination to a colonial regime that had on its side the most universalist justificatory resources produced by post-Enlightenment social thought."[33] While the "masculine," material realm of business, politics, and technology remained subject to colonial intrusion, an Indian cultural identity that fundamentally opposed the universalist claims of

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[31] This is famously elucidated by Frantz Fanon in "L'Algérie se dévoile," *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (1959; reis. Paris: Éditions La Découverte & Syros, 2011), 17-46.

[32] From *Résistance algérienne* (Front de libération nationale: Paris, Tunis, or Tetouan), 16 May 1957. Reprinted in Frantz Fanon, *L'An V de la révolution algérienne,* 47-48.

[33] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation And Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 11.

imperialism took shape within the "feminine," spiritual realm of the domestic sphere. "The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture," writes Chatterjee, and women carried "the main responsibility for protecting and nurturing this quality."[34] As such, they were protected from the "Westernization" thought to be beneficial, to a certain degree, for men; as guardians of national spirituality, women reflected a "purer" or more "authentic" Indianness.

From the bourgeois reformers of turn-of-the-century India to the armed commandos of the Algerian independence movement, a diverse spectrum of anticolonial agitators centered the interior life of a nation in their quest for liberation. In India, this phenomenon yielded the figure of Bharat Mata, or Mother India, a personification of the Indian subcontinent who is "imagined as the substantial embodiment of national territory—its inviolable essence, its shining beacon of hope and liberation—and also as a powerful rallying symbol in its long hard struggle for independence."[35] As discussed in Chapter 2, Palestine manifests through images of women in ways that are less straightforward, and there is no single image of a "Mother Palestine." Nevertheless, the multifaceted connotations of *al-dākhil* point to slippage between the material home, the "home" of cultural belonging, and the body of the woman whose de facto position is as gatekeeper of both.

The dialectic of virginity at work in the landscapes discussed earlier in this chapter is mirrored in decolonial celebrations of women and the (feminized) interior. The "coherence" and "authenticity" of the "fertile nucleus" of the home is also that of the women guarding it, and its

[34] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation And Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 126.

[35] Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

importance derives from its resilience to attack. That this resilience is in constant question is evidenced by its accompanying rhetoric of violation. In his exposition of *al-dākhil,* for example, Said repeatedly expresses the anxiety of porousness and penetrability, describing the essential history of Palestine, "from the Crusades to Balfour and Weizmann," as the story of a nation "entered despite us, and lived in despite us." Where this formulation merely resonates with rape, many texts produced during the era of decolonization were more explicit in equating colonialism with sexual violence.[36] The Palestinian Nationalist Charter,[37] presented by chairman Ahmed Shukairy during the first meeting of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964, unambiguously refers to the Zionist conquest of Palestine as "the rape [*ightiṣāb*] of our homeland."[38]

Joseph Massad argues that this metaphor gains significance in light of an additional gendered framework elsewhere in the Palestinian Nationalist Charter. Article 5 of the document stipulates that "Palestinian identity is an authentic, inherent, inalienable characteristic passed from father to son."[39] Noting that the following article identifies as Palestinian "all persons born in Palestine before 1947 and anyone born of a Palestinian Arab father thereafter," Massad argues that the "rape" of Palestine in 1947 "disqualified her" from her maternal role in the reproduction

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[36] Jawaharlal Nehru's 1936 autobiography, Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950), and Frantz Fanon's *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (1959) are prominent examples of texts that liken colonialism to rape. Novels like *Maru* (1971) by South African-Botswanan author Bessie Head and *A Season of Migration to the North* (1966) by Sudanese author Tayeb Salih also take up this metaphor.

[37] While this document is sometimes referred to in English as "the Palestinian National Charter," this results in frequent confusion with a later document which, though similar, lacks the preface from which I quote. Here, the use of the somewhat awkward "nationalist" is a direct translation of the Arabic *qawmi* in order to distinguish this document from the Palestinian National Charter [*Mīthāq al-Watan al-Filasṭīni*] of 1968.

[38] "Al Mīthāq al-Qawmi al-Filasṭīni" ["The Palestinian Nationalist Charter"], 1964, reproduced in Faysal Hourani, *Al-Fikr al-Siyāsi al-Filasṭīni, 1964-1974: Dirāsat lil-Muwathīq al-Ra'isiyya li-Niẓam al-Taḥrīr al- Filasṭīniyya* (1980; reis. Ramallah: PLO Research Center, 2015), 231.

[39] "Al Mīthāq al-Qawmi al-Filasṭīni," 232.

of Palestinians, replacing (feminized) territory with paternity.[40] Crucially, the Charter does not deny Palestine's ability to produce offspring, but rather suggests "that, since the rape, it can no longer be relied upon to reproduce *legitimate* Palestinian children."[41] This argument, while intriguing, neglects to account for the ubiquity of patrilineal nationality laws in the Arab world. All of the countries in the Mashriq[42] had similar definitions of citizenship until 1975, when Egypt became the first to give women the right to pass their nationality on to their children; this practice is so culturally entrenched that, to this day, only Yemen has followed suit. Especially given the pan-Arab roots of the PLO, it seems likely that the statute sprang from the same casual misogyny that informed regional norms, rather than from an overwhelming desire to slut-shame Mother Palestine.

The Charter, a document that Massad argues "views Palestinians as the children of Palestine, portrayed as a mother,"[43] does not wholly "disqualify" the territory from her role as the bearer of national or cultural identity. It does, however, point to the fears beneath the image of a virginal homeland. When war or colonialism is figured as the rape of a feminized country, the clearest implications are of violence, defilement, and a forfeit of honor or dignity at the hands of a domineering enemy. These are merely the connotations of the act itself; additional anxiety surrounds its consequences. In understanding this anxiety, it is instructive to consider responses

[40] Joseph Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism." *Middle East Journal* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 472. In this essay, Massad mistakenly misnumbers articles 5 and 6 of the Charter, using the numeration from the 1968 document instead. The numbers I use reflect those published in the original 1964 Charter rather than those referenced by Massad.

[41] Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine," 472.

[42] "Mashriq" is a term used by Arabs to refer to the Eastern part of the Arab world (as opposed to its Western counterpart, the Maghreb). This geopolitical region includes Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, and the countries of the Arabian peninsula.

[43] Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine," 472.

to the actual wartime weaponization of rape, as in the case of France during World War I.[44] There, the rape of French women by German soldiers unleashed unprecedented public debate over the legality of abortion, which many argued should be sanctioned in such cases to spare French society from the "child of the barbarian." Among the factors fueling this discourse was the assumption that babies—born of rape or otherwise—would naturally grow into their fathers' sons, and thus the birth of a half-German child was the effective release of an enemy sleeper agent into polite society.[45] Operating according to the same patriarchal logic that legitimates patrilineal citizenship laws, the fixation on the possibility of hybrid "barbarian" children was a common, transcultural response to wartime rape throughout the twentieth century.[46]

"Night Strings," a well-known poem by Iraqi poet Muzaffar al-Nawaab (1934-2022) brings this framework into the Palestinian context. Written between 1970 and 1975 and banned along with most of Al-Nawaab's work throughout the Arab world,[47] the poem gained widespread popularity through its circulation as a two-hour-long recitation in contraband cassette tapes.[48] In

[44] My intention in using this European example is to signal that a preoccupation with rape and its repercussions is not the exclusive purview of Arab or Islamic cultures, which are often stereotyped as following antiquated and misogynistic honor codes (despite the basis of those "honor codes" in virtually universal tenets of patriarchy). In suggesting that the study of actual rape is helpful to understanding its metaphorical import, I do not mean to equate the two or to downplay the significance of sexual violence in both physical and psychological warfare. The rape of Palestinian women by Israeli soldiers during the Nakba is widely believed to have encouraged the Palestinian exodus, though official (Israeli) documentation and (Palestinian) oral histories give predictably disparate accounts of the scope and intent of this phenomenon. See Sayigh (1979); Hasso (2000); Pappé (2006); and Slyomovics (2007).

[45] See Ruth Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian': Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War." *Past & Present* no. 141 (November 1993): 170-206.

[46] See, for example, Karen Engle on the Bosnian War (2005); Louise Edwards on the Second Sino-Japanese War (2013); D'Costa on the Bangladesh Liberation War (2018).

[47] Muzaffar al-Nawaab was a notorious political agitator, and his vocal criticism of various Arab regimes resulted in bans of his work as well as a sentence to life in prison. Incarcerated for years, al-Nawaab ultimately escaped Iraq's al-Hillah prison by tunneling to freedom.

[48] Carol Bardenstein, "Raped Brides and Steadfast Mothers: Appropriations of Palestinian Motherhood," in *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from Left to Right,* eds. Alexis Jetter, Annelise Orleck, Diana Taylor (Dartmouth College: University Press of New England, 1997), 170.

a segment meant to rebuke Arab leaders for their inaction during the Nakba, al-Nawaab recounts the conquest of Palestine, represented in synecdoche by Jerusalem, as the rape of a virgin bride:

> Jerusalem is the bride of your Arabness!
> So why did you usher all the fornicators of the night into her room,
> And stand eavesdropping from behind the door
> to the screams of her torn virginity
> You drew your daggers, and swelled with pride
> And you yelled at her to keep quiet, for honor's sake
> How honorable of you!!
> Sons of bitches, can a woman being raped keep quiet?[49]

The poem is aggressive in its reproach, insinuating that those complicit in the "rape" of Palestine have been stripped of both honor and Arabness. Had it ended with this gruesome metaphor of sexual violence, Al-Nawaab's poem would have launched a sufficiently scathing critique of Palestine's abandonment by Arab nations, but the poem continues. The bride conceives a child as the result of her rape, then ends the pregnancy through its powerful, impossible expulsion. Still addressing the "sons of bitches" who failed to prevent this violence, al-Nawaab writes,

> She'll tear at her braids, and she'll vomit the pregnancy out onto you
> She'll vomit the pregnancy all over your glory
> She'll vomit the pregnancy over the sound of your broadcasts
> She'll vomit the pregnancy onto you house by house, and she'll poke her
> fingers into your eyes, saying: It's *you* who are my rapists!

Palestine's unholy pregnancy becomes a potent means of chastising Arab men, but its abortion is a source of power rather than shame.[50] As Arabic scholar Carol Bardenstein points out, aborting the pregnancy appears "to be the 'right thing,' if possibly the *only* thing, for Palestine to do,

[49] Translation of "Night Strings" by Carol Bardenstein, as published in "Raped Brides and Steadfast Mothers."

[50] This is significant insofar as attitudes on abortion in the Arab world continue to skew highly negative. Abortion is illegal or severely restricted in most Arab countries, despite Islam having a somewhat relaxed position on the practice relative to mainstream Christianity.

given the nature of the impregnation and the resulting 'mongrel' pregnancy."[51] Al-Nawaab continues:

> Be sterile, oh land of Palestine
> For this is a frightening pregnancy!
> Be barren, oh mother of martyrs, from this time on,
> For this pregnancy by the enemies is ugly, deformed and frightening.

Bardenstein argues that "the threat of Palestine refusing motherhood and choosing to remain barren" is mobilized "to shame and goad men into active resistance."[52] In a less cynical interpretation, I read this as a genuine pivot from addressing the guilty parties to addressing both divine order and Palestine herself, imploring a higher power to ward against the monstrous birth of "barbarian children." Implied in his plea for the land to be barren "from this time on" is a concern for the fate of the nation, for the threat of a hybrid pregnancy transforms rape from the violation of a single person or family into that of a society's *future*. In carrying such a pregnancy to term, Palestine would place forthcoming generations at risk of contamination by enemy elements; it is better, Al-Nawaab implies, to forgo reproduction altogether. Even as he effectively begs Palestine to end itself, the poet's temporal orientation is aligned with a reproductive futurism[53] that centers the needs of hypothetical children in the political discourse of the present.

As a response to the violation of Palestine, the visceral anguish of "Night Strings" finds an unexpected compliment in the pastoralism of Ibrahim Ghannam. Ghannam's landscapes willfully conjure Palestine as fertile but immaculate, inviolable by hostile parties. Inversely,

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[51] Bardenstein, "Raped Brides," 171.

[52] Bardenstein, "Raped Brides," 172.

[53] As articulated by queer theorist Lee Edelman in the polemical *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), reproductive futurism refers to a heteronormative mode of political participation that is both motivated and structured by the desire to ensure a better future for successive generations.

"Night Strings" acknowledges Palestine's desecration, but demands the suspension of its reproductive capacities to arrest the expansion of disaster. Each vision evokes a womb, one fecund and paradisical and the other defensively sterile; diametrically opposed, they are nevertheless united in their refusal to accommodate a hybrid pregnancy. Both of these wombs gestate a future that bears no mark of Israel's rape.

PHANTASMAGORICAL LANDSCAPES

Where the virgin landscapes of Jumana Husseini and Ibrahim Ghannam refuse to entertain the possibility of hybridity, the oeuvres of Mustafa Hallaj and Samira Badran feature shape-shifting tangles of imagery that draw from sources as diverse as ancient Egyptian mythology and contemporary junkyards. The creative formal and thematic juxtapositions that fill the artists' works on paper result in dreamlike scenes that resonate with fantasy or science fiction, yet that, in comparison to the more conventional realism of their counterparts, engage more directly with the material reality of Palestine. An untitled 1970 print by Hallaj (Figure 4.8) fuses human, animal, and vegetal forms with each other, creating a landscape that, through simultaneous engagement with the concrete and the mythological, addresses the grim reality of Israeli expansion and the human cost of resisting it. Samira Badran's *25 Barrels* (1977, Figure 4.9) evokes cartography in order to carve a landscape from a dense fabric of hybrid forms, transgressing the boundaries between the mechanical and the organic to create a world in which machines and everyday materials seem to take on lives of their own. In another drawing from the same series, *Glass Village* (1976, Figure 4.10) an assemblage of contradictory parts evokes a sense of futility and stagnation. Both of these imaginative works, in their plays on perspective

and containment, reflect on the material restrictions forced on Palestinians by the changing geography of the occupation.

Mustafa Hallaj came from a humble background; his father was a migrant farm worker, and some of his earliest memories were of traveling with him from orchard to orchard throughout the fertile agricultural regions of Palestine. When he was nine years old, Hallaj and family fled Zionist violence on foot, ultimately settling in Egypt, where the artist would complete all of his training. Although Hallaj spent most of his adult life outside of Egypt, his adopted homeland had a major impact on his work. He considered himself "more Egyptian than many Egyptians," and thought of the clay of the Nile, with which he played as a child, as his first artistic medium.[54] His affinity for Egypt did not preclude his pride as a Palestinian, however, and he was an active participant in the cultural wings of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Beirut and Damascus. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2, Hallaj believed that it was the duty of the Palestinian artist to combat, through his or her work, the "self-denial" and "suffocation of historical heritage" that the Israeli occupation imposes upon Palestinians.

Hallaj's untitled 1970 print (Figure 4.8) is typical of the artist's lifelong aesthetic, suspended somewhere between the realms of reality, mythology, and nightmare. In the foreground is a funeral procession, in which a long line of humans, animals, and hybrid creatures carry a stretcher across the length of a composition. At the front of the stretcher is a rooster crowned with a calligraphic depiction of the word "Filasṭīn" ("Palestine"), a recurring motif in Hallaj's work of this period. Behind him lies the body of a human—a martyr—who sprouts trees from his chest, arms, genitals, and thighs, while his shins serve as a perch for a flock of birds. It is notable that four of these birds are the only creatures in the procession that look backward

[54] Munasira 162

rather than forward, turning away from the head of the martyr and looking towards the mourners who follow behind. Three of these mourners appear to be women, but the two behind them are more ambiguous; both hominid figures, one appears to have the head of a sheep, while the skull of the other morphs into a vulture. The subtle slopes and exaggerated size of the corpse mirror the hills in the background, which, combined with the trees, insinuates the body into the landscape itself.

The rest of this print is no less complex. In the middle ground, hills ripple beneath a horse, a chicken, and a woman, all of whom are giving birth - or, in the case of the chicken, laying an egg. The woman's legs are spread, her ankles bound with ropes and pulled to either side by male figures as her infant emerges. A tree grows from one knee. We cannot see her face, but above her bulging belly and her breasts looms a skeletal figure who appears to bear down on her, shoulders tensed with the effort. This figure—death, perhaps, or the occupying forces—seems to be smothering the mother as she delivers her child. In the far background, yet another plane of hills seems vaguely to echo the corpse in the foreground. In the upper right-hand corner, an enormous crow picks at the hilltop, which almost resembles the stomach of a man. To its left, the head of a huge chicken emerges from behind the hill, the only figure in the composition with a discernible eye. This eye, of course, is trained on the viewer.

As is typical of Hallaj's work, the print bears obvious traces of the artist's interest in the mythologies of various ancient Near Eastern cultures. The figures in the foreground, for example, evoke the stylistic norms of ancient Egypt, depicted with elongated, flattened bodies. The scale of the figures, too, seems in keeping with these norms. Ancient Egyptians often represented people according to a hierarchy of proportion, by which more important individuals were depicted as larger than others; in evoking this visual language, Hallaj might suggest the

significance of the deceased relative to the living who carry his body. The presence of the rooster, too, recalls mythological references; the rooster is also associated with Mesopotamian gods of war, the underworld, light, and fire. As the standard-bearer for Palestine, the rooster can be seen at once to represent the dawn of a new day and the promise of a brighter future, as well as darker certainties of death and bloodshed.

Hallaj does not limit his engagement with mythology to the ancient world, but also dives into contemporary nationalist iconographies. Though at first glance it seems radically different from Ghannam's landscapes or Shammout's surrogates, the print nevertheless alludes to the same language of maternal bounty that defines Palestine in their canon. Growth, after all, is everywhere; trees spring upwards from bodies, figures give birth, and animals throughout the image nourish themselves with food (note the bird with the worm, the grazing horse, the crow). Indeed, in some ways, Hallaj's print represents a more sinister dimension in the image of Palestine-as-mother. If the potential threat of violation hangs over the purity of Palestine in traditional allegorical representations, the threat has become reality in this surreal landscape. The woman giving birth does so in the shadow of the specter of death, while two men pull her legs apart by their tethers - this act simultaneously evokes sexual violence and restricts her movement, rendering her unable to move out from beneath the looming skeleton. The animals who reap the benefits of the earth, feeding on worms and grass, are also part of a funeral procession, and the trees shooting skyward do so from the bodies of the dead and dying. Gone is the harmonious Palestine of nationalist dreams, replaced by a landscape thrown into chaotic flux by violence; where Ghannam and Shammout paint unsullied Palestinian women in timeless surroundings, Hallaj emphasizes the idea of contamination, fusing animals, plants, and people at the beginnings and ends of their life cycles.

Hallaj thus presents us with a morbid balance of life and death that *centers* the occupation's impact on the land rather than pushing it to the periphery. A mother faces death so that her baby may be born; trees are nourished by the dead; the god of war heralds a funeral for a martyr who is also a forest. On one hand, the land itself relies on death to perform its life-giving functions; all victory, growth, or progress comes at a high price, and this could be seen as a reflection on the senselessness of dying for territory that remains shackled beneath the control of the occupier. On the other, the persistence of nature in this violent world points to the resilience of Palestine itself, which regenerates anew despite continued efforts to destroy it. The nightmarish quality of the print suggests something not wholly formed, as if to offer us the raw material of the subconscious instead of a didactic narrative; we are free, as Hallaj famously insisted, to draw our own conclusions from the fruits of his imagination.

In the previous chapter, I introduced a series of drawings completed by Samira Badran while the artist was working in Ramallah, teaching art to refugees at the UNRWA women's training center. This portfolio grew from sketches of Badran's surroundings, combining elements of shipyards she'd visited as a student in Egypt with features of the camps and pieces of abandoned construction equipment between Ramallah and Jerusalem.[55] Two drawings from the series, *25 Barrels* and *Glass Village,* are marked by the reanimation of refuse in the tension between entropy and expansion. In the case of *25 Barrels*, discarded construction materials pile up and take on almost animate forms, the composition dominated by scraps of wood and metal, old barrels, chains, barbed wire, and tires. In *Glass Village,* the central structure is sagging and irregular, shoddily constructed of boards, bricks, industrial drums and metal panels that seem to have been salvaged from elsewhere. Nothing, in these pieces, seems to function as it should.

[55] Samira Badran in conversation with the author, videochat, 26 September 2021.

Discussing her creative use of building materials and equipment, Badran notes the desire she felt to "turn something constructive into something destructive" as she processed the rapidly changing environment of the West Bank.[56] This impulse resonates powerfully with the political atmosphere in which Badran was working. If Israeli settlements had been an "open secret" since the 1967 war, 1977 was a watershed year for discourse around them. Under newly elected Prime Minister Menahem Begin, who publicly voiced his support for settlements, the government was able to openly advance its long-held goal of incorporating the West Bank into a united Israel, declaring that "the entire historic Land of Israel is the inalienable heritage of the Jewish people, and that no part of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) should be handed over to foreign rule."[57] That Palestinians whose families had lived on these lands for centuries are defined, here, as "foreign" speaks to the entrenchment of the Israeli origin myth discussed in Chapter 1 and the surreal conditions of effacement it continued to impose upon Palestinian lives. Not only did settlement activity increase upon Begin's 1977 election, but whatever taboo had surrounded expressions of support for this activity began to deteriorate. Badran's compositions recall the debris from both the destruction of old Palestinian structures and the construction of new Israeli communities on expropriated land, resulting in disjointed, unsettling environments whose chaos is historically situated.

25 Barrels (1977, Figure 4.9) is so densely crafted that any fixed focal point completely evades the viewer, making it difficult to know where to begin to look at it. At its base lays a

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Government statement on recognition of three settlements," 26 July 1977. (vols 4-5: 1977-1979). https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/mfadocuments/yearbook3/pages/23%20government%20statement%20on%20recognition%20of%20three%20se.aspx

figure, a seemingly hominid body with the skull of a camel or a horse, wrapped tightly in a bundle of cloth like an infant or a mummy. It is immobilized, tied to a horizontal structure resembling a tree trunk or a ship's mast and surrounded by a cage. From the center of its forehead, a white line snakes up towards the top of the composition, and an alligator sits on the cage above its chest. Surrounding both the creature and the alligator are piles of detritus resembling cast-off construction materials and, of course, barrels, their wooden stomachs distorted, separated from their metal armatures. There is something alive about these barrels, their metal hoops like human ribs, red circles set into them like reflective, almost cartoonish eyes. Above them, more garbage-like objects, often resembling creatures (or parts of them); bundles of cloth, wood, and scrap metal look vaguely like a hanging bat, a skeletal fishtail, horse's noses, a giant crab. The forms grow sparser towards the top of the composition, where the blue background meets white abruptly, like a horizon line.

The work confronts the viewer with a problem of perspective. Read from the bottom up, as I just have, the drawing appears like an underwater cross-section, with objects piled on top of each other from the ocean floor to its surface. Key elements disrupt this perspective, though – most notably the white line emanating from the bundled figure's head and a blue, y-shaped line of similar width and brightness. These lines, more than anything else, insist on a cartographical reading of the drawing, imitating rivers one might see on a map or in an aerial image of territory. They encourage the viewer to see these piles of material as the topography of a landscape, their varied colors and textures marking differences in terrain. Neither of these perspectives are commensurate with one another; the caged figure disrupts the coherence of an aerial perspective, while the river-like lines and island-like objects seem resist the verticality of the composition. Two possible vantage points wrestle for the viewer's attention, perpetually unresolved.

This perspectival instability disorients the viewer, exacerbating the visual overwhelm of its many crowded details and rendering the drawing profoundly unsettling. As an underwater scene, the primary impression it gives is one of claustrophobia. The evocation of water alone suggests suffocation—the mummy-figure is bound far from the apparent surface, unable to access air—but the pile-up of material around it adds another dimension of weight and volume, threatening to crush the figure. As a map, the space feels cluttered, chaotic, almost as though we're looking down on an enormous landfill. Furthermore, and especially interesting in the context of a map, the drawing is brimming with allusions to constraint. Among its most identifiable elements are ropes, chains, barbed wire, a cage – all things intended to restrict motion, to hem people or animals into spaces they might want to escape. As part of a cartographical iconography, they implicate mapping itself, the very process of delineating territory, as a similar mechanism of brute control.

This drawing, then, deals with the realities of the occupation on three primary levels. On a level of basic iconography, its tumultuous jumble of broken parts evokes the literal space of the refugee camp, where overcrowding and underfunding result in the constant breakdown of the built environment. Experientially, it disorients and overwhelms the viewer, who cannot even determine *how* to look at the image, let alone what to make of it. This sensory response, on some small level, mirrors the sense of whiplash and disbelief that faced Palestinians—especially internally displaced refugees, like Badran's students—as they tried to absorb the reality of their material losses. The feeling of suffocation and claustrophobia this work engenders is, after all, a primary condition of life under occupation. As Israel expropriated more and more property, Palestinians were condensed into smaller and smaller areas; the camps overflowed, and cities like Ramallah swelled while settlements consumed larger and larger swaths of land. Finally, the

work insists on the entanglement of mapping, control, and entrapment, reflecting the practical consequences for Palestinians of Israeli territorial control.

Like *25 Barrels, Glass Village* (1976, Figure 4.10) focuses on modes of containment, and addresses the viewer through a vocabulary of absurdity or disbelief. At first glance, the drawing looks like a strange hybrid of a ship and an enormous kiln. The mass has a boat-like, if distorted, form, with an arch evocative of a rudder at one end and an extension like a bow sprit at the other. Vertical pipes stretch skyward like spindly, precarious masts or crow's nests, with other pipes running perpendicular to them like the booms of a sail. At the same time, the squat, cabin-like structures that comprise the bulk of this form seem to glow through their windows, as if lit from within, and are studded with arched portals reminiscent of furnaces or forges for firing clay or shaping metal and glass. One cylindrical structure rises taller than the others, crowned in a row of windows or vents, at once evocative of a chimney and a panoptic lookout.

The ramps leading towards the open arches of the oven-like hold suggest that the "ship" is docked, awaiting the entrance of passengers. Yet there is something here that forecloses the anticipation of movement, a leaden stagnancy that speaks of a vessel run aground and built into. The bricklike heft and haphazard construction of the cabins and towers seem neither buoyant nor watertight, their dilapidated state casting the ship's seaworthiness into serious doubt. The pipe-masts are too thin, almost fragile, and no sails hang from them: instead, a small scrap of cloth drapes listlessly over the highest perpendicular pipe, floating slightly as if lifted by a halfhearted breeze. It seems vestigial, a remnant or memory of forward movement.

Indeed, the overall aura of this "glass village" is one of futility. The kiln-ship evokes water and fire at once, a kind of elemental cancelling-out that renders the structure useless. Six human figures, posed as if blowing glass, also seem neutralized by factors beyond their control.

Blindfolded, two point their blowpipes towards the sky, where they disappear at the edge of the page, and another drives his into the ground. The other three engage with the ovens, but behind them we see blue sky rather than the flames necessary to shape their craft; the source of light through the kiln windows appears to be the natural light of the sun. Functional neither as a ship nor a kiln, the structure acts instead to contain something seemingly uncontainable, trapping a luminous swath of the atmosphere between its ramshackle walls.

A boat that cannot sail, a kiln that does not fire, a cramped structure that somehow holds the sky: *Glass Village* seems to suggest the shrinkage of a universe, evoking the limitations on movement and growth that were literalized in the form of the refugee camp. At the same time, however, the azure sky beckoning through the doors and windows of the structure has an undeniably magnetic quality, capturing the attention of the viewer in the contrast between its natural clarity and the sooty, crumbling edifice around it. Lingering on the cloud-dotted lapis expanse just beyond the structure's doorways, one begins to see the magic in Badran's composition. Is this a prison for a shrunken world, or is it a portal to elsewhere? Could this "futile" assemblage of cast-off materials lead to a different, freer dimension, the wardrobe to a Narnia of abundant, unrestricted space? Are its glassblowers truly lost in senseless, unproductive actions, or do they simply know something we don't?

In evoking the possibility of a way out, Badran's work establishes a tension between containment and release that remains unresolved. The portal is a possibility rather than a certainty, a leap of faith for the viewer to make or refuse. In this way, it does not undermine the drawing's engagement with the brutal realities facing Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, but rather amends it to include a daring flicker of hope. Like all of the Ramallah drawings, *Glass Cities* makes use of a fantastical vocabulary that is, in its surreal cobbling-together of disparate

materials and structural idioms, uniquely equipped to grapple with the material impact of the occupation. Because it necessarily deviates from the norms of realistic representation, it also cracks a door onto the constructive valances of imagination, offering an escape hatch from the same conditions it considers. This gestures to a larger tendency of Badran's drawings, many of which use hybridity to engage with the devastation of the Palestinian landscape without foreclosing its potential for redemption.

Omens and Dream Talk

The images we have seen so far in this chapter have all depicted places either virginally undisturbed or marked by the defilement of hybridity. In two final drawings by Samira Badran, *Escapee* (1978, Figure 4.11) and *Two Sisters* (1977, Figure 4.13), we return to images of bodies and the question of the "barbarian child." In both of these works, Badran turns elements of her surrounding environment into creatures, breathing life into scraps of metal, knots of wire, and other detritus. Like the creature-machine in *Waiting* (Figure 3.12), they are possessed of an eerie sentience, yet tethered by their composite natures to the landscape from which their parts were drawn. They are the visibly hybrid products of a "raped" territory, yet they do not inspire the horror or disgust that permeates discourses on the "ugly, deformed and frightening" offspring of such a union. Instead, they are complex in their ambiguity, imbued with directionless potential by the double-edge of agency. By animating the literal trash of the West Bank's transformation, Badran grants life to the meaningless leftovers of activities that are both mundane and earth-shattering, testimonies to the "rape" of the Palestinian landscape. As I'll demonstrate, this practice calls attention to the dream-state as a locus of divination, turning quotidian imagery into omens of things to come.

Escapee (1978, Figure 4.11) shows the body of a girl, or some approximation thereof. Her head is a faceless tangle of cloth, an exposed corner of which threatens to unravel itself. Haloing this crush of fabric is a tempest of snarled black hair, which swirls in the wind while a flock of tiny birds gathers at its edges. The head appears just barely tethered to its body by a series of strings and wires, which emerge from the open collar of a torso crafted from the same bunched fabric. Straight pins sprout from the shoulders, from which sleeve-like puffs give way to the figure's arms. On the girl's left, a form like the housing of a crane's lifting hook provides only a truncated appendage, suggestive of amputation. On her right, a doll's tiny arm hangs, seemingly bloodstained, from a small scaffolding laced with string on which more of the miniature birds are perched. Like its shortened counterpart, the arm is full of sewing pins. The girl's left leg is a clublike assemblage of wood, strings, pins, and fabric, parts of which have been grommeted and laced together as though to restrain or reshape something. At first, it appears that the leg ends above the knee, but its toes unambiguously assert the presence of a foot, evoking instead a malformed limb unable to grow beyond its bindings. Her right leg, which is also anchored tenuously to its torso by threads and wires, is made of similar materials to its mate, though it takes a more traditional shape and is normatively proportionate to her torso. Wrapped around the leg from thigh to ankle is an angry red machine, its segmented body occupying the same uncomfortable space between mechanism and animal as its correlate in *Waiting.* Rigid, spindly appendages lock the creature-device around the limb, as if to stop or trip it.

Samira Badran was inspired to create this drawing by a discarded piece of automotive machinery she saw leaning against a tree near a garage between Ramallah and Jerusalem. To the artist's imagination, the damaged car part looked like an animal, and she envisioned it clinging to the tree as one might attack a leg. Contemplating the increasingly reduced mobility of

Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, Badran transformed her source material into a hybrid creature whose mechanical and organic qualities combine to hinder the motion of the girl to whom it is attached. The spinelike curvature of its body and the glow of its single "eye" imbue it with a feral sentience, the tight grip of its limbs around her body active and apparently self-motivated. At the same time, its metallic inflexibility connotes the tenacity or permanence of a padlock, something that cannot be outrun or shaken off.

Badran's process likens her drawing to "dream talk," defined by anthropologist Diana Allen as "the practice of recounting, interpreting, and enacting dreams."[58] Just as our dreams distort unremarkable images from our daily lives, the artist's imagination turns a meaningless object—a car part leaning against a tree—into a fearsome creature. In drawing this mechanical monster, Badran "talks" about her "dream," imbuing it with the broader signification of Palestinian mobility. The viewer is privy to this interpretive act insofar as the drawing formally recreates the transformation of meaning, arranging bits and pieces of unrelated, inanimate objects into a legible, animate whole. The fact that the figure's constituent parts are themselves broken or incomplete simultaneously discourages efforts to isolate elements as independently meaningful and emphasizes their origins elsewhere, suggesting that they have been separated from other wholes in order to form this one.

In the transference of meaning to the meaningless, one might readily identify Freud's dissection of a dream into latent and manifest content. Instead, I turn to colloquial frameworks for dream interpretation in the Eastern Mediterranean, which differ broadly from psychoanalytic approaches in two general ways. Firstly, in line with Islamic traditions, these frameworks

[58] Diana Allan, *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 138.

understand the source of a dream as primarily external to the dreamer, with most of its (latent) content deriving from a metaphysical elsewhere rather than the dreamer's lived experience or personal desires. This is not to say that the dreamer's life is entirely absent from this content, but rather that its appearance in a given dream is mediated through unknowable forces and may have been curated to impart a specific message. Secondly, while Freudian analysis focuses on the resurfacing of the past, both *ta'bīr* and *tafsīr*[59] tend to be oriented towards the future, open to the possibility of dreaming as a mode of divination. This orientation, according to Diana Allen, is not limited to supernatural belief. Allen's study of dream interpretation among Palestinian refugees in early-aughts Lebanon argues that the discussion of dreams, for female camp residents,[60] is fundamentally linked to a "pragmatics of hope—the resources by which selves remain phenomenologically rooted in futurity."[61] Irreducible to idle escapism, "dream talk represents an intellectual and imaginative resource people can draw on in moments of adversity, allowing them to project themselves into the unknown and make it more tractable."[62]

Like *Escapee, Two Sisters* (1977, Figure 4.13) breathes meaning into assemblages of mismatched materials. Where *Escapee* articulates the artist's own dream, however, *Two Sisters* interprets someone else's. Badran was sketching abandoned brickmaking machines between Ramallah and Jerusalem in 1977 when she made the acquaintance of a precocious eight-year-old named Fawzi. Intrigued by the artist's work, Fawzi announced that he, too, wanted to draw the

[59] *Ta'bīr* and *tafsīr* are two common Arabic words used to refer to dream interpretation. The first, which means "expression," generally refers to the casual interpretation of dreams in everyday settings and is not associated with religion. The second, which means "explanation," generally refers to a more "official" mode of dream analysis that uses the Qur'an as its textual basis.

[60] As Allan notes, dream interpretation is a highly gendered activity among Palestinians, where it is almost exclusively practiced by and among women.

[61] Allan, Refugees of the Revolution, 140.

[62] Allan, Refugees of the Revolution, 138.

machines, and eagerly accepted a piece of paper and some colored pencils when Badran offered them. A short while later, the boy gave her the finished drawing (Figure 4.12). Badran was fascinated by the image, struck by how the child had transformed the bulky, dilapidated structures into a creature that seemed almost to dance. Channeling the perspective of an imaginative kid, she created her own version of Fawzi's creature, ultimately creating a set of characters she calls the "two sisters" (Figure 4.13).[63] The sisters haunt her work, showing up in other drawings from the Ramallah series as well as later paintings.

Amalgams of various kinds of construction materials, the sisters are seemingly patched together from engine parts, scrap metal, cables and other detritus in addition to the scaffolding of the brickmaking machines. They move in unison, weight shifted to their right legs, torsos curved in counterbalance. Wire "skirts" bunch up with the motion of thin, straight legs like colorful pieces of rectangular steel tubing, atop which torsos of mechanical castoffs seem to whirr like an organ system. On the left-hand side of their bodies, short, reddish tubes of scrap metal stretch upward like arms, ending in "hands" fashioned of blue hinges. Their other arms are also reddish, tubelike forms, but instead of ending in hinges they sprout long poles that taper skyward until they form a sharp point. Heads emerge from more scrap metal, cocked slightly away from the sword-like protrusions. Spools of wire swing like pigtails on either side of metal bracket "eyes," their contents unraveling slightly in an unseen breeze.

The intentions of these creatures are unclear. On one hand, they do not exude the same sense of lethargic wickedness that their counterpart in *Waiting* does. To the contrary, they seem to be dancing in a playful, jovial manner, moving bodies whose cheerful primary colors evoke children's toys. The red structures that form their mouths turn upward at the corners as if

[63] Samira Badran in Zoom conversation with the author, May 8th, 2020.

smiling, their eyes large, bright, and widely spaced in childlike proportions. The hairlike wisps of wire that escape in unruly strands from their "pigtails" further humanize the creatures, who are, it must be said, a little bit cute. On the other hand, metal triangles above each eye evoke eyebrows drawn together, communicating anger in their cartoonishly steep angle. The tapered rods the sisters carry appear to be weapons, an impression heightened by the particulars of their construction; seemingly rendered in telescoping sections, the poles *could* be retracted, but aren't. Likewise, the "hinges" at the ends of their other arms could as easily be revolvers.

This ambiguity echoes that of *Escapee,* whose macabre aesthetic is the stuff of horror movies but whose subject nevertheless elicits empathy. Here, a subtle sense of hope challenges the image's trenchant despair. A blue root bursts from the calf of the trapped leg, emerging opposite the malevolent apparatus as if to insist on the possibility of growth despite restriction. A bandage wraps one of the red creature's appendages, suggesting its vulnerability to harm. Most remarkably, the girl herself is in motion. Her upper body seems to float almost weightlessly, pulled gently skyward as though caught in an updraft, but is angled slightly forward in a way that implies the girl's command over her own body. Though barely attached, her legs move in accordance with her torso, thrusting the figure into an impossible run. The drawing's subject seizes the futurity of forward movement, propelling herself through space and time despite the odds stacked against her. This futurity, too, finds a parallel in *Two Sisters,* which animates and reproduces the visions of a Palestinian child, symbolic of potential and hope.

Escapee and *Two Sisters* take physical evidence of Palestine's tumultuous present and shape it into the future-oriented figures of the runner and the child. One defined by forward motion, the other by upward growth, these figures speculate about the impending fate of the territory from which they were crafted. Their haphazard construction from scraps of other things

grants this speculation an aura of spontaneity, delineating it from intentional modes of aspiration or conjuring and adding to the sense of meaning-making evoked in the concept of "dream talk." Their animation of everyday cast-offs within frameworks of futurity suggests a search for omens, but their many contradictions ensure that they never portend a single clear outcome.

Indeed, the drawings not only enact the "imaginative resource" of dream talk but also convey its biggest caveat: indeterminacy. The meaning of a dream can never be precisely decoded, nor can the consequences of its telling—believed by many to ensure the dream's truth––be predicted with absolute accuracy. The car-part-turned-creature may herald continued restriction, but the faceless girl's run could signal escape. The two sisters might be harbingers of danger, or they could predict the arrival of friends. According to Allan, this ambiguity is paradoxically entwined with the function of dream talk as "a kind of anti-empirical technique for dealing with difficulty and uncertainty."[64] For many of her interlocutors, "the belief that dreams trigger effects and outcomes that can never be fully known or anticipated…loosened the weave in the fabric of fate, and was productive therefore of agency and hope."[65]

[64] Allan, Refugees of the Revolution,151

[65] Allan, Refugees of the Revolution, 155

Epilogue: After Hiroshima

Beirut from the outside, surrounded by Israeli tanks and official Arab paralysis, has been plunged into darkness and blackmail. Beirut is thirsty.

Yet the Beirut of the inside, Beirut from *the inside, prepares its other reality. It holds its nerve. It raises its guns to protect the radiance of its meaning as the capital of Arab hope.*[1]

In *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1985), Mahmoud Darwish conjures August 6th, 1982, in West Beirut. The poetic memoir does not faithfully recreate an actual event, but rather draws from the author's experience to evoke the surreal quality of everyday life under Israel's siege. In its stiff-lipped determination, the quote above seems to presage a last stand, and indeed, the specific date situates the twelve or so hours of the story's duration at the beginning of the end. By this time, Palestinian leaders had begun to negotiate with US and Lebanese officials, moving towards an agreement that would conclude their time in Beirut. Darwish's choice of date was not a deliberate reference to this history, however, but to a different one: August 6th, 1982, was the 37th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

In drawing a parallel with a tragedy of historic proportions, *Memory for Forgetfulness* proclaims the vastness of Beirut's loss. By mid-August, West Beirut had been under siege for nearly two months. Bombarding the city by land, air, and sea, Israel gave a powerful display of its military might in what would soon be called "one of the most serious breaches of international legal order in recent years."[2] White phosphorus shells ripped through the once-thriving business

[1] Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*, trans. Ibrahim Muhawi (1985; trans. 1995; reis. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), 68

[2] Sean MacBride et al, "Israel in Lebanon: Report of the International Commission to Enquire into Reported Violations of International Law by Israel during Its Invasion of the Lebanon," 1982. Excerpted in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1983): 121.

district of Hamra, gutting the offices of *Newsweek*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *An-Nahar*.[3] Cluster bombs detonated in civilian areas, unleashing small, brightly colored bomblets that would later explode in the hands of children.[4] Nothing was categorically spared: hospitals, schools, houses, apartment buildings, and recreation centers were bombed indiscriminately, while PRCS doctors, including foreign volunteers, were arrested as "collaborators" and forced to leave their posts. [5] From the shell-damaged ruins of the refugee camps to the mansions of Ras Beirut, civilians ran out of food, water, and electricity.

Badly outnumbered and wildly outgunned, the Palestinians and their allies made an admirable show of force in the eleventh hour of their revolution.[6] The courage of conviction, however, is no match for a full-scale military invasion, and in the end the PLO agreed to withdraw from Lebanon. On Saturday, August 21st, a boat left for Cyprus with 400 PLO fighters aboard, inaugurating a twelve-day evacuation that would disarm the Palestine Liberation Organization and scatter 14,420 of its members across Cyprus, Syria, and Tunisia.[7] After just

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[3] Loren Jenkins, "Beirut Phosphorus Victim: 'I Felt I Was Suddenly on Fire.'" *The Washington Post,* 20 August 1982. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1982/08/20/beirut-phosphorus-victim-i-felt-i-was-suddenly-on-fire/b5083eca-2250-4e95-a561-6d4fad11d5ce/

[4] An oft-repeated concern about the Israeli use of cluster munitions in Lebanon in both 1982 and 2006 is that the small, brightly colored submunitions they release are frequently mistaken for toys. For more information on the 1982 context, see Kevin Danaher, "Israel's Use of Cluster Bombs in Lebanon," *Journal for Palestine Studies* 11, no. 4-12, no. 1, "Special Issue: The War In Lebanon" (Summer-Autumn 1982): 48-55.

[5] Well-documented examples of foreign doctors arrested in Lebanon in 1982 by Israeli forces without due cause include Canadian surgeon Chris Giannou (detained with two Norwegian doctors, a Palestinian internist and an Iraqi surgeon, names unknown) and Dr. Steinar Berge of Norway (arrested with childcare aid worker Øyvind Møller, also Norwegian).

[6] Per Yezid Sayigh (1983), the total size of the Israeli invasion force was 120,000 troops with 1600 tanks, 1600 armored personnel carriers, 600 guns or multiple-rocket launchers including at least 500 self-propelled howitzers or field gun, plus "massive air and naval support" (6). Meanwhile, the PLO had no more than 18,000 fighters in all of Lebanon, the majority of whom were not full-time military personnel.

[7] Figure of evacuees from "Chronology, July 16,1982–October 15th, 1982," *Middle East Journal* 37, no. 1 (Winter, 1983): 70.

three months, over 17,000 Arabs were dead—5,500 in Beirut alone—and another 30,000 wounded.[8] The capital of Arab hope had fallen.

Israel's offensive in Lebanon, which its architects dubbed "Operation Peace for Galilee," cost the IDF 345 soldiers during this first phase.[9] Its stated justification was self-defense. That the Palestinian contingent posed no significant military threat to Israel is obvious even to the casual observer, and it has been well established that Israel's actions in Lebanon constituted unjustified aggression by international legal criteria.[10] The real *casus belli*, as political scientist Rashid Khalidi has argued, was the demonstration of effective self-government on the part of the Palestinians. What the PLO announced to the world, Khalidi claims, "was: here we are, doing a reasonable job of governing part of our people in exile in spite of enormous odds; why should we not have the right to do the same thing with all of them in our homeland?"[11] Evidenced by the widespread destruction of clinics, cultural centers, schools, and administrative buildings, Israel's

[8] The most widely quoted statistic on casualties, published by *An-Nahar* on 3 September 1982, cites 17,825 dead and 30,203 wounded across Lebanon, of which 5,595 deaths and 11,260 injuries occurred in Beirut. This number comes from official reports by Lebanese police and is generally understood to be low, as it relied primarily on hospital deaths; an accurate estimate is impossible due to the chaotic nature of the fighting, search and rescue efforts, and burials. This statistic does not include deaths from the camp massacres at Sabra and Shatila, which happened from 16-18 September.

[9] Ralph Mandel, "Israel in 1982: The War in Lebanon," *The American Jewish Yearbook* 84 (1984): 18.

[10] The MacBride Commission concluded that Israel's conduct in Lebanon violated international law in numerous ways, including systematic noncompliance with the UN Security Council; use of fragmentation and incendiary weapons against civilians contrary to international legal principles of proportionality and discrimination; violation of the Geneva Conventions in its treatment of Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners (inclusive of civilians); violation of the Geneva Conventions in its treatment of Lebanese and Palestinian civilian populations; failure to meet criteria for self-defense or otherwise justify its invasion in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations; and involvement in the massacres at Sabra and Shatila. An investigation in the proceedings of the 1983 Annual Meeting of the American Society of International Law, "Aggression or Self-Defense in Lebanon in 1982?" reports similar findings (Mallison et al, 1983). See also UN Security Council resolutions 508, 509, 512, 513, 515, 516, 517, 520, 521; UN General Assembly resolution 37/123.

[11] Rashid Khalidi, "The Palestinians in Lebanon: Social Repercussions of Israel's Invasion," *Middle East Journal* 38, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 256.

target was as much the social safety net provided by the PLO as it was the Palestinian militias. "They felt threatened because it encouraged Palestinians everywhere, and gave a potent argument to their supporters."[12] To most, it was clear that the operation aimed primarily at "breaking the will of the Palestinian national movement, not only in the war zone of Lebanon, but…in the occupied West Bank and Gaza."[13]

It is impossible to quantify the material impact of Beirut's devastation on Palestinian cultural production. To dwell on the collective loss of archives looted or destroyed during the siege is to risk vertiginous overwhelm, and such a task is beyond the scope of this dissertation.[14] Instead, I offer the single example of an embryonic museum, brainchild of the late Mona Saudi. In late 1976, Saudi persuaded Yasser Arafat to sanction the establishment of the PLO's Plastic Arts Division and sign off on its first project, the International Exhibition for Palestine.[15] The exhibition, which was held at Beirut's Arab University from March 21st through April 5th, 1978, showcased paintings, sculptures, and works on paper from an extraordinary network of artists in solidarity with Palestine. [16] Through personal connections, political contacts, and artists' unions,

[12] Rashid Khalidi, "The Palestinians in Lebanon," 256

[13] Macbride et al, "Israel in Lebanon," 121.

[14] UN General Assembly resolution 37/123 B (16 December 1982) censures Israel for these actions, condemning the Israeli army's seizure of "archives and documents of every kind concerning Palestinian history and culture, including…archives, documents, manuscripts and material such as film documents, literary works by major authors, paintings, *objets d'art*, and works of folklore, research works and so forth." The resolution demands the restitution of all seized materials, specifically citing "the archives and documents removed from the Palestine Research Centre and arbitrarily seized by the Israeli forces." In the case of the Palestine Research Center, looted items were returned; in most cases, documents simply vanished, destroyed or whisked away to Israeli archives where they languish in various states of accessibility to this day.

[15] Mona Saudi in conversation with the author, 6 May 2019, Beirut.

[16] All scholarship on the International Exhibition for Palestine owes a debt of gratitude to Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti, whose decade-long research project went to extraordinary lengths to reconstruct the exhibition and its context. This project resulted in a powerful exhibition, *Past Disquiet* (Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, 25 February-1 June, 2015; Haus der Kuturen der Welt, Berlin, 19 March-9 May; Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende, Santiago, 7 April-8 December, 2018; Sursock Museum,

Saudi and her colleagues convinced 179 artists from 30 countries to send their work to Beirut. Participants ranged from well-known Arab artists like Baya (Algeria), Aref Rayess (Lebanon), and Dia Azzawi (Iraq) to international figures like Tomiyama Taeko (Japan), Carlos Cruz-Diez (Venezuela), and Joan Miró (Spain). With the notable exception of Juliana Seraphim, every artist discussed in this dissertation was represented by at least one work.

Michel Troche, an art critic working in museum acquisitions for the French Ministry of Culture, attended the exhibition and described it as important on a number of levels:

> ...politically, it shows the international solidarity with the Palestinian resistance... culturally, it shows that the Palestinians are able to stage an exhibition of high standing, at an international level, but also at the level of their own cultural aspirations…There is a diversity and a sampling that make me think that this exhibition could take place in France or England as well as Palestine. [17]

Troche's point about the marriage between an international exhibition and Palestinian cultural aspirations is particularly salient. Though the formation of the Plastic Arts Division represented a departure from Shammout's model in many ways, its approach to this exhibition indicates that it, too, wanted to keep its distance from the elitism of the commercial art world. "We were keen on holding the exhibition in a modest hall, in a popular neighborhood close to the Palestinian refugee camps," explained Mona Saudi in news coverage of the exhibition. "The art galleries of Beirut appeal specifically to an elite, while our exhibition is generally visited by students, fighters, camp residents, and revolutionary cadres." [18] Nevertheless, the content of solicited work

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Beirut, 27 July-1 October, 2018), as well as a supremely useful accompanying volume of the same name (Warsaw: Warsaw Museum of Modern Art, 2018). My personal thanks go to Kristine for her generosity in sharing her research with me.

[17] Michel Troche, "La politique imprègne toute la vie, y compris la vie artistique," Palestine: Palestinian Liberation Organization Information Bulletin 4, No. 8, French ed. (May 1–15, 1978): 32

[18] Interviewed by Liana Badr, "'Ala Hamish al-M'arid at-Tashkili al-'alami: Shammout, Mona Saudi, al-Touni fi thalāth t'alīqāt." ["At the Sidelines of the International Art Exhibition: Shammout, Mona Saudi, El Touni in Three Comments"], *Al-Hourriah* no. 86 (April 17, 1978): 28.

was not delimited in any way, and the "diverse sampling" of art that comprised the exhibition was largely unrelated to Palestine or its struggle. The true contribution lay in the act of donation: following the exhibition, the works were to form the "nucleus of the 'Museum of Solidarity with Palestine.'"[19]

Saudi conceived of this institution as a "museum in exile," a permanent collection and center for international exchange among artists that would exist in Beirut until it could be relocated to a liberated Palestine.[20] The extent to which the project had developed by 1982 is unclear, as all documents pertaining to its planning were lost in the siege with the rest of the Plastic Arts Division's archives.[21] The building that housed the museum's nascent collection was among the first to be shelled, so the artworks it comprised were initially thought to have been destroyed. However, several works from the collection had been loaned to an exhibition in Iran in 1980 and had not made it back due to airport closures in Beirut; they remain in storage at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art to this day. Furthermore, Palestinian artist Abdel Hay Mosallam recalls having pre-emptively moved some of the works to Mona Saudi's home in Beirut, adding fuel to the "rumors, speculation, and hearsay" that have haunted discussions of the erstwhile collection since the end of the Lebanese civil wars.[22]

Like so many Palestinian endeavors, the Museum of Solidarity with Palestine existed in the future-oriented state of a dream, both an aspiration and an idea at the edge of realization. Its

[19] Mona Saudi, "Art for the Solidarity with Palestine" *International Art Exhibition for Palestine,* exhibition catalog. (Beirut: PLO Unified Information Office, Plastic Arts Section, 1978), 7.

[20] Mona Saudi, "Art for the Solidarity with Palestine" and in conversation with author.

[21] Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti, "Transnational Solidarity Networks and Speculative Histories, 1960s-1980s," in *Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity, and Museums in Exile,* eds. Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2018), 34.

[22] Khouri and Salti, "Transnational Solidarity Networks and Speculative Histories," 34.

ultimate fate befits its brief life: neither wholly destroyed nor able to be reconstituted, the museum lingers, diffuse, in a liminal state between the past and the present. The physical losses it suffered during the Israeli assault of Beirut are simultaneously tragic, unknowable, and beside the point, as they are dead cells in a larger corpse, invisible for its magnitude. The artwork and documents destroyed with the Plastic Arts Division, like the contents of countless other archives reduced to ashes in 1982, belonged to the Palestinian Revolution, and the Palestinian Revolution died in the Hiroshima of Beirut.

The revolution was the slumber in which the dream-state took shape, and its presence is felt in every chapter of this dissertation. In Chapter 1, it is the "light of dawn" that shines through Hallaj's skyward figures, the potential for growth in Saudi's seedling, the "beautiful Arab dream" Darwish seeks to protect. It is the system of patronage that enabled the artists of Chapter 2 to create and exhibit their work, as well as the filter through which that work was received by an international audience. It fostered the aspiration and the anxieties that emerge in the bright canvases of Shammout, Ghannam, and Muzayen. The political conditions it engendered shape Boullata's understanding, outlined in Chapter 3, of exilic Palestinian art. They also establish the terms of belonging that contributed to Seraphim's "personal *barzākh,*" impacting even an artist who distanced herself from the nationalist movement. In Chapter 4, the forward-looking ethos of the revolution animates Husseini's serene cityscapes and Badran's hybrid monsters alike, equipping both with radically different strategies for grappling with the present.

In the years I've spent working on this project, I've realized the force of my own desire to access the dreams of the Palestinian Revolution. Like Mohammad Malas, the director of *Al-Manām,* I know that many of these dreams are nightmares, but I return to them because they bear some trace of a promise almost fulfilled. Unlike Malas, I cannot say that I have written "a dream

about dreams that happened in the memory of a dream," because for me that memory does not exist. Born in 1990, I cannot recall a time when the hope for a free Palestine seemed logically sound. I do not know the confidence of revolutionary conviction; my own hope is vestigial, reflexive, inherited. Unyielding and precious to me, it will continue to break my heart until the occupation ends. In the meantime, I press my face to the glass of history, squinting to make out the sharp, distant shine of past futures and allowing myself to imagine their weight. Here, I can read Darwish's first line in *Memory for Forgetfulness* and believe it: "Out of one dream, another dream is born."

Figures

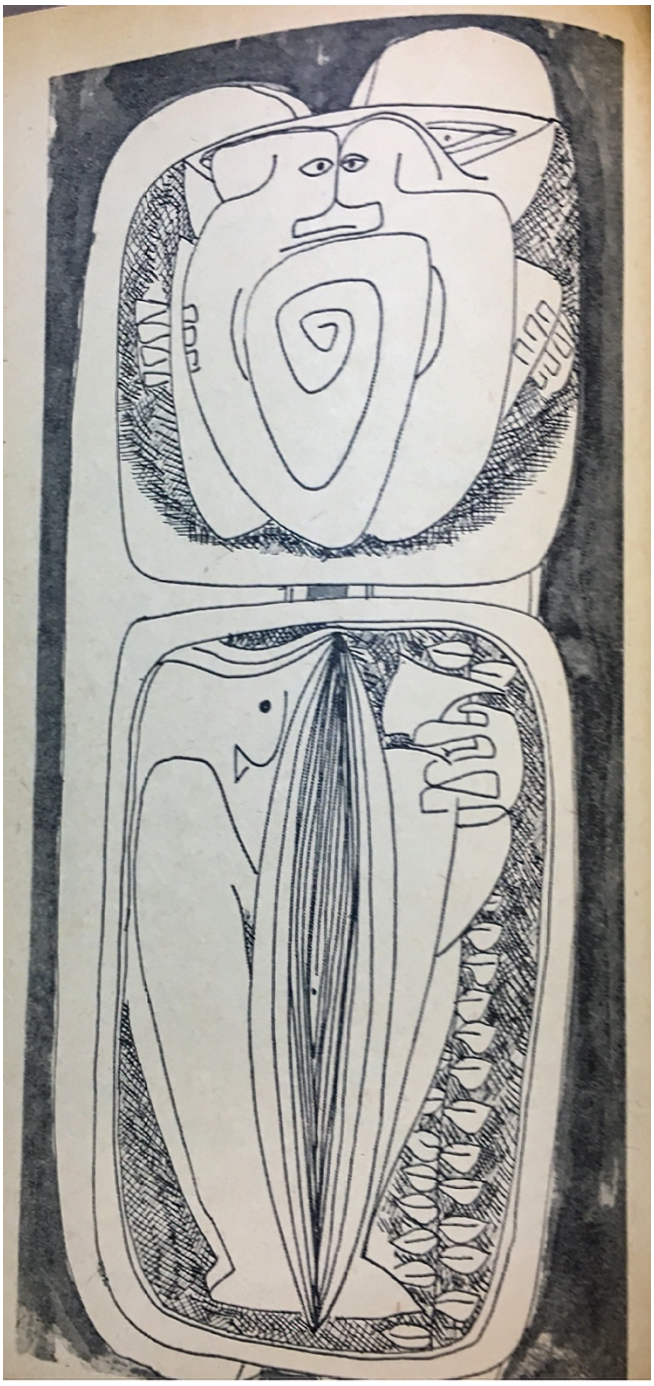

Figure 1.1: Mona Saudi, illustration from "A Person Grows from the Soil of His Dream." Published in *Mawaqif* 28 (1974). Original is pen and ink on paper, dimensions and location unknown. Jafet Library, American University of Beirut.

Figure 1.2: Mustafa Hallaj, untitled self-portrait, 1992. Pencil on paper, dimensions unknown. Private collection of Saleh Barakat, Beirut.

Figure 1.3: Mustafa Hallaj, untitled, 1965. Linocut print, dimensions unknown. Private collection of Saleh Barakat, Beirut.

Figure 1.4: A Fatah poster designed by Mustafa Hallaj, c. 1969. Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

Figure 1.5: Detail of Hallaj's c. 1969 poster showing bird atop Fatah logo; as in the linocut, the white outline of the bird's body mimics the shape of a grenade fuse.

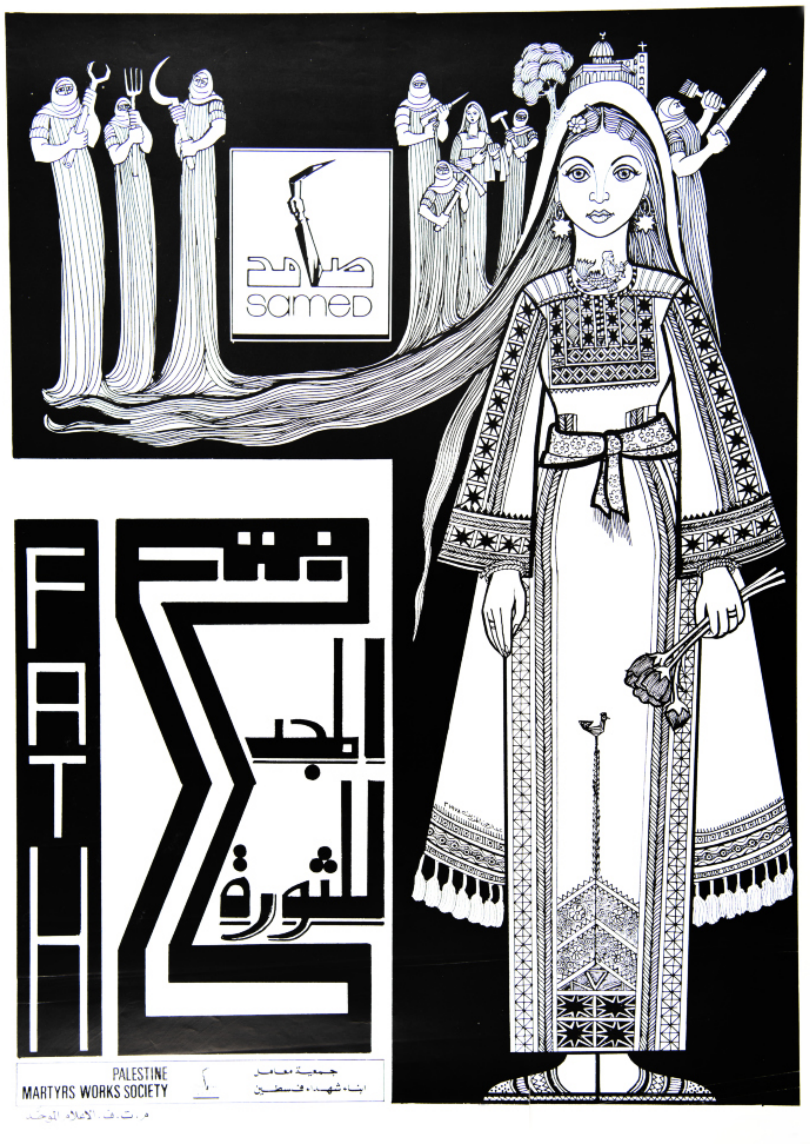

Figure 2.1: Poster designed by Abdel Rahman Al-Muzayen for Fatah's Palestine Martyrs' Works Society (SAMED), 1979. Arabic reads "Fatah: Glory to the Revolution." Archives of the Palestinian Museum (online).

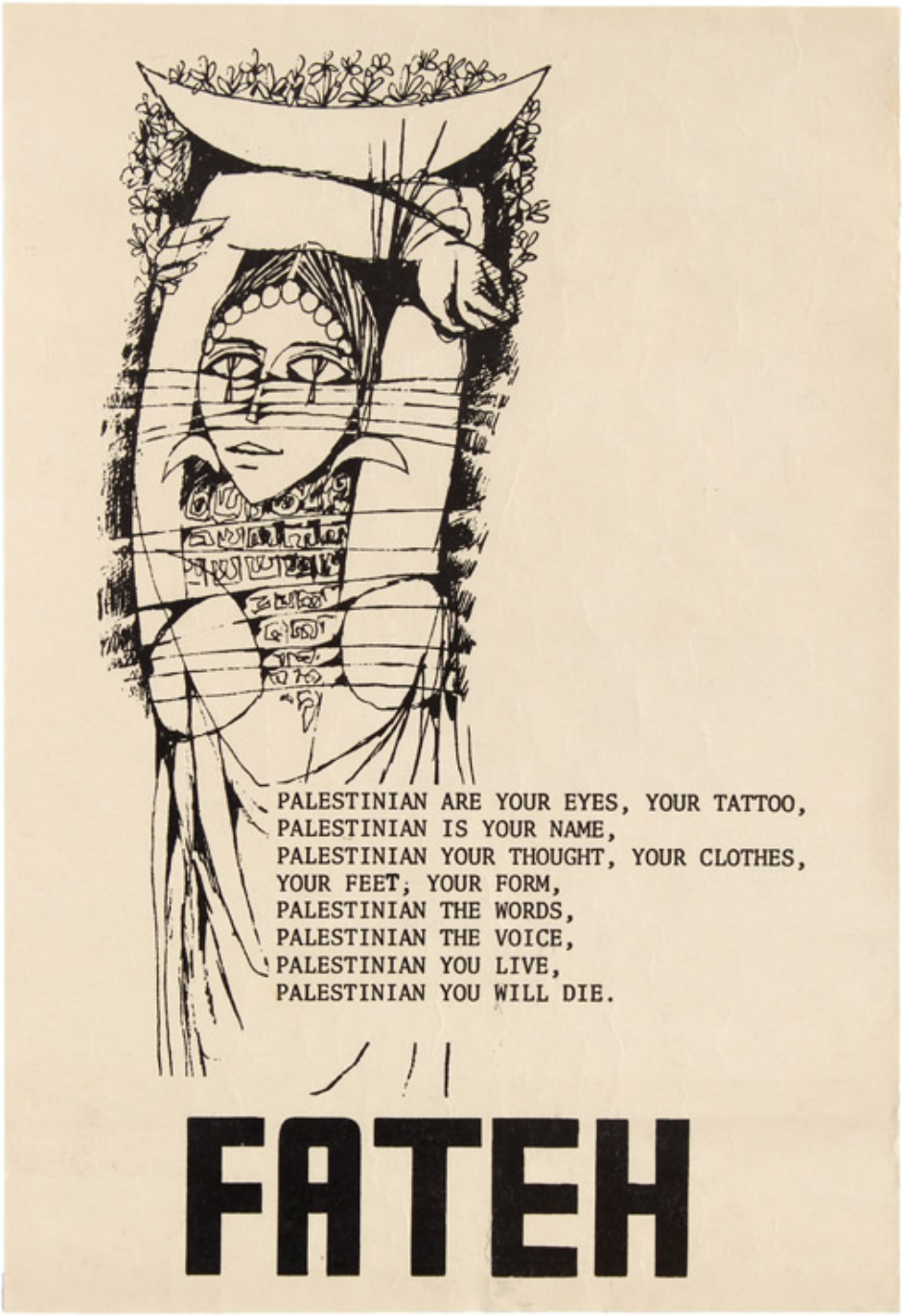

Figure 2.2: Poster designed by Kamal Boullata for Fatah, 1970. The text references Mahmoud Darwish's 1966 poem "Lover from Palestine." Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

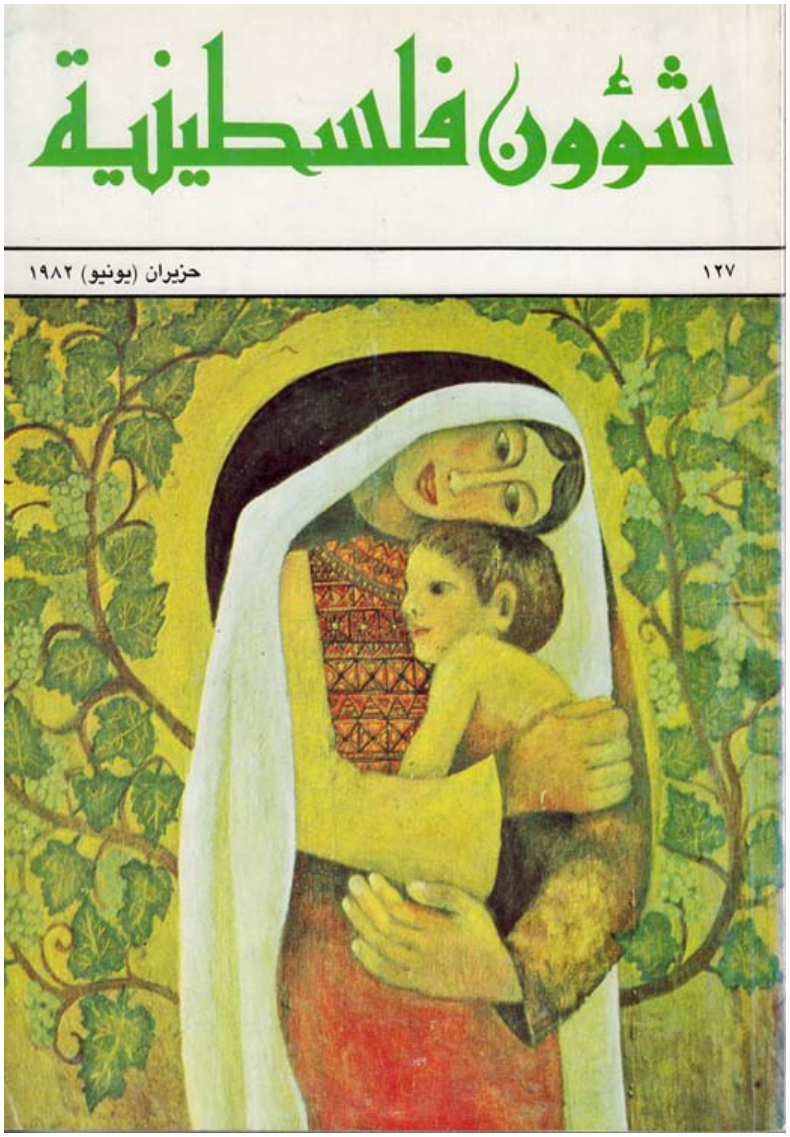

Figure 2.3: Cover illustration by Nabil Anani for *Shu'un Filastiniyya* (*Palestinian Affairs*), June 1982. Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

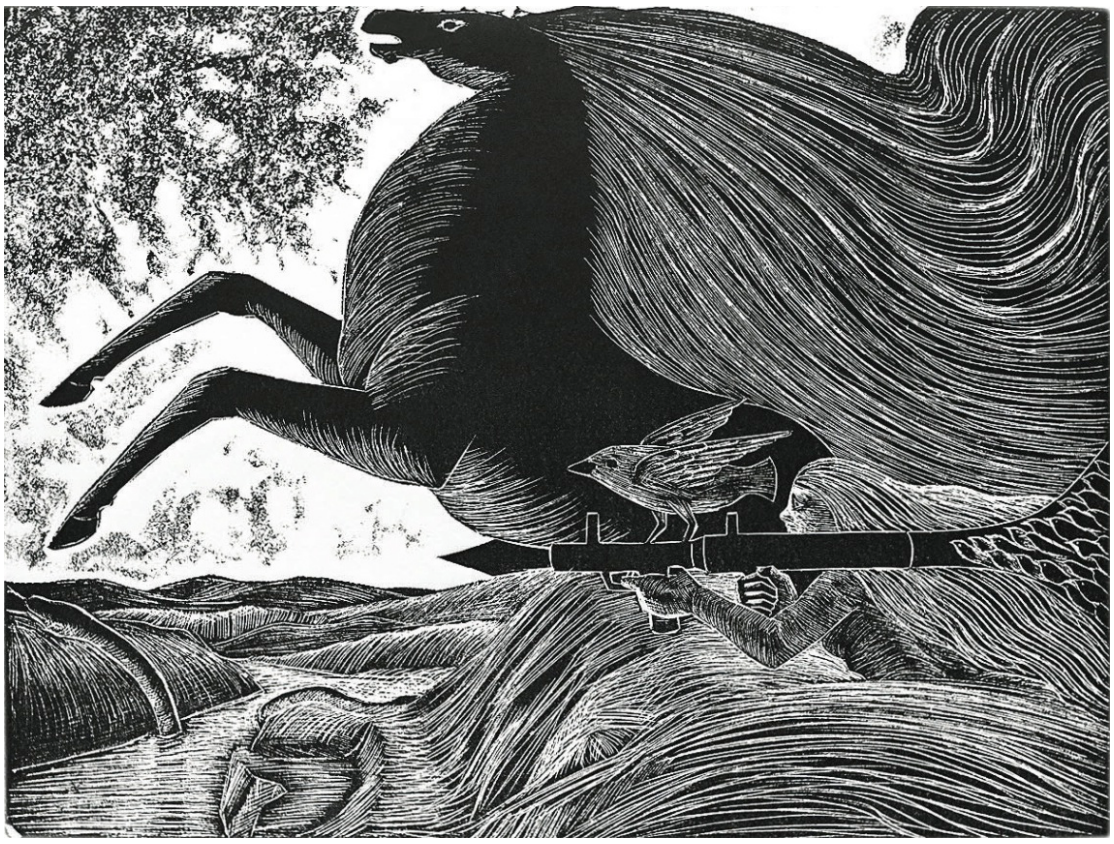

Figure 2.4: Mustafa Hallaj, *The Battle of Al Karameh,* 1969. Masonite block print, dimensions unknown. Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

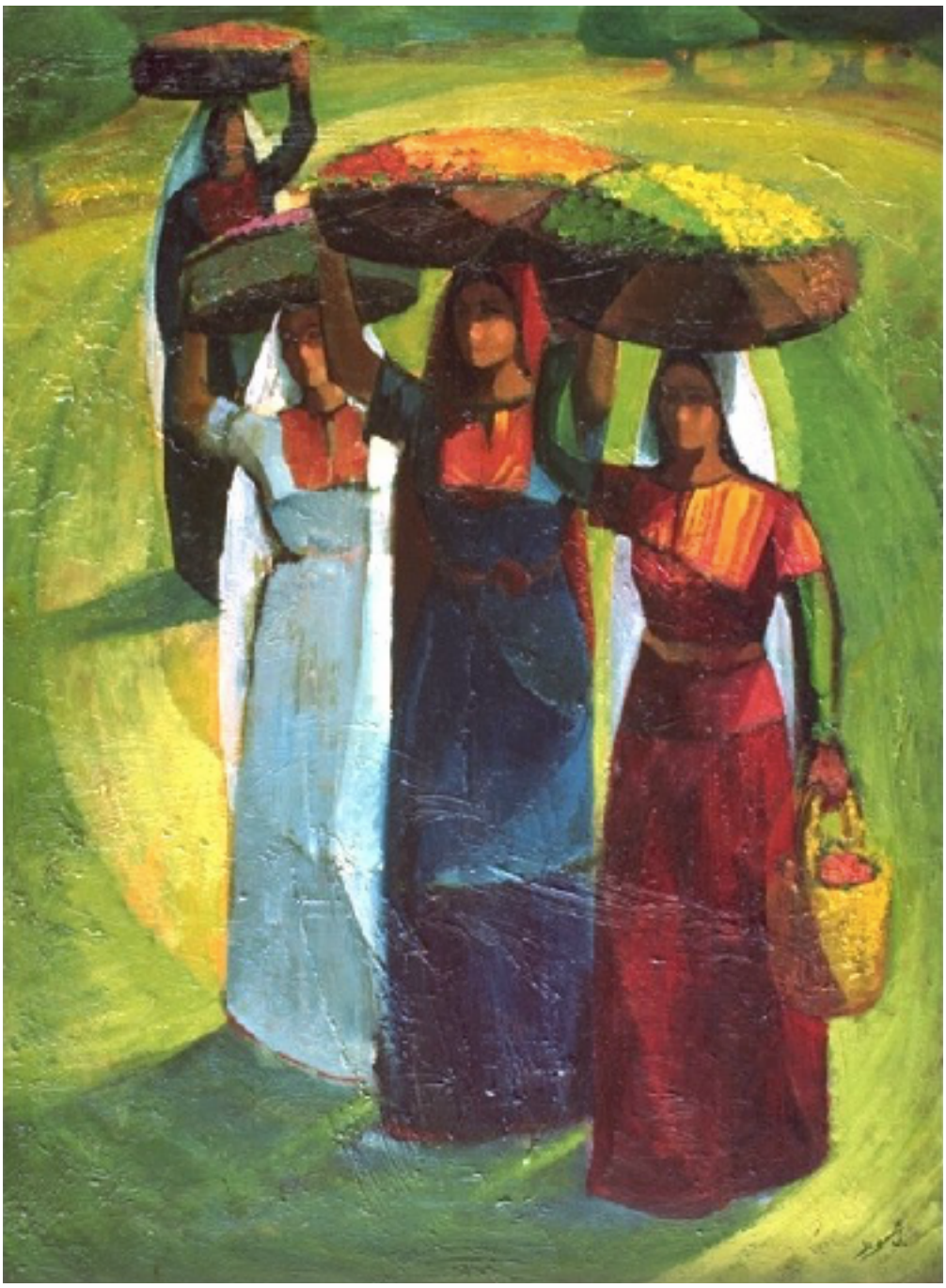

Figure 2.5: Ismail Shammout, *Land of Plenty*, 1970. Oil on unknown surface, 50x70cm. Artist's website (now defunct).

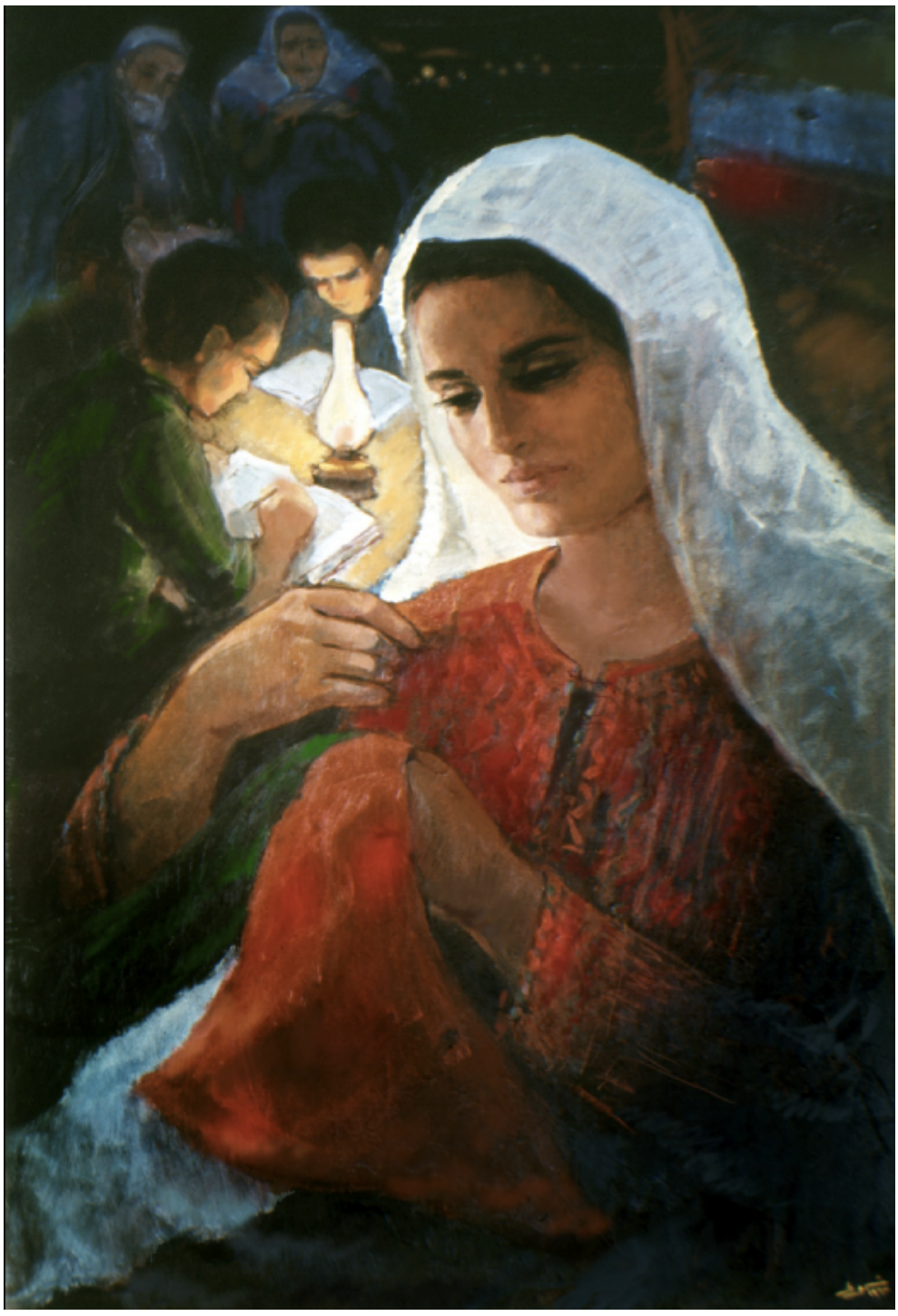

Figure 2.6: Ismail Shammout, *Until Dawn*, 1963. Oil on unknown surface, dimensions unknown. Artist's website (now defunct).

Figure 2.7: Ismail Shammout, *Motherhood*, 1967. Oil pastel on unknown surface, dimensions unknown. Artist's website (now defunct).

Figure 2.8: Ismail Shammout, *Tell Us We're All Right*, 1976. Oil on unknown surface, 98x68.5cm. Artist's website (now defunct).

Figure 2.9: Ismail Shammout, *Pledge Under the Tree*, 1970. Oil on unknown surface, 50x60cm. Artist's website (now defunct).

Figure 2.10: Ismail Shammout, *Three Tales*, 1970. Oil on unknown surface, dimensions unknown. Artist's website (now defunct).

Figure 2.11: Ismail Shammout, A Flower from Majdal, 1970. Oil on unknown surface, dimensions unknown. Artist's website (now defunct).

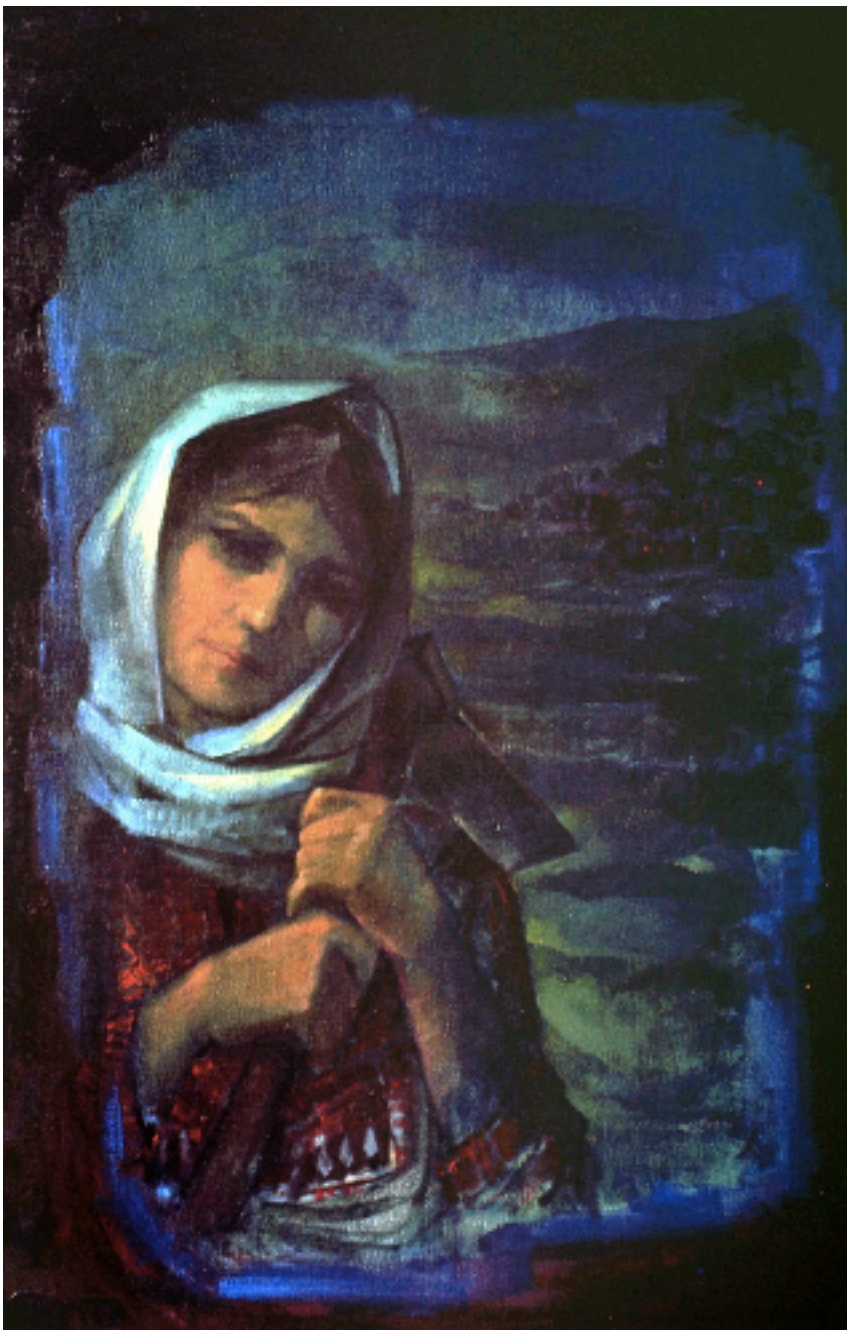

Figure 2.12: Ismail Shammout, *Until He's Back,* 1969. Oil on unknown surface, 70x100cm. Artist's website (now defunct).

Figure 2.13: Poster of Abdel Rahman al-Muzayen's *Waiting at the Threshold* (c.1977). Original was acrylic on unknown surface, dimensions and location unknown. Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

Figure 2.14: Ismail Shammout, *The PLO,* 1965. Oil on unknown surface, dimensions unknown. Artist's website (now defunct).

Figure 2.15: Postcard issued by Iraqi Ministry of Information featuring Amer Al-Obaidi's *Knights from the South* (1973). Original was mixed media on unknown surface, 80x90cm (current location unknown). Personal collection of Amin Alsaden.

Figure 2.16: Ismail Shammout, *The Green Hand,* 1974. Oil on unknown surface,* 60x80cm. Artist's website (now defunct).

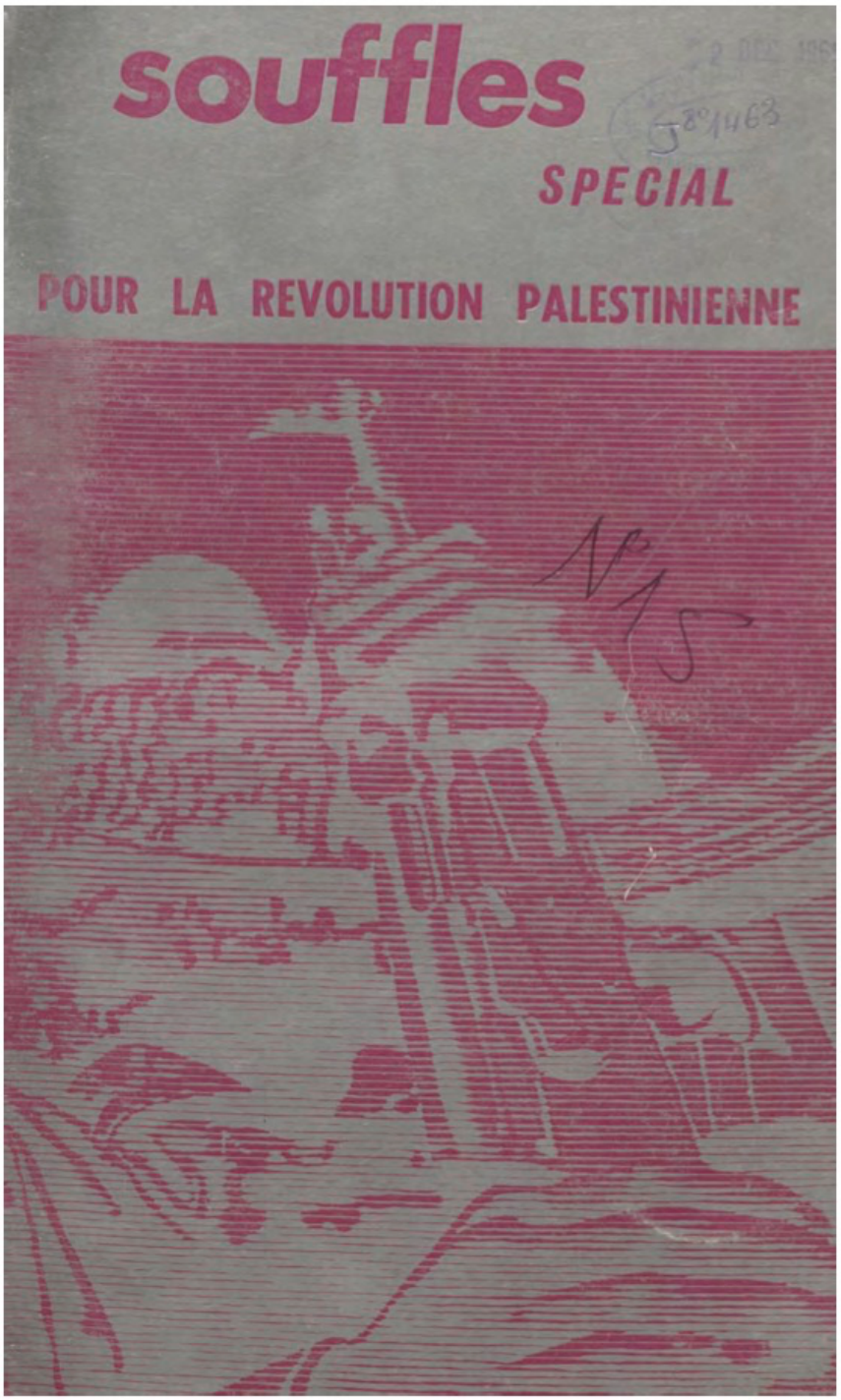

Figure 2.17: Cover of *Souffles* 15 (1969), designed by Mohammad Chebaa. Digital collections of the National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Figure 2.18: Poster designed by Ghassan Kanafani for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, c. 1970. Arabic text reads "Glory to the Combatants who Smashed the Fascist Tanks." Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

Figure 2.19: Poster designed by Emad Abdelwahhab for the PFLP, 1970. Arabic on right says "May 15th," referencing the day the Nakba is commemorated annually. Arabic on left says "Towards the Liberation of Palestine and the Establishment of a Democratic Society." Jafet Library, American University of Beirut.

Figure 2.20: Poster design by Shukri al-Mohandis for Fatah, c. 1968. Arabic text says "Al-Karameh 1968," referencing a 1968 battle between PLO and Jordanian forces against the IDF in the Jordanian town of Al-Karameh. Jafet Library, American University of Beirut.

Figure 2.21: Tamam al-Akhal, *Camps no 1*, 1974. Oil on unknown surface,* 47x120cm. Artist's website.

Figure 2.22: Reproduction of Tamam al-Akhal's *Camps no. 2* in *Integral* 9, 1974. Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge MA.

Figure 2.23: Poster reproduction of Ibrahim Ghannam's *Wheat Harvest,* 1973. Original was oil on unknown surface,* 60x80cm, displayed at the 1974 Arab Biennial. It was destroyed during the siege/massacre of Tel al-Zaatar refugee camp, where Ghannam lived. Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

Figure 2.24: Jumana Husseini, untitled, 1970. Acrylic on canvas, 115x89.5cm. Dalloul Foundation, Beirut.

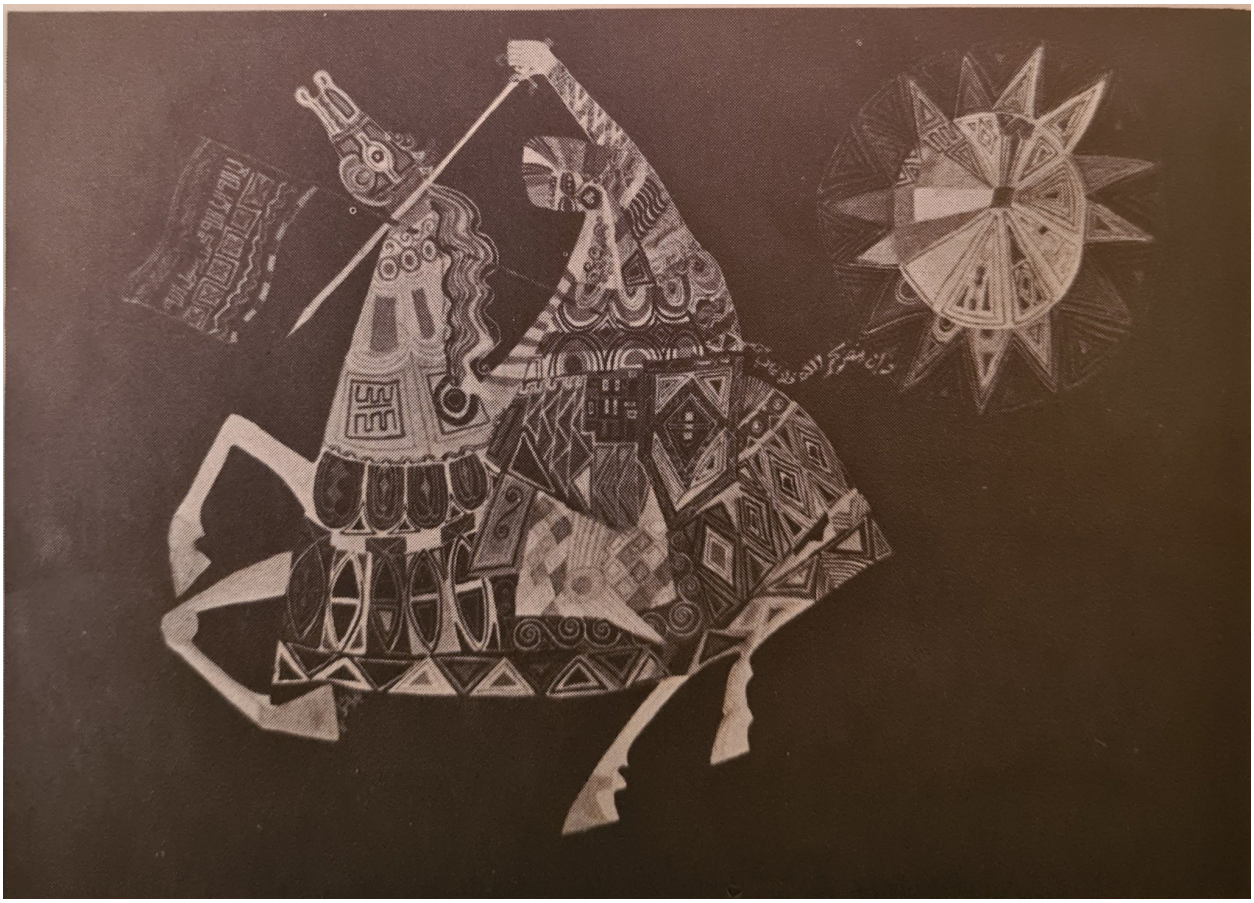

Figure 2.25: Laila Shawa, *Knight* (1974), reproduced in Integral 9, 1974. Oil on unknown surface*, 50x70cm. Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge MA.

*All Palestinian paintings were listed as oil paintings in the First Arab Biennial catalog, though I suspect many of them (especially Ghannam and Shawa) were actually done in acrylic.

Figure 2.26: Newspaper clippings showing the appropriation of a *tatrīz*-embellished *thawb* by El Al airlines, reproduced and captioned in *Palestinian National Art* (c.1980)

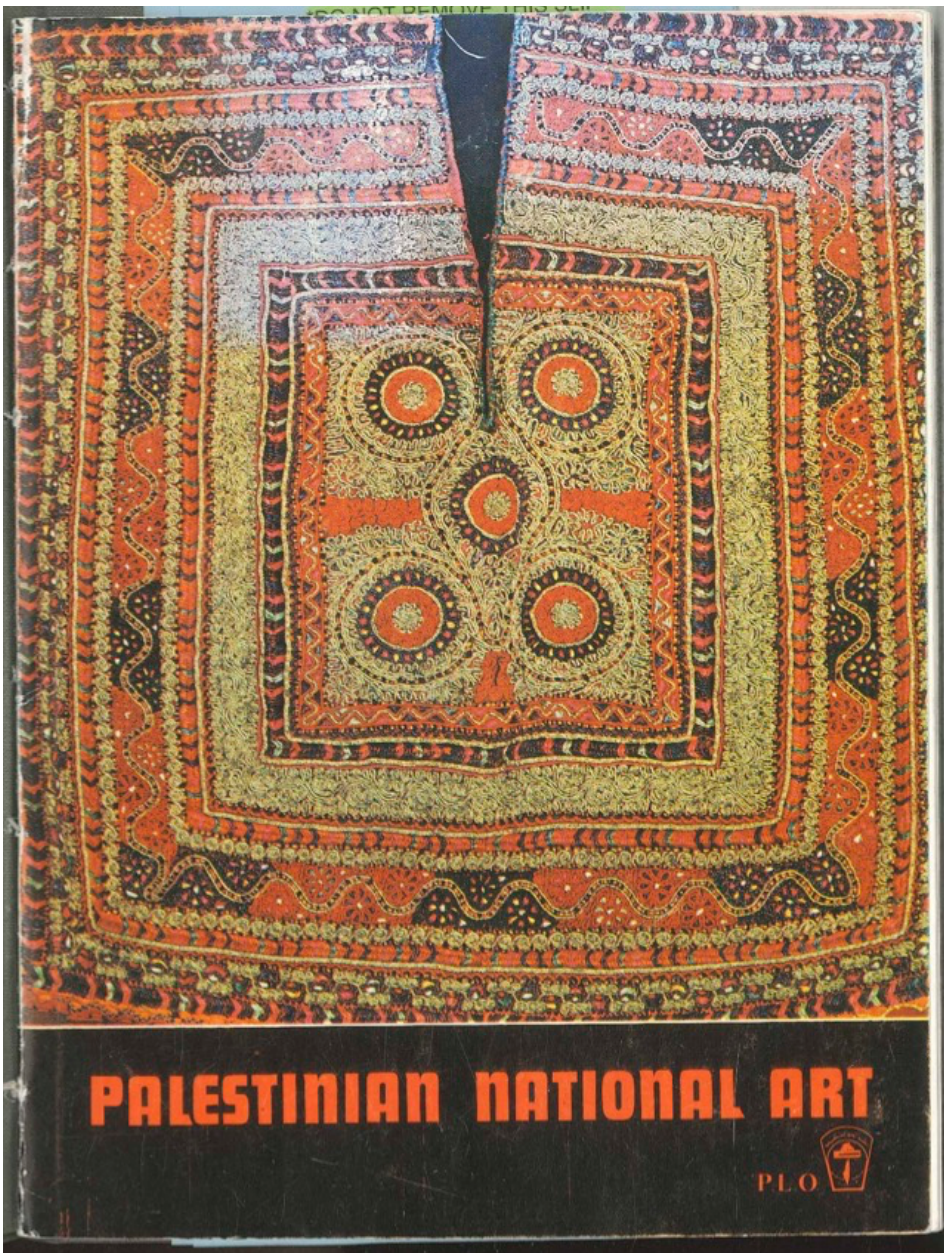

Figure 2.27: Cover of *Palestinian National Art* by Ismail Shammout (PLO, c. 1980), featuring embroidered chest piece of a *thobe*.

Figure 2.28: Maskit catalogue, circa 1970, showing dresses (on left) that appropriate Palestinian *thawb* designs and *tatrīz* patterns. Naora Warszewski Archive, National Library of Israel (online).

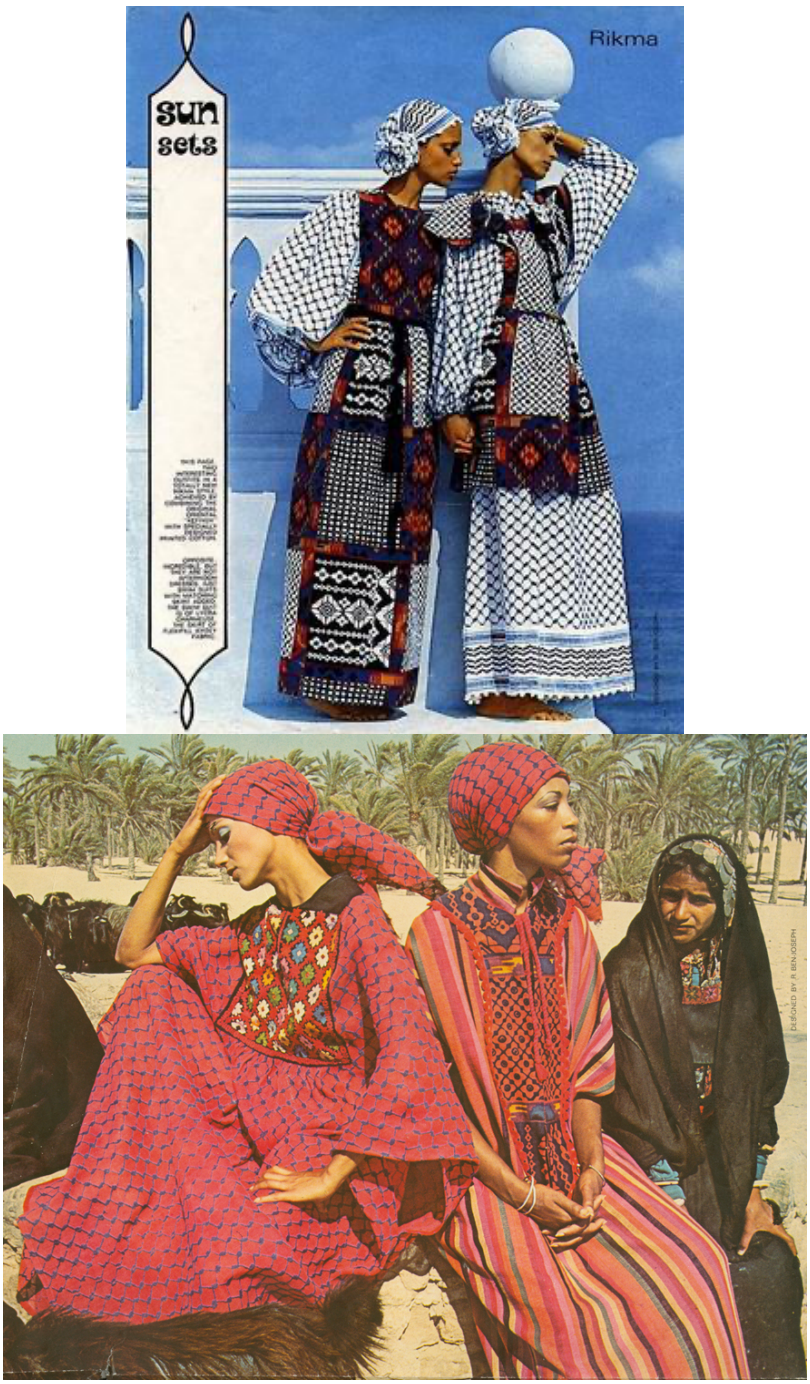

Figure 2.29: *Thobe*-like dresses designed by Rozi Ben Yosef for Rikma that appropriate the patterned fabric of the *kuffiya*, a traditional headscarf and an important symbol of Palestinian resistance. Top photo n.d., bottom 1967. The Israel Museum Center for Israeli Art (online).

Figure 2.30: Abdel Rahman al-Muzayen, untitled, 1977. Acrylic on canvas, 70x100cm. Dalloul Art Foundation, Beirut.

Figure 2.31: Sliman Mansour, *Sad Tunes*, 1977. Oil on canvas, 87x90cm. Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

Figure 3.1: Cici Sursock, *Juliana Seraphim*, 1965. Oil on Masonite, dimensions unknown. Sursock Museum, Beirut.

Figure 3.2: Juliana Seraphim, *Phoenician Amulet,* 1961. Oil on canvas with sand and glass (?), 80x100cm. Barjeel Collection, Sharjah.

Figure 3.3: Juliana Seraphim poses with her work in one of her signature outfits. Photograph undated but taken before 1976, photographer unknown. Published in Helen Khal, *The Woman Artist in Lebanon* (Beirut: Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, 1987).

Figure 3.4: Juliana Seraphim, untitled, 1961. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Photographed in the private collection of Saleh Barakat, Beirut; currently in the Barjeel Collection, Sharjah.

Figure 3.5: Juliana Seraphim, untitled, 1965. Oil on canvas, 100x80cm. Christie's.

Figure 3.6: Detail of Seraphim's untitled 1965 painting showing resonance with earlier "Jerusalem" painting.

Figure 3.7: Juliana Seraphim, *Eye on the City,* 1980. Oil on canvas, 88x116cm. Dalloul Foundation, Beirut.

Figure 3.8: Detail from Seraphim's *Eye on the City* (1980) showing overlapping eyes

Figure 3.9: Juliana Seraphim*, Dragonfly Woman*, 1974. Oil on canvas, 90x70cm. Arcache Auctions, Beirut.

Figure 3.10: Juliana Seraphim, untitled illustration in Ḥiwār 18, 1965. Original is India ink on paper, dimensions and location unknown. Jafet Library, American University of Beirut.

Figure 3.11: Juliana Seraphim, untitled, 1975. Etching, dimensions unknown. Sursock Museum, Beirut.

Figure 3.12: Samira Badran, *Waiting,* c. 1977. Mixed media on paper, dimensions unknown. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4.1: Sliman Mansour, *Memory of Places,* 2009. Oil on canvas, 137x117cm. Barjeel Foundation, Sharjah.

Figure 4.2: Reproduction of untitled, undated harvest scene by Ibrahim Ghannam (c. 1970s). Original was acrylic on unknown surface, dimensions and locations unknown, likely destroyed. Palestine Poster Project Archives (online).

Figure 4.3: Ibrahim Ghannam, untitled, c. 1970. Acrylic on canvas, 60x80cm. Dalloul Foundation, Beirut.

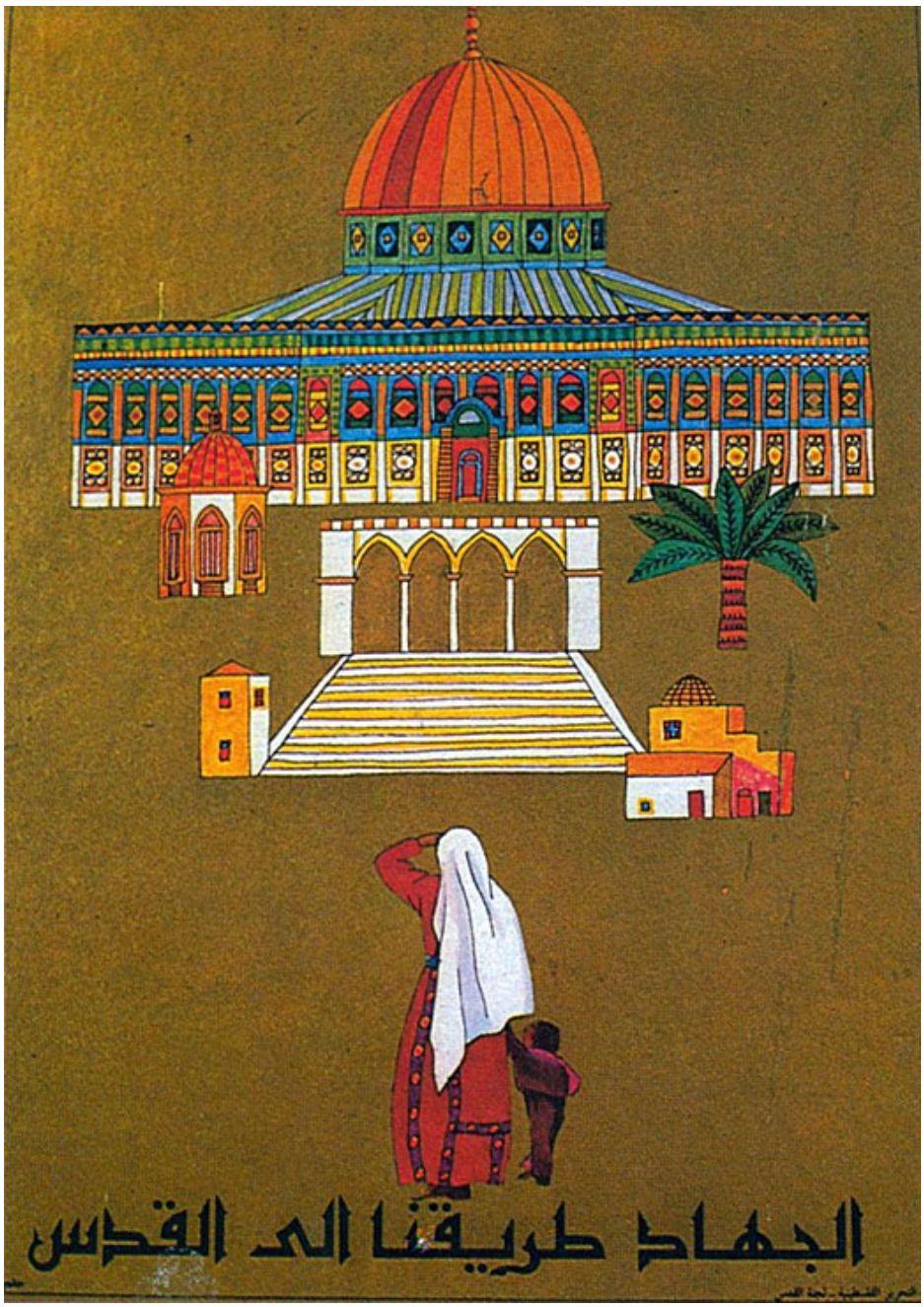

Figure 4.4: Poster designed by Helmi El Touni for Dar al-Fata' al-Arabi, c. 1979. Arabic reads "Righteous Struggle is Our Path to Al-Quds [Jerusalem]."

Figure 4.5: Poster designed by Jumana Husseini for the Palestinian National Commission on the Celebration of the 1500th Anniversary of the Beginning of the Hijra, 1978.

Figure 4.6: Jumana Husseini, untitled, 1970. Oil on canvas, 50x80cm. Christie's.

Figure 4.7: Sliman Mansour, Camel of Burdens III, 2005. Acrylic on canvas, 152x98.5cm. Dalloul Foundation, Beirut. This is the third of three virtually identical versions of this painting. The first was painted in 1973-74 and became a well-known piece of "resistance art" by virtue of its circulation as a poster. It is purportedly in the collection of an unknown private collector. The second, painted in 1975, was purchased by Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and destroyed

with his residential compound in 1986 during “Operation El Dorado,” in which the United States bombed Libya in reprisal for its sponsorship of terrorist activities.

Figure 4.8: Mustafa Hallaj, untitled, 1970. Masonite print on paper, 42x92.5cm. Dalloul Foundation, Beirut.

Figure 4.9: Samira Badran, *Twenty-Five Barrels,* 1977. Ink and watercolor on brown paper, 62x48cm. Dalloul Foundation, Beirut.

Figure 4.10: Samira Badran, *Glass Village,* 1976. Watercolor, ink, and colored pencil on paper, dimensions unknown. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4.11: Samira Badran, *Escapee,* 1978. Watercolor and ink on paper, dimensions unknown. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4.12: Drawing by Fawzi, aged 8. Colored pencils on paper, dimensions unknown. Image courtesy of Samira Badran.

Figure 4.13: Samira Badran, *Two Sisters,* 1977. Ink and watercolor on paper, dimensions unknown. Image courtesy of the artist.

Appendix: Glossary of Arabic Terms

Per IJMES transliteration standards, proper nouns and words that appear in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary are not italicized, nor are they written with diacritical markings.

'Abāya (pl. *'abāyāt*): A loose, long-sleeved, ankle-length garment worn by women.

Barzākh: In Islam, the liminal space between life and death where souls await final judgment. Described in the Qur'an as an isthmus or barrier separating fresh from salt water.

Dākhil, fil-dākhil: Lit. "inside," "on the inside." Among Palestinians, *al-dākhil* refers primarily to historic Palestine/present-day Israel. For example, someone who lives in Jerusalem is said to live "*fil-dākhil,*" whereas someone who lives in New York does not.

Fedayee (pl. fedayeen, fem. fedayeeyya): A freedom fighter affiliated with the Palestinian resistance.

Fellah (pl. fellaheen, fem. fellaha): A peasant farmer, frequently mobilized by various Arab nationalist movements as a symbol of cultural authenticity.

Inṭilāqa: Lit. "outburst," "eruption." Refers to the launch of the Palestinian Revolution in 1965.

Nakba: Lit. "catastrophe." Refers to the campaign of ethnic cleansing through which the state of Israel established itself, during which roughly three-quarters of the Palestinian population was displaced. The Nakba, which some consider ongoing, generally refers to events that occurred between 1947 and 1949, but is commonly dated 1948 in keeping with the Israeli declaration of statehood. Capitalized rather than italicized in this dissertation as a proper noun used among Anglophone Arabs and, increasingly, among the general public to name to this historic tragedy.

Naksa: Lit. "setback." Refers to the swift and shocking defeat of Arab armies by Israel during the Six-Day War of 1967.

Tatrīz: Embroidery. In the context of this dissertation, *tatrīz* refers to traditional Palestinian embroidery, which has been at the center of efforts to preserve Palestinian material heritage since the late nineteenth century.

Thawb (pl. *thiāb*): A long-sleeved, ankle-length garment worn by Palestinian women, more fitted than the *'abāya* and often adorned with *tatrīz.* Outside of the Palestinian context, refers to a range of robe-like garments worn by members of both sexes throughout the MENA region.

Turāth: Cultural heritage or patrimony, often used in a nationalistic context.

Khārij, fil-khārij: Lit. "outside," "on the outside." Companion term to "*dākhil*," refers to places outside of historic Palestine/present-day Israel. For example, someone who lives in New York lives *fil-khārij,* whereas someone who lives in Nablus or Ramallah does not.

Kufiyya (pl. *kufiyyāt*): A headscarf worn traditionally by Arab men. In the Palestinian context, refers to a black and white checked version worn initially by fedayeen and later as a symbol of Palestinian pride or solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

Muhajiba (pl. *muhajibāt*): A woman who wears hijab.

Sumūd: Steadfastness. Among Palestinians, "ṣumūd" refers to the resistant act of staying on and maintaining control of one's land in historic Palestine, as well as to the creation of institutions that undermine the Israeli occupation by enabling Palestinian autonomy.

Sherwāl: A type of baggy trousers ("harem pants") traditionally worn by men in the Levant

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