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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

Political Performance of Violence: Palestinian Female Bombers and the
Politics of Visual Representation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of philosophy

in

Drama and Theatre

by

Rana Salimi

Committee in Charge:

    Professor Emily Roxworthy (Chair)
    Professor Patrick Anderson
    Professor Babak Rahimi
    Professor Janet Smarr
    Professor Frank Wilderson III

2012

The Dissertation of Rana Salimi is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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(Chair)

University of California, San Diego
University of California, Irvine

2012

My deepest gratitude goes to Professor Emily Roxworthy, my mentor and advisor, whose encouragement and enthusiasm over the years have helped me finish this dissertation. There is no doubt in my mind that without her genius guidance and expertise, this project could not have come this far.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my dear parents, Forough and Bahman for their unconditional love , for teaching me the importance of rising against the injustice, and for believing in me. To Mona for her friendship and to Mani for making me laugh

everyday. And to Arash for our years together and for teaching me the art of perseverance.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Political Performance of Violence: Palestinian Female Bombers and the
Politics of Visual Representation

by

Rana Salimi

Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO, 2012
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE, 2012

Professor Emily Roxworthy (Chair)

The phenomenon of "suicide bombing" is not new, and yet the involvement of

Muslim women in this violent political activity has received much media attention,

especially since the Second Intifada. This dissertation challenges interpretations of

female bombers in academic writing and in media presentations. Through the lens of

performance studies, this dissertation offers a nuanced view of what violence means in

present-day Palestinian culture. Viewing female bombers as political performers, I argue

that their actions are evidence of the emergence of a new generation of Muslim women

whose relational agency over their bodies allows them to claim a socio-political status

equal to that of men. By transforming their bodies from visible signs of oppression to a

tool of political activism as weapons of destruction, these women have gained new identities and challenged the norms of Muslim patriarchy as well as Orientalist views of women. The female bombers have manipulated their assigned gender roles as mothers and daughters and have become the mothers of the whole nation. While their virtual presence in their farewell videos presents a deadly threat to their enemy, their performances of power and commitment contribute to the pedagogy of resistance and self-sacrifice.

The semiotics of resistance illuminates the pedagogical purposes of the bombing attacks these women carry out. Palestinian resistance organizations create spectacles of resistance that feature the actions of women bombers prominently and turn public spaces into stages where the public can display its commitment to the struggle. The spectacles of resistance, aiming at reaching the Palestinian youth, are a response to spectacles of occupation created by the Israeli military that cast shadows on the daily lives of the residents of the occupied territories. Spectacles of resistance seek to recruit Palestinians as spect-actors who will become the next generation of fighters. They also (falsely) present the Palestinian community to the global audience as a unified body of supporters of violence.

Introduction

There they stand in front the camera, holding a machine gun. A Red-Cross nurse (Wafa Idris), an attorney (Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat), a mother of two very young children (Reem Saleh al-Riashi), a student (Mirvat Masoud), a grandmother and a political activist (Fatima al- Najar): female bombers. They talk about the ideology of resistance and the necessity of violent resistance against the occupiers. It is hard to associate them with the oppressed, shy, illiterate, and domestic Middle Eastern female figure Orientalism has portrayed for centuries. Instead, they present themselves as icons of resistance. Their images and their statements are hard to forget. Regardless of how we interpret their motivations, the spectacularized bodies remain haunting and threatening. Perhaps because it promises death, perhaps because we know they have already reached their goal of bombing before the videotapes were released, or we know that others are ready to follow in their footsteps. The images we see are mesmerizing. Our physical remoteness from them is no longer enough to guarantee our safety, as those in the United States learned on September 11.

Dozens of videos of "suicide bombers", which I will refer to as farewell statement videos, are available on the Internet. These short clips are made of both male and female volunteers for bombing missions and are released to the public only after the mission is completed and the individual is deceased. They all use similar representational techniques and showcase the dedication of the paramilitaries to the struggle and to the resistance organizations that support them. The perfromativity of the bombers' farewell statements position these women as political performers in the

theatricality of war. The significance of the videos becomes more apparent when we look at the history of Palestine and the Palestinians' resistance against the various forces of domination.

The quest for freedom and independence in Palestine has a long history of more than 170 years. It began with the Ottoman Empire's conquest of Palestine, which lasted from 1840 until the 1920s, when Palestine came under the jurisdiction of the British Mandate. After World War II, Britain showed an interest in withdrawing its military forces from the region. This coincided with an increase in immigration to Palestine by Jewish refugees, the vote in the United Nations to partition the country, and the decision of the Allies (mostly United States and Britain) to support Zionist leadership in Palestine. Shortly after, the state of Israel was established on 12 May 1948. Dozens of villages were depopulated and completely destroyed and 700,000 Palestinians (which at the time was more than 75 percent of the nation) fled their homes and went to exile in the neighboring countries. Palestinians and their Arab neighbors remember this date as *Nakba* Day, the day of the big catastrophe.

Throughout almost two centuries of colonization by the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, and the occupation forces of Israel, Palestinians resisted with little success, losing battles and territories. The last official war was the Six Day War of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan against Israel in June 1967. The outcome was a swift and decisive Israeli victory. Israel took effective control of the Gaza strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. In the twenty years after the Six Day War, armed struggle against the Israeli occupation led to the first national uprising, known as the *Intifada,* which took place

from 1987 and 1993. The Oslo Peace Accord ended the first *Intifada* but failed to restore peace in the area, and the Israeli government continued expanding Israeli settlements beyond the territories that were agreed upon in 1967.

It 2000, another major conflict erupted. The second *Intifada,* known as the *Al-Aqsa*[1] *Intifada,* broke out as a result of Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon's, visit to Temple Mount (or Al-Haram Al-Sharif), an area sacred to both Jews and Muslims. Sharon claimed Temple Mount as an Israeli site. This, coupled with his non-humanitarian policy against the Palestinian refugees ignited the flames of anger and distrust among Palestinians once again. Charles Smith believes that suicide bombings began as a response to Sharon's reelection in 2001, which led to more restrictions on the movements of Palestinians and targeted assassinations of leaders of different Palestinian groups.[2] The conflict between the soldiers of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and resistance forces and civilians in Palestine resulted in 5,500 Palestinian, 1,100 Israelis, and 64 foreigners' death in less than three years. The second *Intifada* added a new element to the conflict. Even though "suicide bombings" had taken place during the first *Intifada,* after2001, the number of Palestinian self-sacrificial bombing attacks increased significantly, constituting a change in the war strategies of Palestinian resistance groups. Even more significant, women began volunteering for bombing missions.

Just as important are the representational strategies used to publicize those actions. For the first time in the history of Palestinian armed struggle, volunteers for bombing missions, men and women alike, pose in front of the camera to be photographed and videotaped. They choose to articulate their goals, make themselves

known, and send their messages clearly to the world. Within the past decade, Palestinian resistance authorities have used the media as a means of communication with the rest of the world. This may appear at first to be contradictory to Islamic ideology, which generally opposes the use of the media in the West to promote Western values. Yet, using the technology of the Internet is one of the few ways that Palestinian activists can communicate across cultures with an international audience that seems blind to the violations of human rights taking place in the occupied territories.

The short farewell statement videos are usually the only live footage in which the bombers talk to the audience directly. Female paramilitaries, armed with machine guns or strapped with a belt full of explosives (or both), stand in front of the camera and discuss their missions and motivations for the violent act they are about to commit. The bandanas the women wear and the banners that decorate the background of their videos showcase their political affiliations. Some of the female bombers hold the Qur'an in their hand or begin their statements with the name of Allah, emphasizing their devotion to their faith, while others do not make any such references. In fact, some of the bombers are secular individuals who adopt a conservative appearance in front of the camera as a performative strategy. Mohammed Hafez argues that although "suicide bombing" were the domain of Islamic militants before 2000, after the second *Intifada*, "this mode of violence has been adopted by secular factions such as the semi-Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and a splinter Fatah faction known as Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade." [3]

My research on Palestinian female bombers and analysis of the videotapes they produce before carrying out the "martyrdom operation", as they refer to it, focuses on the performativity of these women's action. It is the performativity of the farewell videos they produce that differentiates them from their predecessors. They are not the first to sacrifice themselves in bombing missions. Japanese Kamikazes pilots and the German pilots of the Leonidas Squadron in World War II and Irish Republican Army[4] in the 1990s used human beings to deliver targeted bombs. Today, members of the Kurdistan Workers Party and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam in Sri Lanka use bombing missions. These examples of self-sacrificial acts remind us that Palestinian women are not the pioneers of "suicide bombing" and that Islamic ideology is not the only reason for fighters to choose the self-sacrificial deed. Although the political implications of the bombings connects all the examples above, the conscious political performance of the bombers make the Palestinian female bombers' resistance different from other groups before them. Palestinian bombers are the first to produce farewell statement videos.

Performativity and theatricality of the farewell statement videos not only distinguish the Palestinian bombers from bombers elsewhere, but also differentiates female bombers from other Palestinian women political activists. Women have fought for liberation alongside men from the beginning of resistance in Palestine. They have supported their fighters and have taken up arms against the foreign occupiers. Some have come to international attention for their participation in armed struggle. Leila Khaled, a member of PFLP, is internationally recognized for her role in a 1969 hijacking and one of the four simultaneous hijackings the following year as part of the

coordinated events that were later called Black September Timeline.[5] However, the year 2002 marks a beginning for Palestinian women's political activism and participation in violent resistance. This is the time that women bombers openly participate in performing their dedication, fabricating the spectacle of resistance, and training the next generations of fighters.

In January of 2002, the first Palestinian female bomber, Wafa Idris, detonated a 22-pound bag of explosives in a shoe store, killing two people and injuring close to 100. Dareen Abu Aisheh, Ayat Al-Akhras, and Andalib Suleiman Takafka followed Idris in January through April of that year. Many in Palestinian society see these women as the pioneers of women's violent reaction to occupation and thus as heroines, or *shahidas* (female martyrs). Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat (Oct 2003), Reem Saleh Al-Riyashi (Jan 2004), Mirvat Masoud (Nov 2006), and finally Fatima Omar Mahmud Al-Najar (Nov 2006) followed in their footsteps.

This dissertation focuses on the farewell videos of eight of the first ten Palestinian female bombers. Each of the women I examine completed a bombing operation in the period of four years, 2002 to 2006. I have chosen these women because they are seen in the Palestinian resistance movement as icons of Palestinian women's resistance and heroism. For three of the female *shahidas*— Wafa Idris, Hiba Daraghmeh (May 2002), and Zeinab Abu Salem (September 2004)— I have not been able to locate farewell statement videos. As a result, I have not included Daraghmeh or Abu Salem in my discussion. However, I have included wafa Idris even in the absence of a farewell statement video since a few photographs remain of her as well as a video that shows her at work. In addition, Idris is commemorated in many songs, TV programs,

and farewell statements; she is an iconic figure in the culture of resistance and thus could not be excluded.

The production of farewell statement videos by Palestinian organizations has inspired other resistance organizations in the Middle East and elsewhere to produce similar videos of the volunteers for martyrdom. These individual fighters as political performers on stage have been able to reach local and global audience members long after they have ceased to exist. It is possible to attribute women's volunteering for bombing missions to the mass imprisonment or obliteration of male fighters. Or we can rationalize that women volunteers had a better chance than men of passing through military checkpoints or that the traditional garments of women made them better conceal belts of explosives. However, what interests me about these women is not their war tactic but the fact that their engagement in armed struggle, especially in bombing missions, changes them from passive second-class citizens to political activists who become agents of violent resistance and leaders in political change. These women's performance of military power, ideological strength, and theological-nationalistic devotion in their farewell videos have initiated a new trend in the resistance.

The farewell statement videos illustrate the power of the "subaltern" who dares to look the audience in the eye and promise the imminent annihilation of the enemy. When Gayatri Spivak speaks about the Third World people as the "subalterns", she criticizes the marginalization of the oppressed in British colonialist literature. Spivak argues that while those who are oppressed in the First World have opportunities to speak and do not lack the ability to do so, in the colonialist literature, subalterns,

those who are oppressed in the Third World, cannot even speak.[6] Indeed, Spivak criticizes the Western feminists for marginalizing the Third World women even further by holding Third World men responsible for oppressing the women in their societies. Based on Spivak's theory, I have argued that the Other, in this case the Palestinian female bomber, has broken away from the persona assigned to her by an Orientalist worldview and has gained a voice. Once a Palestinian woman becomes empowered as a paramilitary, neither her gender nor her ethnicity can take away her ability to speak. Through the militarization and desexulization of her body, through the power of the gun, she surpasses her gender, her passivity, and her ethnicity and claims an equal status with men. Her public performance, which includes not only her performance for the camera but also her direct engagement in violence, enables her to articulate her desires. Although other Palestinian women who have not adopted the armed struggle mode of resistance may not be as visible as female bombers, the female paramilitary's performance opens up new ways for women to gain visibility and their voice.

The women who volunteer for martyrdom have demonstrated a commitment to the cause. This has changed the minds of resistance organization leaders about what role women could play in advancing the struggle for liberation. After the first female bombing in 2002, Islamic organizations and their local supporters understood that they had to glorify male and female bombers equally. Thus they started to produce spectacles of female martyrs (posters, banners, funeral processions) and acknowledged the female bombers' status as "martyrs". The statements of female bombers are noteworthy for emphasizing the women's agency and their vivid calls for

gender equality. In a culture that otherwise does not favor women's exposure to public activities in general and casts taboo on women's political activism, the voluntarily death of men and women are praised equally as self-sacrifice for resistance and jihad and thus is called martyrdom. Andaleeb Takafka's statement clearly affirms the equality of the genders in a time of war: "when you want to carry out such an attack, whether you are a man or a woman, you don't think about the explosive belt or about your body".[7] In a culture that otherwise forbids women's exposure to public activities and sees women's political activism as taboo, the voluntary deaths of men and women are praised equally as self-sacrifice for resistance and jihad and both are referred to as "martyrdom".

Publicly performing engagement in violence has enabled women to reach a new status that does not reject traditional gender roles but instead combines them with the new role of sociopolitical activist. Female paramilitaries step into the male-dominated realm of military power. They claim the power of the machine gun, a phallic representation of male dominance and authority. They are not threatened by the gun but hold it firmly, indicating their access to the sign of power and their ability to use it if necessary. The bombers performing in front of the camera represent themselves as militarized individuals whose bodies have been unified with the weapons they are carrying. The unification of the body and the bomb is emphasized further when the bombers refer to their body parts becoming bullets and shrapnel that will pierce the enemy. Fatima al- Najar and Reem Saleh al-Riyashi appear in their videos wearing military vests filled with grenades and other explosives. They never remove the vests, even when Reem Saleh holds her children or Al-Najar addresses her children and

grandchildren. Both these women emphasize their maternal duties while in military attire. Their performance of militarization is combined with references to motherhood and traditional roles Palestinian women are assigned to. I will explore this phenomenon in Chapter one.

The existing literature on "suicide bombing" has mostly concentrated on various reasons— ideological (religious or nationalist), socioeconomic (such as monetary compensation to the bombers' families), and personal (revenge, honor, psychological predisposition)— to explain why an individual would volunteer for "martyrdom operations". However, conceptualizing the phenomenon of bombing missions without considering the political performativity of such actions has resulted in a focus on suicide above other factors. In fact, Islam prevents its followers from taking their lives as a result of disappointment and despair. In Islamic doctrines, ending one's own life as a result of depression is an expression of disbelief in God's power to restore things and thus is considered *haraam* (forbidden and subject to punishment).

If we believe that fighters, and female fighters, are drawn into martyrdom as a way to restore their lost dignity — Wafa's barrenness and divorce, the fact that Ayat's father is seen as a traitor, Reem's affair with a high-ranking Hamas official, and so on — then how can we explain the absence of female volunteers for martyrdom among other Muslim women with the same dilemmas? [8] Personal explanations do not suffice. A search for evidence within other Muslim nations reveals that all the incidents of suicide bombing carried out by women have taken place in countries subject to high political tension. The female fighters who have

volunteered for martyrdom in Chechnya, Iraq, Kurdistan and Indonesia responded to the political upheavals their countries go through.

It is also interesting that fewer individuals volunteer for martyrdom operations in ultra-conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia or in dictatorships such as Iran. Political oppression by an outside power appears to be the factor that triggers human bombing. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the increase in the number of bombing attacks coincided with the foreign invasion by the United States.

Psychopathological and other inherently sexist types of analysis cast doubt on the agency of women fighters, presupposing them as hysterical and apolitical individuals. In the chapters to come, I discuss the subjectivity of female bombers while performing in front of the camera and during the operation. These deliberate and conscious performances of power contradict the view of bombings as suicidal actions. The women who appear in front of the camera engage in a pedagogical performance and perform their political missions as part of the spectacle of resistance. Seeking the betterment of their community, defeat of the enemy, or the after life prize gives these women nationalistic and/ or spiritual motivations. In other words, their self-sacrifice reaches beyond any nihilistic or personal motivations.

I have been careful not to use the prevalent terminology (suicide bombing, suicide bomber) that ascribes a nihilistic aspect to the operations. Suicide is largely believed to be the result of psychological instability. However, as I have argued in this dissertation, the women bombers' political performances prove that they are strong and mentally clear, not weak or unstable. Supporters of Palestinian cause refer to bombing missions as "martyrdom" ascribing holiness and grandeur to the violence of

killing oneself and others. Although I sympathize with and respect the philosophy of self-sacrifice for a higher cause, I do not approve of violent resistance. Therefore, whenever "martyr" or "martyrdom" is used in the dissertation, it is from the Islamists' point of view. Instead, I have called these women simply bombers who have committed a self-sacrificial act for a political reason.

The occupiers' use of force in the forms of check points, segregation wall, frequent and unpredicted raids on residential areas, confiscation of land, occasional bombings of the occupied territories, the expansion of Israeli settlements into Palestinian territory, and frequent arrests and assaults against civilians are discernible to anyone who visits the occupied territories. And yet Israel's dream of total authority is shattered each time a Palestinian subaltern denies his or her inferiority. Those who participate in the resistance use posters of martyrs, pro-Palestinian demonstrations, wall graffiti, martyrs' funerals, and violent assaults against the oppressors to establish their identity and agency as protestors against the occupation. Ultimately, all of these things work to create legitimacy for the resistance. Farewell statement videos and the women who perform in them are important parts of this process.

Terminology

Much has been written about "suicide bombing" as an act of terrorism that is planned and implemented by terrorist fanatics. Discourse on the topic rarely goes beyond what has already been said and does not provide alternative views. Perhaps part of the problem lies in the double standard superpowers adopt in defining terrorism. Noam Chomsky argues that "like most weapons, terror is primarily a

weapon of the powerful". But it is also "tradition for states to call their own terrorism 'counterterror'".[9] Chomsky asks whether pursuing the right to "self –determination, freedom, and independence [for] people forcibly deprived of that right"[10] is resistance or terrorism.

I find Chomsky's ideas useful and have analyzed the bombing missions through a lens that combines political, social, and performance studies. Violent resistance, I have argued, gains meaning and a purpose through a performativity that targets the audience. It is in the intersection of these concepts that I have found a new woman who stands apart from fundamentalist or Orientalist understandings of Third World Muslim woman. In this dissertation, I have treated both the forces of occupation and the violence of those who resist that oppression as terror. In looking at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general and female bombers in particular through the lens of performance studies, I have discussed Palestinians as victims of occupation and oppression without justifying their method of resistance. Contextualizing occupation and resistance within the concepts of spectacle and theatricality, I have noted that both sides of the conflict use similar modes of representation. I have criticized how both sides manipulate their audience at both local and international levels.

In this dissertation, I have used the terms "spectacle", "performativity", and "theatricality" in various contexts to explain the impact of imagery on the audience who watches the performance of bombers on stage and at the scenes of bombings. I have used the terms spectacle and theatricality to describe the fabricated and purposeful propagatory of both Israeli and Palestinian authorities. I have used these words interchangeably to describe the authorities' display of socio-political and

military power. I analyze the military presence of the IDF and the oppressive

infrastructure Israel has created as a spectacle of the occupation. This spectacle is

intended to mesmerize local (Palestinian) viewers and elicit international support.

Palestinian resistance organizations engage the local and global audience in the

theatricality of resistance. Engaging the audience is the most important part of the

theatricality of resistance. This involves inviting audience members to participate in

forming the spectacle of the resistance to oppression.

Resistance organization leaders have realized the importance of displaying their

power and ideological values for the public and have generated the theatricality of

resistance and have encouraged others to do so as well. Members of resistance groups

understand their roles are scripted. Nonetheless, they voluntarily conform to the rules

of the organizations and participate in the formation of the theatre of resistance in

order to pursue a political goal. Posters, banners, musical videos, stage performances,

and television programs that target the audience at home are all elements of the

theatricality of resistance. All of these serve a pedagogical function. Resistance

organization members display the pictures and videos of martyrs in public places and

arrange for funerals of martyrs and other cultural activities in order to impart the

values of resistance to the masses and recruit more soldiers.

I have ascribed political performativity to the female bombers who operate

within the confines of the theatricality of resistance. I have also argued that members

of the local audience who oppose the theatricality resistance organizations create

participate in political performativity. How is a single term capable of describing two

very different intents? The reason for me lies in the nature of the protests against the

resistance organizations or against the occupation forces. Both forms of protests are performative in the sense that the participants are aware of the sociopolitical situations they are in and both intelligently manipulate culturally bound, scripted roles. The performers (activists, paramilitaries, and intellectuals) deviate from the norms of their cultures as they challenge the local and foreign hegemony of power in the occupied territories by publicly performing their resistance. Therefore, both female bombers and Palestinians who oppose violent resistance share common ground as they gain visibility.

In *Unmarked,* Peggy Phelan argues that visibility is a trap.[11] She contends that visibility "summons surveillance and the law, [and] provokes voyeurism, fetishism, [and] the colonialist/ imperialist appetite for possession". I agree with Phelan and borrow her theory to argue that those who challenge the rules of power, whether that power derives from occupying forces or from resistance organizations, subject themselves to surveillance and cannot escape punitive consequences. The increasing number of political prisoners and victims of public reprimand is an indication of the intolerance of alternative views in conservative societies. The visibility of both women bombers and those who protest violent resistance is also a trap in a sense that their sociopolitical visibility means the possibility of (and, in the case of bombers, the certainty of) their physical extinction. Female bombers are recognized as heroines of Palestinian national resistance only in the moment of their martyrdom. The lives of protestors against violent resistance are always threatened by the fundamentalist resistance organizations. Although ideological–religious or nationalistic–political values grant women bombers an afterlife in heaven and in the memories of the next

generations to come, this glorified social status is usually not an option for those who oppose violent resistance.

And yet, the trap of the visibility also provides female bombers with a position of power. The visibility that female bombers achieve through performance leaves its trace on the community who remembers its heroines. This is not an archival effect on the community. Instead, surrogate[12] bodies of the spect-actors in the funerals are trained in the pedagogy of self-sacrificial resistance. Continual exposure of the community to the memorials of the resistance revives the memory of the heroes and heroines of the war and emphasizes that these men and women have conducted themselves properly. Thus the visibility of women bombers give them the power to lead the next generation.

One reason that visibility does not constitute a trap for female fighters is that they consciously manipulate that visibility in their farewell videos. Female paramilitary indicate their refusal to be viewed as fetishized and sexualized objects by wearing Islamic hijab, appearing on stage fully armed, and by controlling their emotions. This controlled visibility indicates their self-conscious engagement in the theatricality of resistance designed to provoke sociopolitical change in the individuals who constitute their audience. Both the hijab and the weapons they carry empower female bombers and secure their status as virtuous and determined individuals, to the extent that they freely refer to their body parts in their farewell statement videos. These women consciously objectify their own bodies as weapons. Through their public performance of their political views and self-sacrificial commitment to their ideology, the status of women bombers is elevated to the level of heroines and iconic

national figures. This is an example of empowerment and is very far from objectification of women. The women in the farewell videos tightly control their performances. They do not allow their emotions to dictate the content of what they say or how they present themselves. They do not allow the audience access to their inner thoughts. Instead, they offer spectators the image they choose to present: that of a powerful, militarized, dedicated, and ultimately victorious paramilitary.

Although the performances of female bombers are by their very nature ephemeral, these performers continue to engage their audience in the act of experiencing their self-sacrifice after their deaths, when they are commemorated in videos and posters. The political performance the bombers offer can be compared to "ordeal art" or "hardship art" in Phelan's words. Analyzing Angelika Festa's performance entitled *Untitled Dance*, Phelan introduces the concept of "ordeal art" as a genre of performance art that "attempts to invoke a distinction between presence and representation by using the singular body as a metonym for the apparently nonreciprocal experience of pain."[13] This form of art invites the viewers to experience the individual's death and pain. Phelan concludes that "the promise evoked by this performance is to learn to value what is lost, to learn not the meaning but the value of what cannot be reproduced or seen (again)."[14] I see similarities between Angelika Festa's performance, as Phelan describes it, and the farewell statements of Palestinian female bombers. In both cases, the audience is called to the bodies' endurance of pain and violence. Viewers carry the performer's message of pain, self-sacrifice, weaponization, and self-objectification beyond the performance.

Visibility is a prerequisite if resistance organizations are to enter the international power struggle over Palestine. Broadcasting videotapes of live martyrs or the messages of organization leaders to the world confirms the physical presence of resistance organizations. Although this visibility does not legitimize Palestinian organizations at the international level, it does identify them clearly as groups that oppose the Israeli occupiers. In reality, the videotapes produced by resistance organizations are our only means of direct contact with the "terrorist" enemy.

In *Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the making of suicide bombers*, Mohammed Hafez points out the ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of suicidal violence. Although Hafez does not analyze the detail of farewell videos, he notes that the bombers' testaments, banners emblazoned with Qur'anic verses, and the explosives and rifles that serve as "props" for the bombers, and the insignias of martyrdom that immortalizes the martyrs are used "repeatedly, routinely, and with procedural rigor.[20] Hafez concludes that the martyrdom rituals elevate the self-sacrifice into something higher and associate it with faith. These are in fact "performative traditions and redemptive actions" through which devoted fighters communicate their ideologies. Although Hafez correctly sees farewell videos as a performative and ritualistic tool in the hands of the resistance organizations, I have focused on the performances of female bombers as their conscious contributions to the *theatricality* of resistance. By performing their new identities as living martyrs (*al shahid al hay)*, in front of the camera, the bombers become part of the theatre of

resistance on display and pursue the pedagogical goals of resistance by sacrificing themselves.

I see these individuals as political performers who communicate with their audience through their performances and who seek to be heard. They are not professional actresses trained to embody various characters in order to entertain. Rather, they are believers in the resistance who have chosen the medium of performance as their only way of communicating with the outside world. Both in creating the videotapes and in detonating the explosives, the bombers perform a distinct political statement. Perhaps they will not need to continue with their performances of violence if the world starts to listen to their voices. Creating the semiotics of resistance against the occupation, in all the forms mentioned above and beyond and especially the performance of an ideology in front of the camera, is in fact re-inventing the lost agency and identity of a nation whose existence has been forcefully effaced from the map of the world. I argue that farewell statement videos are a claim to agency and authority both for the community as a whole and for the individual who volunteers for martyrdom.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter one, "The Political Performances and Relational Agency of the Female Bombers" focuses on misconceptions of female bombers in media reports and scholarly works. I will contextualize the discourse on *shahidas* (female martyrs)

within Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Gayatri Spivak's criticism of the colonialist view of the subaltern. I argue that discussions in the media of whether female bombers suffer from psychopathological disorders and the vilification of Muslim men for oppressing Muslim women overshadow the relational agency paramilitaries gain through performance.

I analyze three videos of women who have volunteered for martyrdom or have become *umm al shahid* (the martyr's mother). Highlighting women's political performances in these footages, I emphasize on women's "active submission", in Diana Taylor's words, in demonstrating their traditional roles as mothers and simultaneously manipulating their gender role. Reem Saleh al-Riyashi, Fatima Omar Mahmud al-Najar, and Umm Nidal emphasize their motherhood but expand this concept to the mother of the whole nation. By appearing and performing as mothers, these women claim public space and engage in the armed struggle against the occupation, yet they fulfill their gender roles at the same time. In doing so, they secure their position as iconic figures in the hierarchy of power and honor that is culturally reserved for men.

Chapter two, "My Body, What Else? The Female Bomber's Body in Performance," discusses the transformation of the corporeal body from an ordinary citizen to a sociopolitical activist and then a paramilitary. Borrowing from Allen Feldman, I argue that the process of militarizing the body transforms the weak, gendered, and marginalized individual into a powerful, subjective, and omnipresent woman. I also examine the theological terms within which the physically non-existent but metaphorically omnipresent martyr is comprehensible. Drawing on theories of

memory and surrogation (Joseph Roach) and Islam and the notion of Jihad (Minoo Moallem, Laleh Khalili), I analyze the funeral processions for female bombers in the context of the commemoration of the dead in Palestinian culture. The visual signs of the martyrs and the surrogated bodies of the next generations of supporters of the Palestinian cause create a "panoptican" effect, in Michel Foucault's words, for the masses contributing to the pedagogy of resistance.

The body of the martyr serves as a political performer whose presence in front of the camera intimidates the international viewers of the farewell videos. It also serves as a political performer when it carries out a bombing mission and leaves behind a political statement. In her self-sacrificial resistance, the bomber willingly submits to objectification of her body as a tool. She unifies with the bomb and yet maintains her relational and performative agency. In this sense, the body acts as a testament to the ideology of resistance.

Chapter three, "The Audience of the Spectacle of Conflict", deals with the relationship of spectacle to its audience and with the pedagogy of spectacle. The chapter focuses on roles audience members play in the formation, completion, and effectiveness of spectacles of power and the theatre of resistance. As Augusto Boal envisioned the concept, the spect-actor not only watches but becomes part of the spectacle on display. This chapter examines Boal's ideas in the context of the performative actions of Palestinian locals who both support and oppose violent resistance.

Analyzing wall murals, videos depicting children training for war, and visual representations of occupation, I discuss the transformation of public space into a

training stage for the masses of people. Pro-Palestinian organizations use these tools to convey nationalist and fundamentalist ideologies of liberation to the masses of spectators. I draw upon the similarities in the politics of representation in China, Iran, and Argentina with the politics of representation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to clarify why it is necessary to theatricalize resistance for pedagogical purposes. I will also look at the politics of representation on the Israeli side. I borrow Emily Roxworthy's concept of the "mystifying spectacle" to analyze how the occupation forces use spectacle with intent of silencing the residents of the occupied territories.

Methodology

I have relied on a variety of visual records of resistance, including videos of live performances, TV reports, songs, and photographs. I have tried to develop my own theories and produce original analysis of female bombing operations. For the most part, however, I consider myself one of the global spectators of the conflict, an outsider whose access to information is mostly virtual. Although perhaps growing up in the Middle East dissolves my current geographical distance to some extent, I do not claim to have first-hand knowledge or understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Experiencing the conflict as an audience member, however, has pushed me to dedicate the good portion of this project to spectators and their receptions of the events. It is the spectator who ultimately assumes the crucial position of judging the atrocities.

Using Internet resources has had many pros and cons. Through this virtual archive of information, I have been able to access numerous videos, articles, and blogs that have broadened my perspective on my topic. Although I have not referred directly to all of these resources because the accuracy of some could not be confirmed, they have revealed to me the various levels of Israeli-Palestinian conflict that are rarely reflected in media reports or academic writing. Nora Barrows-Friedman's contributions to the website *The Electronic Intifada* and Osaid Rashees's postings to his *Palestinian Blogs* site provide daily updates about life and events in the occupied territories. These two bloggers, a journalist and a nurse, report on various topics in the Gaza strip and the West Bank. Palestinian and Israeli activists' contributions to *Israel Palestine Blogs, The Peace Blog Aggregator,* where most of the articles address the two-state solution and the end of the occupation in the region, provide analysis of the TV programs and radio shows and of meetings of the political authorities and debates on the issues related to the conflict. *Occupied* is another blog that provides information and an insider's view of the incidents inside the refugee camps and the occupied territories. Among the Zionist blogs that I have encountered, Richard Millett's stands out for his reports of Palestinian gatherings, seminars, and conferences in diaspora.[22]

These and other Internet resources provide background information on how audiences in occupied Palestine and Israel receive images, news, and events. However, relying on Internet resources can be problematic as some of the videos have disappeared over time or have been removed from the websites for various reasons. It is unfortunate that three of the farewell video statements I relied on, those of Mirvat

Masoud's, Hanadi Jaradat's and Andaleeb Takafka, are no longer available online. I have decided to include these videos in my analysis nonetheless because their content is so valuable. Also these videos have been referred to in other resources.

The theories upon which I have based my arguments are mostly from the secular point of views offered by Western scholars or non-western academics living in diaspora. Although the phenomenon of "suicide bombing" is viewed as a fundamentalist resistance tactic, analyzing it within the confines of secular theories has proved fruitful. Borrowing from non-theocratic theories has enabled me to focus on other major, non-religious, elements that lead to self-sacrificial bombings. By drawing upon Western and non-Western scholarship on the topics of gender, power, body, agency, visibility and representation in conversation, I have explored the possibility of analyzing bombing missions differently. Expanding the discourse on these topics has helped me find fertile ground for a more thorough analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Borrowing from secular theories has also pushed me to better understand the factors that motivate women bombers to commit the ultimate act of violence. I have emphasized throughout the dissertation that the religious faith is only a part of the violent resistance movement and should not be relied upon as a sole motivation for self-sacrificial bombings.

A topic as prominent as female bombing, is quite engaging and at the same time quite difficult to work on. The sensitivity of the issues that emerge in debates about female bombers have made me pause many times and reevaluate my judgments as a scholar living in the United States who has experienced firsthand some of the issues I

discuss. I hope I have opened new arenas for discussion on the topic of the female

bombers and the violence they perform.

Notes:

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[1] Al-Aqsa is a mosque located in the old city of Jerusalem. It was built in the 8th century AD and is considered the third holiest place in Islam after Mecca and Madina.

[2] Smith, Charles D. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents,* 6th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Publishers, 2007), 515.

[3] Mohammed M. Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making o Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 2 (March-April 2006): 172.

[4] "Using Innocent People to Deliver Security Force Targets was a Tactic Used by the Provisional IRA for a Short Time in the Early 1990s," *Belfast Telegraph*, September 21, 2009, accessed May 4, 2012, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-20786575.html.

[5] The Black September Timeline refers to September 1970, an era of regrettable events in the Arab world, when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) hijacked four Western commercial airplanes and took the passengers hostage. Hashemite King Hussein of Jordan moved to quash Palestinian forces in order to restore his rule. With the help of Israel and Britain, a six-day war began during which 3,000 Palestinians and Jordanians died. Hussein lost prestige and Arab support while the PLO grew to become a recognized authority in the region under Yasser Arafat. "Context of September 6-12, 1970 and after: "Black September" Triggers Global Islamist Terrorism, Rise of PLO," accessed May 17, 2012, http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a091970blacksept http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a091970blacksept.

[6] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea,* ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 25.

[7] "Palestinian Women Martyrs against the Israeli Occupation," *La Voz de Aztlan*, accessed June 2, 2012, http://www.aztlan.net/women_martyrs.htm.

[8] Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses*: *Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2004). "Female Suicide Bombers," YouTube.com, accessed May 19, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZADVmQLEW8. Yoram Schweitzer, ed. *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?* (Tel Aviv: The Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, 2006).

[9] Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival, America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003), 189.

[10] Ibid, 190.

[11] Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 6.

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[12] Joseph Roach talks about *Surrogation* in "Cities of the Dead". This concept is explored further in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[13] Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, 146.

[14] Ibid, 152.

[20] Hafez, *Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers*, 177.

[22] Millet, Rochard. *Richard Millet* (Blog). Accessed: May 17, 2012. http://richardmillet.wordpress.com.

Chapter One:
The Political Performances and Relational Agency
of the Female Bombers

The prevalent discourse in the West on *shahidas* (female martyrs)[1] concentrates on personal and cultural norms that obligate women to commit "suicide." This chapter presents a different interpretation of bombing missions using the lens of performance studies. Media reports and scholarly works that deny the ability and willingness of women to participate in violent resistance follow the notion of Orientalism, portraying Muslim women as passive and naive and thus easily objectified and victimized by patriarchal relatives and political leaders.[2] Such views help legitimate the colonization of Muslim nations under the guise of "liberating," "civilizing," and "democratizing" them. They also tend to characterize the Other as non-human, barbaric, irrational, and bloodthirsty. Thus, it becomes permissible and acceptable to use violence against this Other in the interest of furthering the westernization of Third World nations. Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry write that theories of individual violence address the topic of women's violence "with theories tailored to expectations and assumptions about [women's] gender."[3] That is what is happening in current writing in the West about women bombers; instead of looking for the political motivations for these bombing attacks, discussions of these acts emphasize traditional gender roles.

I argue that "volunteers for martyrdom" make a deliberate choice to become involved in violence that already exists by fighting back. The conscious transformation from ordinary citizen to political activist to paramilitary empowers the individual and grants her agency over her body, her actions, and her destiny. Contrary to Orientalist

perception of Muslim women the Palestinian female insurgent deviates from the norms of patriarchal culture by claiming her place in the male-dominated world of violence. Focusing on the performativity of the video recordings of these women's farewell statements, I analyze the woman paramilitary's conscious appearance in front of the camera as part of her political activism against foreign forces and her quest for equality and social status in her community. The female bomber communicates with national and international viewers by performing her politicized self and the ideology she represents. Most important, her performance mirrors her deliberate commitment to the violent mission she is about to carry out. It is in fact the performance that secures her agency as an actor and provides a forum where she can be heard. The female bombers' farewell statement videos are the only source available to us through which we can hear these women's voices and watch their movements. If we believe that the female bomber is a puppet in the hands of the authorities, we are left with no choice but to succumb to the Orientalist analysis of these women's actions. However, if we view these recordings as conscious performances of power and resistance, we are then able to understand the level of agency these women exercise in relation to the hetero-patriarchal system.

The concept of *agency* refers to an individual's ability to consciously make decisions and execute them. However, the freedom to choose and act upon one's will is relational. As Joanne Faulkner observes, "We humans are not invulnerable to external events that act on us; nor are we self-caused. Rather, insofar as we are free, we participate in a complex web of interactions through which our agency is bounded and context dependent."[4] Faulkner analyzes Richard Drew's photograph, "Falling Man", which depicts an unknown victim of 9/11 attacks. This image has captured a man's mid-

flight from the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Faulkner explores the image as a representative of the falling man's "decision- a will and hopeless decision but a decision nonetheless" that reveals and embodies a "traumatic horror… of choosing the means of one's own particular death in the force of a less certain but more protracted demise at the hands of another." Faulkner views this agency as a "civil creativity" and not a suicide since the individual takes responsibility for his/her own manner of dying. Faulkner reflects on Nietzsche in concluding that in choosing the manner of death, an inevitable ending for all human beings, is playing an active part in one's own life. Even if this agency extinguishes the subject through which it is performed, it is nonetheless an act of resisting the passivity, quietism, and absolute subordination to the circumstances.

I borrow from Faulkner in arguing that the Palestinian female bomber exercises her agency in response to the necessities of her life and circumstances imposed on her. Her choice to become a bomber couples her freedom with fatalism without taking away her active participation in her faith. In a way, the female paramilitary takes liberty against God's will who supposedly determines her life and death even though she explicitly reiterates her mission as God's will. Confined behind the geographical and political boundaries of occupation, the individual envisions her eternal suffering; the situation is similar to those people who were trapped in the Twin Towers. She, too, decides to jump and take the enemy's life along with hers.

It is true that socio-political circumstances restrict, redirect, and limit one's freedom but do not entirely remove the individual's capacity to think and understand and ultimately reach *awareness.* It is this ideologically infused political consciousness, be it anti-Western, Islamic, or nationalist, that has inspired millions of men and women to rise

against colonialism, capitalism, and foreign occupation in the Third World countries. Political upheavals and revolutionary movements that redirect perceptions and views of the world, of cultural norms, and of ideological concepts have raised the level of consciousness in the Middle East. I refer to these political reactions as conscious performances realizing that these violent reactions to occupation may not be considered rational in secular worldviews. This is because in the Western hemisphere, autonomy is understood as an unlimited and unbounded freedom. The liberty to act regardless of all the rules and the restrictions is promoted although in reality, the exercise of one's own right is tolerated only if it is practiced within the boundaries of the Law.

The agency that I attribute to female paramilitary cannot be unbounded or absolute. In saying that the female martyr has agency over her action, I do not mean to imply that she has gone beyond the conventional norms of her culture. As Sjoberg and Gentry assert, "In a world of relational autonomy, decisions can be made within constraints or with fellow constrainees, but are never entirely unavailable and never without any constraint."[5] As an insurgent, a woman bomber acts within the realms of the group and organization she has affiliated with. She cannot carry her mission to the end and be successful without the training, equipment, and physical and emotional aid she receives from the organization and community that support her. Naturally, joining a certain organization necessitates the individual to abide by the rules and accept the restrictions. Her awareness of the limited scope of options available and her conscious choice to take a very specific mode of resistance prove the agential position she takes in regards to her violence. The female paramilitary actively submits to the organization's rules, maneuvers within the boundaries of her cultural norms, and nonetheless practices her

relational autonomy in changing her faith.

In her "active submission"[6] to the norms of her culture and the organization, for instance claiming gender equality as a nationalist-Islamist fighter, the woman bomber nonetheless challenges the patriarchal system by gaining visibility and a voice. To achieve equal rights in armed struggle, a goal that is both political and feminist, the woman bomber consciously submits to the rules and standards of proper conduct. Yet she simultaneously manipulates the ideologically based and culturally infused concepts of martyrdom, womanhood, and motherhood to claim her place in the male-dominated, conservative, and prejudiced realm of conflict. I define *agency* as a female paramilitary's awareness of political circumstances and of the impact her performance can have on those who see her video. Since, she acknowledges the audience who are expected to follow her path, she engages in a performance that depicts her as an agent of change. I will refer to this as *performative agency,* an agency that provides the individual with political visibility. This performative agency is indeed relational and bound by rules, but it makes possible a conscious and autonomous participation in the struggle. Performative agency, the political awareness and the willingness to take action, has offered women a new arena in which to be heard and seen, even though it has yet to change the social status of women in Palestinian culture.

As I review the body of work on this topic, I question the authors who argue that women do not have freedom of choice when they become bombers. Each section of this chapter addresses one of the misconceptions about female bombers. I argue that ascribing madness or other psychological deficiencies, cultural and religious obligations, or inherent bloodthirstiness and irrationality to these women

either victimizes or vilifies them. I propose a new view that understands violent resistance as a political performance through which resistance fighters, regardless of their gender, exhibit their agency, ideology, and power. The sections that follow question current Western views of female paramilitaries and reinterpret their actions through their performances in video recordings.

Psychologically Disordered?

Watching the female bombers as they verbally attack the enemy, outline their plans clearly, and explain their motivations for violence right before their missions brings one to realize their consciousness of the audience who will respond to their actions. Fully aware of the impact of image on their viewers, they take advantage of the one opportunity they have in front of the camera to talk to their people and to an international audience. Even if we assume that the statements the paramilitary women read have been vetted by the organizations to which they belong, their performances clearly provide evidence of their agency. In other words, the fighters' performances in the videos secure their position of power as they engage the audience, even if for a very short time, with their images and their words.

In the farewell statement videos of the first eight Palestinian female bombers I study, the women have spontaneous reactions toward their surroundings. Mirvat Masoud reacts to outside noise, Hanadi Jaradat giggles and covers her mouth while looking bashfully into the camera, Andaleeb Takafka asks the camera person to stop shooting, and Fatima Al-Najar takes orders about where to stand and when to begin from an invisible person. These short but recurrent glimpses of spontaneity attest to the female

volunteers' awareness of their performances at the time of the recordings. Furthermore, neither the words the female insurgents utter nor their bodily movements and gestures indicate physical or mental unhealthiness. On the contrary, they all seem determined, strong, and rational; the way they handle their weapons, their speech, and their postures all attest to a clear mind.[7] Some may appear less comfortable than others in front of the camera—Fatima al-Najar's hands tremble and she barely looks at the camera, and Ayat al-Akhras reads her statement very hastily—but the self-presentation of each of the women is strong and determined.

Even Al-Najar, who is not sure what to say to her viewers when she finishes reading her statement, has a firm grasp of the machine gun she holds throughout her speech. Her awareness of the camera and of the fact that she needs to perform in front of it manifests itself in her interaction with the cameraperson. When she finishes reading the statement, she puts down the piece of paper and looks inquiringly at the camera, waiting for her next task. When she is instructed to continue, she laughs bashfully and says "I don't know what else to say."[8]

The discourse on female "suicide bombers" has often negated the agency of female paramilitaries by arguing that they have no subjectivity because of a psychological disorder or because of cultural oppression. References to female bombers' being "remotely controlled,"[9] "manipulated,"[10] or "drugged"[11] by resistance organizations portray them as puppets in the hands of the authorities. In his article "Mentally Retarded Women Used in Bombings," Steven Hurst follows the trend in news media; he describes two Iraqi female bombers as "two mentally retarded women strapped with remote-control explosives—and possibly used as unwitting suicide bombers."[12] He claims that

the bombs the women bombers carried were detonated by remote control and that one of

the women was referred to by locals as a "crazy woman." CNN reporters Ahmed Taha

and Jomana Karadsheh also refer to these two women attackers as "crazy" and "mentally

disabled."[13] Hurst and others' interpretations of these two bombers may be correct since

there is no visual evidence that proves that these particular women made a personal

choice to carry out a bombing mission. However, Palestinian women's performativity in

farewell statement videos, in which they introduce themselves as *al shahid al hay* (the

living martyr), thus attesting to their imminent death, presents another perspective on

female "martyrdom".[14]

In *Army of Roses*, Barbara Victor analyzes the cases of the first four Palestinian

female bombers. Although her interviewees described these women as "strong-willed,"

"patriotic," "concerned about political circumstances," "independent," and "rebellious,"

Victor focuses on psychological disorders (depression and anxiety), cultural restrictions

(family and peer pressure regarding marriage and childbearing), religious obligations

(the culture of death and martyrdom), and the monstrosity of the men who recruited

them. She presents Wafa Idris, the first woman bomber, as "a troubled young woman

who was prone to bouts of melancholy and depression,"[15] despite the fact that Idris's co-

workers and family members dismissed this explanation. Other factors that might

explain Wafa Idris's actions, such as her job as a paramedic in the Red Crescent, her

encounters with violence against her people on a daily basis, the reality of living in

refugee camps under occupation, and the facts that one brother was in jail and another

one was jobless because of the curfews, are overshadowed in Victor's analysis. She does

not give enough weight to the brutal oppression of Palestinians that Idris witnessed

throughout her life. Instead, she devotes a good portion of her analysis to the issues of

depression, hopelessness, and poverty and Idris's frustration over her divorce and

infertility. Victor treats these issues as abnormal diseases that are unique to certain

people in certain parts of the world. Implicitly, Victor's analysis is that the malicious

diseases combined with a "hostile" religion to create the catastrophe of "suicide

bombing."

Victor presents Andalib Suleiman Takafka, the second female bomber in Palestine,

as a victim because she had inadequate resources and lacked other options. She does not

present Takafka's case, which she describes as an "unsensational" story,[16] in a way that

would inspire feelings of respect or admiration for a young university student who saw

beyond the limited spectrum of the material world. Instead, Victor chooses to focus on

her naiveté by emphasizing Andalib Takafka's passion for cinema and portraits of movie

stars. According to Victor, Takafka later replaces these portraits with posters of female

"martyrs" on the walls of her room. As an introduction to Takafka's story, Victor points

to her mental instability, which she claims could have been cured if Takafka had lived in

another country:

> In another society, Andalib might have ended up like countless
> other young women and girls who fall in with the wrong crowd and
> become addicted to drugs or involved in prostitution or a life of petty
> crime. Then again, perhaps if she had lived in another society she might
> have been rescued by an observant teacher or caring relative and sent to
> a psychiatrist or consultant for help. But Andalib Suleiman lived in the
> remote Palestinian village of Beit Fajar, where there is not even a local
> doctor, let alone a psychiatrist or school counselor.[17]

Victor thus views Takafka as a naive, passive victim whose action is more suicidal than

rebellious. In both of these case studies, Victor deliberately ignores the agency and

subjectivity of the female bombers, instead describing them in ways that reinforce Western beliefs that Palestinian women are the inferior sex and second-class citizens in a patriarchal culture. By stressing Takafka's need for psychiatric help, thus implying that she was mentally ill, and Wafa Idris's "long history of depression,"[18] Victor presents the two women as purposeless and incapable individuals whose mental disorders could have been prevented if they had been controlled by more able figures of authority.

Part of the reason Victor and her readers feel sorry for these young women is because of their stereotypical and anti-feminist assumptions that capitalist goals and ideals apply to everyone regardless of their social and political circumstances. To this end, Idris and Takafka are portrayed as young women who shared Western desires and concepts of life and beauty. Wafa Idris is described as "a woman who would have enjoyed shopping in Jerusalem, trying on beautiful clothes and shoes, being able to buy things that she admired in old magazines she read at the Red Crescent headquarters."[19] In Victor's narrative, not only is Wafa Idris deprived of sensible judgment and any right to resent the occupation and thus to fight against it, she is also presented as a pitiable young woman who is deprived of the joy of consumption.

Although I de-emphasize any interest these women might have had in fashion or the entertainment industry, this is not because I wish to make them seem even more alien or to portray them as super humans (or non-humans) who do not enjoy life the way we do in the Western hemisphere. Instead, I choose to emphasize other issues that were important to these women—their conscious participation in the armed struggle and their courageous manipulation of traditional gender roles. I agree with Robert Brym and Bader Araj, who contest the theory that female bombers are psychologically disabled.

They note that in the aftermath of nearly every major eruption of violence against authority, including suicide attacks, psychologists cling to the notion that the individuals involved were mentally unstable, despite the fact that they have no clinical or anecdotal evidence.[20] Based on their recent study of 462 bombers, only one of whom suffered from depression, Brym and Araj conclude that psychological disorders cannot be a crucial factor in the decisions of opponents of occupation to become bombers.

Other sources point to sociopolitical factors as the reasons women bombers volunteer for "martyrdom". However, none of these sources views bombing missions as performative political actions. Libby Copeland's article "Female Suicide Bombers: The New Factor in Middle East's Deadly Equation" describes Palestinian women's engagement in the armed struggle against the Israeli occupation as acts of desperation.[21] Margaret Weiss argues that despair and emotional reactions to witnessing the deaths of others led Mirvat Masoud to volunteer for a bombing mission.[22] John Burns of the *New York Times* gives equal weight to the atrocities of the Israeli occupation and Hanadi Jaradat's pain over losing her brother and cousin in that occupation.[23] Paige W. Eager claims that women's "emotionally-driven instinct to protect their families translates into a willingness to murder those who are perceived as oppressing their surrogate families, whether the surrogate family be a class or a nation."[24] These sources do not ascribe female bombers' actions to madness, but they do point to feelings of hopelessness, despair, and depression as motivating factors. And yet the language these authors use presents these women as puppets. Interpreting the actions of women paramilitaries as driven by emotion presents them as inhuman, animalistic, and vengeful—as beastly monsters who lack a rational, clear view of what they are doing. In this view, female

bombers deviate from a cultural norm that expects them to be inherently nurturing and caring and turn into violent beasts to save the nation.

The theory that bombers are psychologically disordered seems even more inadequate in analyses of university-educated bombers. It is widely believed that male paramilitaries' zeal for jihad and their fierce determination to kill and to die reach a level of "madness" that drives young men to commit the violent act of sacrifice bombing.[25] Yet this "madness" is described as a spiritual state of being, something that provides a strong inspiration for the individual. The madness, therefore, is not a disorder but a familiar state of mind that is related to determination, belief, and spiritual strength. The terminology here—which is associated with notions of power, endurance, courage, religious devotion, and a certain level of sophistication—assigns subjectivity to male bombers. These young men choose to act. Even though Western writers use this fact to vilify the Muslim male jihadist, the language they use grants him the agency that is necessary for him to be identified as a man. In fact, claims that male fighters have psychopathological disorders do appear in media reports or the academic literature, but these sources do not portray even supposedly disordered male fighters as the puppets of the authorities of the organizations they represent. As Lori Allen points out, at times "fanaticism and despair"[26] have been cited as explanations for men's decisions to volunteer for "martyrdom", but these explanations have not cast any doubt on the men's subjectivity. However, in the case of female bombers, 'madness' is assumed to have direct and unequivocal relationship with submissiveness.

Secular-feminist discourse also tends to ignore the agency of Muslim female paramilitaries. This discourse accuses Palestinian patriarchal society and the resistance

organizations of coercing vulnerable women into acts of violence and does not treat women paramilitaries as responsible adults. Katrina Jaworski offers an intelligent observation on Australian media reports on *shahidas* (female martyrs). She argues that the Australian media ignores gender when discussing male fighters and refers to them as "suicide bombers." This language implies that the maleness of the paramilitary is self-evident and does not need to be referred to directly, an "absent presence" that affirms the masculinity of "suicide bombing."[27] Femaleness, on the other hand, is not self-evident and must be recognized and made visible. Hence, Jaworski points out, not only is women's "martyrdom" marked by gender—with the language "female suicide bomber"—but also the media emphasizes women's physical appearance (hair color, outfit, eye color) and the individual's femininity in a way that objectifies her through the lens of Orientalism. Brunner affirms Jawroski's observation by pointing to another interesting aspect of the Western discourse on female bombers. Women are mostly referred to by their first names,[28] which not only implies an unnecessary affinity between the author and the women she or he is discussing but also treats them like little girls. In contrast, male bombers are never infantilized in the literature, regardless of how young they might be.

Misrepresentations of female fighters using the discourse of psychopathology deny women's ability to intelligently comprehend the current political situation in the region. They also ignore the fact that occupation, dispossession, and personal and communal loss affect both men and women psychologically, emotionally, and economically. But these representations imply that it is only rational for men to be actively engaged in the cycle of violence, thus confining women to the rules of heteropatriarchy. Women are

presented as mentally and intellectually incapable of making critical, deadly, yet courageous decisions. In this view, the right and the capacity to act are reserved for men, who are naturally more aggressive than women. The women paramilitaries that Western journalists and scholars portray as mentally disabled are assumed to be human puppets controlled by male fanatics. This portrayal victimizes women as powerless individuals in need of special care and the attention of the powerful. It presents them as non-members of society who are incapable of actively participating in struggle against the invaders, willingly joining a guerilla organization, firmly determining to wear an explosive belt, or detonating a bomb at the appointed time and place.

Vilification of Muslim Men and Muslim Culture

Although equating the decisions of female bombers with mental disorders provides attractive headlines and draws attention to supposedly victimized Muslim women, it reinforces Orientalist stereotypes of Middle Easterners, Muslims in particular, as members of inferior nations in need of the white man's rule and benevolence. In order to reach to the point where the brown woman should be saved from the brown man, as Gayatri Spivak famously theorizes, the Middle Eastern man needs to be vilified.

Ignoring both the history of women's activism and resistance in the Middle East and the notion of *istishhad* (willingness to become a martyr), some media analysts and academics insist that women bombers' involvement in violence is mandated by men. Highlighting the supposed psychological disorders of female paramilitaries and cultural and ideological pressures, demonizes the male enemy and victimizes the female enemy.

In this construction, the superpower as the savior of the oppressed becomes crucial. The woman is presumed to be caught between the colonizer and the colonized man, and protecting her is thus necessary for the survival of the "good society."[29] This strategy victimizes women by vilifying men. It dismisses the agency of Middle Eastern women to "act." This is because the concept of agency is comprehensible for the Westerners only if it is put in the context of unbounded freedom. In this black and white understanding of "freedom", the individuals are either given the opportunity to enjoy their liberty of choice or not. By contrast, in patriarchal conservative cultures, such as Palestinians', individuals may take creative and risky measures in making choices.

I refer to Barbara Victor's field research once again since it is one of the most often cited works on female bombers. Her book revolves around the frequently asked question of how women, the symbols and bearers of life, can metamorphose into soldiers determined to destroy the enemy at the cost of their own lives. Victor highlights the cultural and ideological differences between her interviewees (Palestinians) and herself as an icon of Western (American) journalism. Despite the fact that some of her critics have called her "objective" and "honest,"[30] the analytical sections that follow each interview fail to offer more than stereotypical perceptions of the phenomenon of "female suicide bombing." In the introduction to the book, Victor asserts:

> I found that there were, in fact, very different motives and
> rewards for the men who died a martyr's death than for the
> women. Consequently, it became essential for me to understand
> then reasoning of the men who provide the moral justification for
> the seduction and indoctrination that eventually convinces a
> woman or girl that the most valuable thing she can do with her
> life is to end it; at the same time, I saw it was crucial to
> understand the social environment that pushes these young
> women over the edge of personal despair.[31]

This introduction makes it clear that for Victor, gender and cultural obligations are the major factors that determine a woman's decision to volunteer for "martyrdom". She also holds resistance organizations accountable for their "evilness" in recruiting women she sees as naive.

Victor emphasizes Dareen Abu Aisheh's fear of being stigmatized in her community and Ayat al-Akhras' desire to save her family's honor as crucial factors in their decisions to wear belts of explosives. Abu Aisheh is challenged by Israeli soldiers to kiss her cousin when she begs them to let a very sick child and his mother pass through a checkpoint. She decides to comply in spite of her religion and the fact that her culture forbids a modest woman to kiss a man unless he is her husband. But neither Abu Aisheh's humanitarian act nor her cultural rebelliousness convinces Victor to take her and her actions seriously; instead, she sensationalizes the pressure the family brings on the young woman to then marry her cousin. Although Dareen Abu Aisheh's sister and her friend both remember her as a feminist, Victor omits this characteristic in her study of the case. Instead, she offers many quotes from one of the interviewees, Nano Abdul, Abu Aishe's best friend, who recounts Abu Aisheh's frustration with her culture. One of these quotes in particular seems to accord with Victor's train of thought. Nano Abdul states

> Of course it was because of the occupation, but it was also because her parents were putting a lot of pressure on her to be an obedient, full-time childbearing and child-rearing spouse in a family where the husband was all- powerful and had absolute authority. Darine [Dareen] resisted that. She told me she woul rather die.[32]

This quote brings Victor to her own conclusion:

> Singled out because of her unwavering faith; sought after
> because she was intelligent enough to understand the
> political complications of a religious edict that summarily
> changed the rules; depressed and desperate because she was
> being forced into a marriage; aware that her refusal would
> bring disgrace to her   family, since dozens of other
> Palestinians from Nablus and the   surrounding villages had
> witnessed the traumatic scene orchestrated by the Israeli
> soldiers . . . Darine [Dareen] decided to become the second
> female suicide bomber.[33]

Victor presents Dareen Abu Aisheh as a victim of her culture whose main concerns were

about domestic issues. Because she is a Muslim woman from a conservative society,

Abu Aisheh cannot be imagined as a political activist who consciously rises against the

oppression.

The way Abu Aisheh is represented in Western texts contradicts how she performs

herself in her farewell video. She appears in front of the camera as one of the strongest

and most serious bombers among the women I discuss. Her posture is relaxed, her voice

is determined, and her gaze into the lens is confident, all reflections of her faith in her

mission. Abu Aisheh explains her bombing mission as retaliation for Israeli atrocities

against Palestinians, especially the four individuals who had been killed a few days

earlier. She raises her voice when she accuses Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon of

failing to perform his duty.[34] At the end of her speech, she poses for the camera with a

dagger in one hand and holds up her index finger to make the symbol for the number

one. This last image, the violent gesture Abu Aisheh performs, is meant to communicate

with her audience her strong determination to kill for the one and the only God, Allah.[35]

It is important to note that Hamas twice refused Abu Aisheh's attempts to volunteer for

bombing mission because of her gender.[36] But she succeeded in convincing the authorities of her physical and mental ability to carry out a bombing mission. Her perseverance in joining the volunteers for bombing missions and the organization's hesitance to admit women in general are two pieces of evidence that contradict the theory that women are forced to commit the violent act of bombing.

Both Hamas and Hezbollah refused to accept female volunteers prior to 2002.[37] They reasoned that as long as male volunteers were available, women did not have to risk their lives. Sheik Ahmad Yassin once stated in an interview:

> A woman martyr is problematic. A man who recruits a woman
> is breaking Islamic law. He is taking the girl or woman without
> the permission of her father, brother, or husband, and therefore
> the family of the girl confronts an even greater problem since
> the man has the biggest power over her, choosing the day that
> she will give her life back to Allah."[38]

Dr. Al-Rantisi, Hamas' co-founder, political leader, and spokesman, corroborates Ahmad Yassin's statement: "Every day, women, even married women, want to be *shahidas.* We try to tell them that they have things to give in other areas and not specifically in military areas."[39] Both of these statements indicate the position Islamic resistance organizations took toward women's political activists prior to 2002. The desire of Palestinian women to become involved in armed struggle was a challenge to fundamentalist organizations. Yet it was powerful enough to convince resistance movement authorities to change their attitudes.

Instead of highlighting women's challenging the fundamentalist organizations, Israeli and most Western texts focus on aspects of their sexuality, such as marriage, virginity, motherhood, and sexual encounters outside marriage. Ebrahim Barzak, a

journalist for the *Jerusalem Post*, describes Riyashi's love affair with one of the leaders of Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades as a "culturally unaccepted" relationship that ultimately "pushed" Riyashi to volunteer for "martyrdom".[40] Miriam Shaviv, another journalist at the *Jerusalem Post,* states that "young women Palestinian militants in the first *intifada* [uprising] were in trouble with relatives for 'sleeping around' and would have rather been killed or jailed than face retribution from their families."[41] Many Western writers refer to female bombers as victims of rape and sexual abuse.[42]

To Western writers, ethnocentric understandings of women in Islam and the so-called horrors of arranged marriage seem sufficient justification for a young woman to use her body as a weapon of destruction.[43] This focus on the sexuality of female insurgents treats women as half-human beings who are unable to formulate their own thoughts, determine their own destinies, and take action based on their own will. It sees Muslim men as oppressors and thus justifies the superpowers' presence in the region as saviors and the bearers of civilization and democracy.

The third-millennium version of Orientalist views of Muslim women has replaced images of belly dancers and concubines in harems with the image of Muslim women in fatigues. In times of war or conflict, the militarization of both men and women as supporters of the state or of the opposition is inevitable. A lifelong exposure to the ideology of martyrdom and self-sacrifice equips the individual to develop a clear vision of the path she has chosen. Each of the women I discuss could have chosen the path of nonviolent resistance, like thousands of other women living under the occupation. However, they made a different choice. More important, they consciously took advantage of the politics of performance in order to gain the visibility that both

fanaticism and patriarchy had denied them. For these women, performance was a prominent aspect of their political activism. Even if we accept the prevalent assumption that Muslim women are oppressed in a patriarchal conservative culture, the political performances female paramilitaries make right before their bombing missions clearly deviate from the norms of their culture. These women's political awareness and conscious performance of power, through which they vividly threaten the enemy and present their capacity to destroy the oppressor, deconstruct the system of patriarchy.

Although in some Muslim cultures, women's virtue is jeopardized when their faces are seen in public, pious paramilitaries choose to pose for the camera to be videotaped and photographed for posthumous posters and banners. For these women, visibility is part of the process of sacrificing themselves for a higher cause. The performances of these devout soldiers in farewell videos present new women who are neither invisible nor silent and who definitely do not need saving, even if we assume that their boundary crossings are only virtual. The visibility these women acquire through their performances empower them beyond their gender, age, and social status. Not only do they become icons of resistance in their own cultures, but also they will be internationally recognized, even if that recognition includes negative remarks.

Arab media praises female bombers as "martyrs" and glorifies them as mothers and daughters of the nation without focusing on personal issues. Female paramilitaries become heroines of the resistance not just because they sacrifice themselves but because these women publicize their struggles, their words are repeated, their posters are mounted on walls, and their videos are circulated for local and international audiences. In short, they embody the ephemerality of performance: their self-sacrifice performs the

ephemerality of the material body but also remains in the form of pedagogical posters, videos, and so forth that create a genealogy of female activists in their wake.

Performing Motherhood

When Muslim women paramilitaries are not victimized or infantilized in Western media, they are represented as deviators from the norms of their culture. In her analysis of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo during Argentine's Dirty War, Diana Taylor observes that under the junta regime, motherhood was perceived in patriarchal terms. This vision of motherhood brings forth the notion of good versus bad woman in which the "good" woman is defined as the "non-political mother confined to the private sphere" and the "bad" woman is the active woman who is "associated with deviance and subversion."[44] This same view sometimes underlies contemporary analysis of the violence of female resistance fighters. The patriarchal understanding of motherhood justifies violence against mothers who do not abide by the rules. As Belinda Morrissey puts it, "When women commit murder, their abjection is even more extreme than that of men who do the same. Legal and media narratives of murders committed by women indicate that these acts are also generally more traumatic for hetero-patriarchal societies than those of men. For the fear of women, of their power to generate life and to take it away, runs deep in male dominated societies."[45] Female paramilitaries are portrayed in Western media as unfeminine monsters who have rejected motherhood. According to Morrissey, the most heinous departure from a social norm a woman can make is to abandon maternity and childcare. Elyse Max's study of Western newspaper texts corroborates

Morrissey's analysis. She found that 71 percent of the articles that discuss female suicide bombings "frame women as rejecting their maternal instincts."[46]

Motherhood is at the center of patriarchal analysis because this system of thought sees womanhood as an incomplete identity; it defines women only in relation to men, as wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. This view of women is prominent in coverage of women paramilitaries. Roy McCarthy writes about female fighters as mothers, sisters, and wives,[47] and others discuss how women *shahidas* are supposedly affected by the ideology of their male relatives or are persuaded or manipulated by them. Defining the identity of female fighters in terms of their associations with men or in terms of traditional gender roles obscures their agency and how they consciously manipulate their assigned roles.

In the articles Max included in her study and in numerous other sources I have seen, women are assumed to have an innate preference for nurturing, domesticity, and passivity. Women's ability to bear children is sometimes the center of the stories that are told about female paramilitaries. For example, Wafa Idris's inability to bear children is the focus of analysis of her case. The *Jerusalem Post* went so far as to conclude that Idris' action was her sacrificial compensation for not bearing children.[48] According to this article, Wafa Idris had to sacrifice herself or part of herself to fulfill the role assigned to her by virtue of her gender. Had she been able to give birth to soldiers, she would not have had to volunteer for self-sacrifice. Yoram Schweitzer also presents this idea. He describes Wafa Idris's deed as "acting as a human bomb [which] is an understood and accepted offering for a woman who will never be a mother."[49] Schweitzer and others who share his views contribute to the stereotypical assumption

that Third World women must make some kind of sacrifice, in the form of childbirth or some other sacrifice, if patriarchal society is to thrive. In other words, if a woman is incapable of reproducing, her annihilation is predictable. It is surprising that even Western analysts find this view comprehensible. Elyse Max notes that such thinking is presented despite what Idris accomplished and who she became in her last days.[50]

Within both the secular and theocratic patriarchal systems, motherhood has been used not only to differentiate between "good" and "evil" women but also to define womanhood. Palestinian female paramilitaries are criticized most harshly for risking their relationships with their children because of their long hours of political work, their imprisonment, or even their deaths. Women's political activism and motherhood are regarded as two opposite poles that cannot be satisfactorily fulfilled unless one is completely sacrificed for the sake of the other. This fairly universal patriarchal view holds that women's political activism in general and political activism that is not state-sponsored in particular challenges the "hegemonic discourse of militarized masculinity."[51] Thus, women who engage in political action are subject to criticism on two counts: first for ignoring their family's needs, and second for deviating from the norms of patriarchy.

From the Palestinian perspective, however, the concept of motherhood includes the notion that a mother can protect the whole nation by sacrificing herself. Remma Hammami observes that the peasant background of Palestinian culture means that family, children, and motherhood are central to Palestinian values. In the decades following the occupation of Palestine, when the majority of Palestinians became refugees, "men went into shock. Women, mothers specifically, didn't have the luxury

to go into shock. Mothers had to keep everything going."[52] Hammami notes that women were active participants in the resistance from the beginning. Since the second *intifada* (national uprising), Palestinian mothers have organized sit-ins, demonstrations, protests against mass arrests, and vigils to commemorate the dead, and they have worked to rescue fighters and prevent house demolitions. The way that Palestinian women have publicized their pain and opposition and have legitimized their political visibility in a conservative culture is what fascinates me the most. Fully aware of the social and political circumstances that surrounded them, these women have used traditional roles that previously restricted them to the domain of the home. They have exploited the concepts of motherhood and martyrdom to secure their status as political activists.

As Annelise Orleck perceptively notes, motherhood "has been politicized, both as a means to control women—through state regulation, medical intervention, and brutal military assault—and a means by which women have sought to regain control over their lives and the lives of their children."[53] The Palestinian female fighters I study have manipulated cultural concepts of motherhood in an empowering way. In the three videos I analyze in this chapter—a farewell statement video, a report about sit-ins mothers organized as part of an effort to rescue fighters, and footage created by Hamas of a mother who sends her son to war—I will focus on the performances of mothers. I will argue that although Palestinian women's participation in the theatricality of resistance is not explicitly a feminist movement, it leads toward empowering women.

Conservative resistance organizations who function within the rules of patriarchy and impose many restrictions on women have appealed to concepts of motherhood and

the womanhood of fighters to reach their political goals. They have idealized the heroic

mothers who send their children to war, martyred mothers who have sacrificed their

own lives for the benefit of the whole community and for God, and mothers who

contribute to the struggle by giving birth to the next generation of soldiers. These

organizations have produced these exemplary images of resistance as part of their

efforts to recruit and train more people. Many Western analysts concentrate on this

aspect of female bombing and argue that the patriarchal society of Palestine demands

that women sacrifice themselves. For instance, Mia Bloom believes that "traditional

patriarchy has a well-scripted set of rules in which women sacrifice themselves[;] the

patriarchal ideal of motherhood is one of self-denial and self-effacement."[54] I agree

with Bloom that women are expected to prove their support and care for the family and

the nation at large by giving of themselves in patriarchal societies. It is also true that

religious fundamentalists see women as inferior to men. It is important to study the

political activism of women in such cultures to understand how women manipulate

cultural restrictions and claim agency within the boundaries of gender roles.

Reem Saleh Al-Riyashi (Mother-Martyr)

Al-Riyashi's choice to volunteer for "martyrdom", her farewell statement video,

and the posters that remain of her have been subjected to harsh criticism in the West.

Her farewell statement is unique for the number of weapons it displays and the

presence of her children. Although most fighters in the videos are armed with machine

guns, the volume of weapons on display while al-Riyashi talks in her farewell

statement video is quite notable; they include dynamite, hand grenades, automatic

rifles, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, and homemade bombs. The presence of her two very young children, who pose with her before the camera, surprises the viewer to such an extent that Reem Saleh has been widely criticized for neglecting her maternal duties. Critics feel that her maternal body is polluted by the weapons she is wearing and that the children's proximity to the explosives calls al-Riyashi's status as a good mother into question. According to this view, she symbolizes the mythical "evil woman" who either has no motherly feelings for her children or is responsible for bearing evil offspring.

Reem Saleh al-Riyashi and other women are not the only paramilitaries who enthusiastically expose their children to weapons, but the female paramilitaries are the only ones who are widely censured. In a posthumous poster of Ali Uthman, his sons are seen examining the rifles that surround their father. The poster reads "The sons of martyr Ali Uthman 'Asi, continuing the way."[55] Even though exposing children to real weapons is usually condemned in the Western world, I have not found any criticism of Ali Uthman's actions as a father. Neither his sacrifice of his own life nor the fact that he trained his sons to become martyrs in the future is seen as "abnormal" for Muslim men, who are stereotyped as violent, unemotional, and irrational. The absence of criticism of Uthman's posters implies that the decisions of male fighters to become involved in violence and their ability to train the next generation are seen as natural. For female fighters, however, such acts are seen as cruel. As Brunner has noted, "It is not only the idea of [the] multi-birthing mother that threatens the Israeli population but also real mothers like al-Rayashi [*sic*]" and the ones who "chose murder over motherhood."[56]

Arab media often praise the actions of bombers regardless of their gender. Indeed, pictures of male and female fighters with their children are meant to convey two messages to supporters: first, that parenting and resistance are two sides of the same coin; and second, that it is necessary to educate the masses to follow the "martyr's" path. Mother-martyrs have also been glorified in the Arab media for being mothers and political activists simultaneously. Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, praises al-Riyashi's deed by calling it a "qualitative evolution," while *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*[57] praises it as an effective strategy: "The Palestinians are fighting against the Zionists with a lethal weapon—a weapon of the multi-birthing women."[58] In its use of the term "multi-birthing mother," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* echoes how resistance organizations urge Palestinian mothers to give birth to as many children (potential future soldiers) as they can.

In fact, for many years, resistance organization leaders felt that the only way women could participate in the struggle was by giving birth to and raising the next generation of jihadists. Of course, this attitude changed after women volunteers for bombing missions proved themselves to be vital elements of violent resistance. In their farewell statements, Mirvat Masoud and Dareen Abu Aisheh emphasized the role of mothers in the conflict not as figures who exercise influence in the background but as a new generation of women who can become fighters themselves. Dareen Abu Aisheh said, "Every Palestinian woman will give birth to an army of martyrs and her role will not only be confined to weeping over a son, a brother, or a husband. Instead, she will become a martyr herself."[59] Her statement makes a clear distinction between the passive woman of the past whose only response to oppression was to weep over her

loss and the active partisan of today who bargains her life for freedom. She also emphasizes that resistance will continue until the occupier is defeated. The new generation of Palestinian women claims to be and is encouraged to become visible, active, and directly involved in violence. These women distinguish themselves from the emotional, domestic, and invisible women of past generations who stayed behind their men.

Reem Saleh Al-Riyashi is part of this new generation of women activists. She is conscious of her new role as a mother who is also a political activist and the danger this new situation puts her in. She participates in the theatricality of resistance: she takes advantage of the visibility she is granted in the video recording and performs her new status, her political point of view, and her maternal feelings publicly. Reem Saleh appears in military fatigues, emphasizing her masculinized and militarized identity, while also observing hijab as a sign of her femininity. With a belt of explosives strapped around her waist and a bazooka in one hand, Reem Saleh reads her statement calmly and confidently. Her voice and posture are as strong as her statement, in which she goes into some of the graphic details of her operation. Her statement leaves no doubt of her awareness of the degree of violence she will commit. As a matter of fact, the scenes she depicts for the viewers, such as a body ripped into pieces and body parts flying in the air, confirms her awareness of the aggression of the operation she is about to carry out.[60] Simultaneously, however, she showcases her full awareness of her gender identity. She begins her rather long farewell statement video by highlighting her motherhood and her maternal duties.

> God gave me the ability to be a mother of two children who I love so. But my wish to meet God in Paradise is greater, so I decided to be a martyr for the sake of my people. I am convinced God will help and take care of my children.[61]

In this statement, it is clear that Reem Saleh does not deny her maternal duties and the cultural expectations of her as a mother. She is aware that she might elicit a negative reaction for deviating from cultural norms, thus at the beginning of her speech, she declares her motivation for "martyrdom" is her desire to fulfill a divine duty.

In conservative cultures, young women can be ostracized for failure to fulfill social duties and religious expectations. Thus, performing as a secular, political activist can result in social stigma as well. Yet the values of martyrdom and jihad provide support for women's cooperation with male paramilitaries, taking on masculine tasks, and articulating their desires and ideals—in short, their performance of resistance for the public view. Thus, Reem Saleh's devotion to Allah first and her patriotism next exempts her from stigma and criticism, at least in her own culture. Her self-sacrificial commitment to Islam and Palestine not only legitimizes her decision to leave her children behind but also raises her to the level of a heroine. After all, she is leaving her children in God's care. If she had not prioritized her duty to jihad and the nation, Reem Saleh's decision to abrogate her maternal responsibilities would have left her open to the cruelest censure. Reem Saleh and other female bombers, aware of this cultural obstacle, ground their political activism in an ideological and nationalistic framework to avoid cultural punishment for bending the rules of the patriarchy.

Reem Saleh also has to announce her position publicly in order to avoid stigmatization. She has to perform her thoughts for the audience who will judge her

after she is gone. If visibility means power for other unmarried female fighters, for Reem Saleh performing her goal and her new identity in front of the camera means the agency to initiate a new path for other young mother-paramilitaries. Reem Saleh defines a new status for young Palestinian mothers by performing her new self. She consciously participates in the spectacle of martyrdom by appearing in military fatigues in a distinctive setting that showcases massive amounts of weapons and explosives and performs her scripted role as a mother-martyr in order to recruit other young women.

The set and costume announce Reem Saleh's metamorphosis from an ordinary woman to a "living martyr" who is ready to sacrifice herself and destroy the enemy. She emphasizes her new role by including her children. After her children enter the scene, Reem Saleh receives them affectionately without changing her military attire. In photographs that have remained of her, she holds her son in one hand and a rifle in the other. In another picture, she poses behind her daughter and carries a machine gun while the toddler holds a bazooka. In all of the images, she appears wearing a vest full of explosives. Combining images of armed struggle and motherhood, Reem Saleh portrays a new mother figure who reaches beyond her domestic role and becomes a nationally acclaimed heroine. She is a new mother who is the mother of all the children of Palestine, not just her own children. Therefore, she is ethically, instinctively, and rationally mandated to defend the nation's children even if it means abandoning her own biological offspring.

Fatima Omar Mahmud Al-Najar (Mother-Activist-Martyr)

In addition to Fatima Al-Najar's farewell statement video, a short television recording remains of her in which she speaks to a reporter about a demonstration and sit-in at Beit Hanoun.[62] This video captures a few minutes of the three-day sit-in. That event was followed by mass demonstrations in September 2006, at which older Palestinian mothers provided a human shield for resistance fighters. Three weeks earlier, Hamas fighters had taken shelter in a local mosque in Beit Hanoun, where IDF (Israel Defense Forces) soldiers had besieged them and threatened to air-bomb the mosque if the fighters did not surrender. In an organized event, Al-Najar and many other women braved Israeli tanks and guns and prevented the IDF soldiers from destroying the mosque. One woman was killed during this event, but the Hamas guerillas managed to escape through the back door.[63] Fatima Al-Najar, the oldest Palestinian bomber to date, participated in and organized many demonstrations to defend her city and prevent house demolitions in Gaza before finally carrying out a bombing mission.

Analyzing Al-Najar's television interview is significant for understanding the importance of the role of visibility in her political action and in the actions of other women. These women performed their rage and protest publicly, fully aware of the traditional and political roles they needed to play. In this video, Al-Najar approaches the cameraman to voice her objection to the occupation forces. Realizing the necessity of reaching an international audience, Al-Najar performs herself as a mother first and a political activist second.

Al-Najar and other women in the video surprise the Western viewer in multiple ways. They are not in the domestic sphere of their homes and they are not accompanied

by their men. Instead, they claim public space independently and quite aggressively.

We do not see these women as individuals who have experienced loss (such as a family

member or personal property) but see their wholeness (as a collective entity demanding

visibility). These women (mothers) do not shy away from the camera or cover their

faces but use the camera and the politics of representation to communicate with the

outside world. They deviate from the Orientalist depiction of Muslim women through

their direct engagement in violent resistance. In the rallies or sit-ins they participate in,

they do not carry arms but use whatever objects are available to them (stones, their

own hands, etc.) as they defend themselves against the violence of IDF soldiers. Their

gatherings are public performances in support of the armed struggle movement. For

instance, they arrange sit-ins to prevent the arrest of armed resistance fighters or to

save a bomber's house from demolition or to commemorate a "martyr's" death.

Palestinian mothers who participate in these events consciously support the violent

resistance movement.

In her study of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, Diana Taylor notes how "non-

political"[64] women were transformed into active mothers who claimed the public space

of Plaza de Mayo by the hundreds, seeking recognition for 30,000 Argentines who had

been abducted, raped, tortured, and permanently "disappeared" by military forces.[65]

The Madres "walked arm in arm, wearing their white head scarves . . . in Argentina's

central square." Carrying placards and photographs of their missing children, they

turned "their bodies into walking billboards."[66] Both the Madres and the Palestinian

mothers who took to the streets crossed gender lines by rejecting their roles as

domestic and invisible mothers. "Already socialized and politicized through

patriarchy" and thus "always already performative," these mothers have turned their private pain and frustration into a "collective project of resistance," demonstrating their political awareness.[67]

The way Palestinian women expressed their agency in their response to the Beit Hanoun incident is quite fascinating. Although they were supported by Hamas, these mothers did not wear bandanas or carry banners or placards that indicated their political affiliations. They went to the sit-in with empty hands, dressed in their traditional hijab as ordinary women trying to save their children's lives. Al-Najar and some of the other participants in the conflict at Beit Hanoun were members of Hamas and thus supporters of armed struggle. Yet at least on this particular occasion, they chose not to emphasize this political stance but to perform as older mothers (affectionate, apolitical, nonviolent, and traditionally passive) to reduce the risk of being arrested by IDF soldiers.

Moving within the boundaries of their very traditional maternal duties, these mothers displayed their readiness to sacrifice their own lives to save the lives of their symbolic children. Older Palestinian women are aware that they are less likely to be beaten or arrested during a conflict because they are embodiments of mother figures even for IDF soldiers. By contrast, younger women are seen as political activists and thus subject to the IDF's violence. Within Palestinian culture, older women are considered to be "desexed" and thus free to encounter men.[68] The older women at Beit Hanoun used their bodies, the essence of their motherhood, to create a barrier between IDF soldiers and Hamas insurgents, their metaphorical sons. The theatricality of this move both saved the lives of the women and rescued the insurgents. More important, it

drew the attention of local and international audiences to the atrocities that were

happening in that area. These mothers refused to internalize their pain; instead, they

politicized their suffering by staging it for the whole world to see. The visibility of

these women contrasted sharply with the patriarchal gender norms of Palestinian

society but was nonetheless embraced because of its practicality in the situation at

hand. It is ironic that the Hamas fighters (the children), who were in reality more

powerful in terms of social, military, and political status than the mothers, depended on

the sit-in the women had organized. Hamas had always defined itself as the defender of

the rights of Palestinians, but in this situation it was forced to realize that women's

participation in struggle was necessary.

The resistance of the Palestinian mothers at Beit Hanoun created a sense of

collectivity among all Palestinian mothers. About this collectivity, McCarthy writes:

> To use this collective power of the people is something very
> new in the political scene here [Palestine]. Before, the women
> were glorifying martyrs and martyrdom; now, they speak
> about their power themselves as women. It was the women
> within Hamas, partly by design, partly by trial and error, who
> have begun to push beyond the group's vague assertions of its
> support for women to seize a much bigger, more practical
> role.[69]

The political participation of Palestinian mothers shares many characteristics

with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. However, there are also some significant

differences between these two groups of mothers. First, from the beginning, the public

protest of the Madres was institutionalized as a structured and scheduled performance.

The Madres functioned as an organization that was founded and run by women.

Palestinian mothers, however, have responded to an ongoing conflict that is happening in the streets and have organized their public performances (gatherings, sit-ins, demonstrations) at random locations and times, depending on the nature of each new incident. Women political activists in Palestine do not collaborate with organizations that are run by local women, and they have not established such organizations for themselves. The various organizations that operate by and for Palestinian women are oriented toward cultural events, career opportunities, and women's domestic issues, and all of them claim to be nonpolitical. The absence of an organizational framework for women political activists renders communication very difficult. That is why the media is a necessary and, indeed, the only way Palestinian women fighters can communicate with their people.

Second, the Madres present themselves as nonpolitical, nonviolent mothers who remain in a subordinate status. Taylor makes a valid observation of the limitations of their movement, arguing that the Madres neither challenge the patriarchal system at home nor ask for power; instead, they gain power through self-sacrifice. Because of this, Taylor believes that the Madres "are not feminists, if by feminism one refers to the politicization of the female's subordinate status."[70] In contrast, Palestinian mothers consciously take a versatile position that can change from nonviolent to violent political activism as situations unfold. It may be true that Palestinian women go home after each demonstration to cook dinner for their husbands. In this respect, it may be said that they, too, have not targeted the whole system of patriarchy. Yet their conscious performance of political activism projects a new voice that prioritizes duty before gender roles. One

example is the young bride who tells her fiancé that if her nation calls her, she will respond immediately and leave her role as a housewife behind.[71]

Third, the Madres began their public resistance to draw attention to the fact that they had lost sons and daughters. Palestinian mothers took the streets, and still do so, to prevent such losses. While the Madres have politicized their motherhood as the result of experiencing the pain of losing a child, Palestinians, (women, men, and children) inevitably become politicized because they are living under the occupation. Women may become political activists as a result of the loss of a family member, but that is not always the case, even though it is true that most, if not all, of the families living in the occupied territories have experienced loss to some degree. Naturally, the cultural and physical landscape of war alters people's identities as the need for struggle and resistance arises. The environment they live in and the atrocities they witness every day position Palestinian women and men alike in a politically defined zone of reaction. It is only natural that women feel the same pressures and frustrations that drive men to violent resistance. If we believe that women are more sensitive or more emotional than men, we should expect them to suffer even more than men and thus be willing to change from "passive witnesses to active protestors" against the occupiers.[72]

Umm Nidal (A Martyr's Mother)

Islamist authorities have used performances of motherhood as an educational tool to promote self-sacrifice for religious or national reasons. Fundamentalists conspicuously speak of how women can make a substantial contribution to the resistance

by voluntarily sacrificing a child, especially a male child. Soldiers who are killed in the course of the battle against the occupiers or the supposed enemies of God die prestigious and thus desirable deaths. The mother of a deceased soldier becomes the mother of the "martyr", or *umm al-shahid*. This is a very general term that literally translates to the mother of any individual who has been killed in the battle for a higher cause, be it ideological or otherwise. The concept of *umm al-shahid* includes the idea that the loss of a child and the relationship between the child (martyr) and his or her mother are both collective experiences. Neither a mother's grief over losing a child to martyrdom nor the fear of leaving a child behind when she herself dies a martyr is intangible for other mothers across the nation. In a sense, the entire nation becomes a collectivity of children and mothers caring for one another and sharing the same goals. Besides implementing a sense of unity, the collectivization of endurance and agony alleviates the martyrs' mothers' feeling of loss and strengthens the public's motivation for struggle.

One of the intriguing aspects of the theatricality of resistance organizations is the images of martyrs' mothers on television or at public events. Resistance organizations are fully aware of the pedagogical impact of theatricality and provide the technical means that facilitate the visibility of these women. They have created television programs and videos of mothers who are sending their children to war or have already lost their loved ones. In these programs, martyrs' mothers often appear confident about the decision of their child to become a martyr. Many are able to hold back their tears, but some cry in front of the camera. All display the image of the ideal mother who is always ready to sacrifice whatever she has for her religion and her people. Martyrs' mothers present themselves as living advocates of the ideology of *istishhad* (martyrdom) by

promoting the legitimacy of resistance organizations with their voices and their actions. Resistance organization authorities always acknowledge martyrs' mothers for their role in the national struggle to recruit young people.[73] At a Women's Day celebration in the early 1990s[74], Palestinian authorities invited seventy martyrs' mothers to introduce themselves on the stage. The audience clapped after each woman uttered the name of her child and praised the son or daughter for his or her self-sacrifice.[75] This public recognition and praise of self-sacrificial resistance reinforces the concept of the multi-birthing woman activist.

The martyr's mother is glorified as a facilitator who not only gives birth to many children, the future army of resistance, but also sends her children to war. She is the bearer of heroes and heroines, and she is the iconic figure of patience and commitment. Yet she remains in the background, maintaining her invisible, silent, and second-class position. At first glance it appears that the mother-facilitator's role, what Diana Taylor calls "weakness" and subordination,[76] does not have an empowering effect. The mother's invisible and indirect involvement in the resistance nullifies her agency. However, Taylor's analysis of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo suggests that public performance can be a strategy that both complies with and defies the norms of the heteropatriarchal ideal of motherhood. Building on this analysis, I suggest that performing "weakness" has gained the Palestinian martyrs' mothers visibility, local and international recognition, and thus power. While staying within the norms of their culture, martyrs' mothers have performed their suffering and pain and have exposed their wounds to an international audience. Laura Rossi calls this "the power of the cunt"

and "the wick of the powerlessness" that generates change "in a way that power itself was not able to achieve."[77]

In a widely distributed video, Mariam Farhat prepares her 17-year-old son, Muhammad, for martyrdom. The resistance organization authorities gave Mrs. Farhat the title of Umm Nidal (mother of struggle)[78] after Muhammad was killed in 2002. Umm Nidal (the mother of struggle) transcends *umm al-shahid* (mother of a martyr) in its capacity to encompass all aspects of resistance, including raising potential soldiers for the resistance. So the language *mother* of struggle connotes motherhood (the ability to give birth) to the person who bears the title. Mrs. Farhat, who sent three of her six sons to the jihad against the occupiers, received this prestigious title as a mother who repeatedly showed her devotion to the Palestinian cause. In order to fulfill the high demands of the task of feeding the resistance, Umm Nidal has participated in public interviews in which she has expressed joy and profound satisfaction that she was able to raise sons who would join the army of God.[79] Mariam Farhat is one of the very few women activists who has been offered a high position in Hamas. She has been an active member of parliament since 2006.

For her audience, Umm Nidal performs the role of a mother-facilitator whose involvement in each and every part of her child's political activity is crucial. The video captures the ritual of preparing the son for the battle and preparing mentally for his imminent death. It begins with Farhat's emotional caressing of her son and concludes with her leading Muhammad through the door, facilitating his departure. She gazes directly into the camera for the rest of the video and is quite self-conscious about her mise-en-scène, making sure to fit into the frame without blocking her son. The video

begins with Muhammad and his mother in their backyard, talking while Mrs. Farhat adjusts his outfit. Muhammad's attire—army pants and boots, a long-sleeve shirt hanging over his pants, and a checkerboard black and white *kafiyeh*[80] round his neck— and his very short hair designate him as a militia member. Mrs. Farhat kisses her son on the eyes, expressing her affection for him and her approval of his choice to join the guerilla groups. Then she gives him his rifle and helps him place it on his shoulder. For a few seconds, Mrs. Farhat watches Muhammad getting comfortable with his weapon before they both pose for the camera, smiling. Umm Nidal and Muhammad walk toward the lens and pass it to enter their little garden.

While Muhammad casts his eyes down and steps aside when they reach the trees, Umm Nidal gazes into the camera and only occasionally follows Muhammad around. She chooses a tree and stands next to it to be photographed alone. She turns toward the second camera, which is capturing her portrait as she is being filmed. Then she and the camera join Muhammad once again so she can caress him some more. Muhammad kisses his mother and shares his weapon with her. Once again, they stand still holding the rifle together. Finally, Muhammad leaves for the entrance gate, followed by Mrs. Farhat. The last segments of the video seem to focus on Mrs. Farhat's action more than on Muhammad's preparation for a mission. The camera captures Mrs. Farhat as the iconic mother figure. Umm Nidal performs her support for her son's decision and her indestructible faith in the struggle against the enemy by personally arming her son for the battle. She smiles into the lens, accentuating, in her performance, her willingness to submit to the will of God. As a true believer, Umm Nidal foresees her son's admission to paradise and performs her belief for the younger mothers who are sure to watch this

video. She promotes the role of the new mother: traditional and yet active, subordinate without losing her agency, and in control of her children's destiny.

Finally, after all the pictures are taken, Muhammad walks out the entrance door into the deserted alley. The camera captures his departure in the door-frame, which is half-filled with Umm Nidal's figure. She does not follow her son to the actual battle but stays behind in the private domain of her house, as is expected of a good woman. The choice of location in this video complements the new role fundamentalist organizations would like women to take. Umm Nidal prepares her son and bids him farewell in her own backyard. She does not go to Hamas headquarters or a safe house or a training field, although all these places are commonly used in the documentaries resistance organizations make. Umm Nidal converts her family home into a supporting headquarter, quite obviously emphasizing the role the home plays in raising the future Palestinian army. The fact that Umm Nidal is a public political figure adds to the theatricality of this video; first as a Hamas representative in parliament and second as a political activist who has consciously used theatricality to access the masses. Her decision to publicize her support for Muhammad's martyrdom, the fact that she saves her tears for her private moments in order to appear strong, and the reality of her political activism are all evidence of her conscious political demonstration of courage and dedication. In front of the camera, Miriam Farhat adheres to the norms of her society while engaging in the theatricality of resistance. She presents herself as a mother-facilitator, someone whose strong presence is vital for the resistance but whose place is ideally in the background. In this particular video, she does not encourage women's

direct participation in the resistance but introduces herself as a role model for young mothers to follow.

Paige Eager compares the Palestinian mothers who send their children to war or praise Allah for granting martyrdom to their children with the Spartan mothers of Ancient Greece or the Gold Star mothers of World War II.[81] She concedes that some may be troubled by the juxtaposition of these three examples; they may see the Palestinian mothers as simply sick, crazy, or brainwashed, in contrast to their view of Gold Star mothers and Spartan mothers as women who sacrificed their children for a noble cause. The latter view is how the international audience may interpret the actions of Palestinian mothers of martyrs. But in the Arab world, the sacrifice of Palestinian mothers is nothing but heroism. Eager focuses on the question of "were all three of these mothers 'performing' in the public sphere and then grieving in the private sphere where they could shed their 'civic motherhood' veneer?"[82] Eager's question points to a difference between an individual's public performance and her private struggle with ideologies, emotions, and personal dilemmas. Surprisingly, Eager's discussion of the performativity of martyrs' mothers' responses to the deaths of their children ends with this quote. Her analysis is rooted in the disciplines of sociology, historiography, and political science but does not address the issue in the field of performance studies.

The martyrs' mothers may conceal their personal emotions about the pain of losing a child in order to nurture resistance, whatever the cause may be. Even in cases like that of Umm Nidal, who might have conservative religious beliefs about martyrdom and paradise, it is not ethical to deny her humanity. In fact, refusing to acknowledge the human feelings of these religious mothers means denying them the

agency to react to the injustice they witness every day. The scholarly literature that insists that Palestinian mothers celebrate the deaths of their children with joy demonizes these women and fails to understand that their expressions of power, endurance, and dedication are performances for the public eye. These texts are reluctant to admit that these women have made a conscious choice to perform as *umm Nidals* and *umm al-shahids*, iconic mothers who are to be perceived as strong, devoted, and in control of their emotions.

There are other historical examples of women who have earned the title *umm al shahid* for originating a new trend of resistance. As the first *shahida,* Wafa Idris has been referred to as a symbol of resistance whose "courageous act" paved the way for hundreds of young women to volunteer for martyrdom. In the West, she is seen as a woman for whom infertility led to "depression"[83] and then "self-immolation."[84] And yet in the Arab world, she has become a "national figure" for the new generation of women fighters.[85] Numerous events and organizations have been initiated or named after her. Marcus and Zilberdik offer a list of such events and groups: they include a soccer tournament for youth in the Al-Amari camp in Palestine, summer camps funded by UNICEF, and a Fatah women's military unit. Idris's martyrdom was not just an isolated act of self-sacrifice; it was the beginning of the phenomenon of "female suicide bombing," which is now referred to as "Wafa's Cult,"[86] a new tool for resistance organizations that has proven to be effective in reaching the target and gaining media attention worldwide. Although Idris never fulfilled the role of a biological mother, she gave birth to a generation of martyrs metaphorically. Dareen Abu Aisheh and Mirvat Masoud expressed their willingness to emulate their symbolic

mother and had the honor of being the first and second women to follow in her footsteps. Many other young women were also influenced by Idris to step into action.

Conclusion

The patriarchal notion of "good" versus "bad" women casts a shadow over the analysis of the violent deeds of female bombers. Attributing their motivation for their engagement in armed struggle to their faith, to cultural oppression, to personal issues, or to psychological deficiencies severely limits the scope of analysis in the literature on female bombing. Media reports and the academic literature seem to imply that cultural obligations are exclusive to Muslim nations, although they are not entirely mistaken in their understanding of the cultural pressures on Palestinian women. Yet these women have manipulated their scripted roles as mothers and caregivers and have reconstructed a new image of womanhood in the context of resistance. The decisions of Palestinian women to use performativity and join the theatricality of resistance have raised their status and brought them to the forefront of the struggle against Israeli occupation. By consciously performing within the boundaries of the doctrines of jihad and the values of the resistance organizations to which they belong, these women have become political performers who play a vital role in the pedagogical aspect of "martyrdom". They have become role models for the next generations of martyrs' mothers and female bombers.

Women like Umm Nidal, Reem Saleh, and Al-Najar are acquainted with their cultural norms and expectations. Thus, in their performances of their new roles, as

political activists, they highlight their boundaries as Muslim women, mothers, and soldiers of God. It is within the culturally defined and theologically determined realms that they take a political action. Although they practice their relational agency according to the rules and war strategies of a patriarchal culture, they choose to do the most violent deed while other forms of resistance are available to them. As I will discuss in the next chapters, they perform their possession of the phallic armory, willingly partake in desexualization of their bodies through wearing hijab, and submit to objectification of their bodies as the flesh unites with the explosives. Women paramilitaries, ready for "martyrdom", abide by the rules of resistance organizations by appearing in front of the camera and performing their new selves. However, in their performance, once again they display their agency in reaching for the audience, to train the young generation of soldiers and send a message to the world.

Notes:

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[1] In this section, 'martyr' and 'martyrdom' from the stand point of the supporters of the Palestinian cause. In this section, martyr refers to the paramilitaries, including the bombers, who engage in the act of violence.

[2] The term Orientalism was first coined by Edward Said in *Orientalism* in 1978.

[3] L. Sjoberg and C. E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics,* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2007), 175.

[4] J. Faulkner, "The Innocence of Victimhood Versus the 'Innocence of Becoming': Nietzsche, 9/11, and the 'Falling Man,'" *Nietzsche's Studies* 35/36 (Spring/Autumn 2008): 78.

[5] Sjoberg and Gentry. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*.194.

[6] Yoram Schweitzer, ed., *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?* (Tel Aviv: The Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, 2006), 57.

[7] Here it should be clarified that rationality, like agency, is a relative concept that can be defined according to one's culture, language, and systems of belief. Therefore, one's disapproval of another's ideas does not

mean that the latter suffers from mental disorder, but each concept becomes meaningful only in relation to other familiar concepts

[8] Fatima al Najar, "Une grand-mere kamikaze," Nov. 27, 2006, accessed April 18, 2012, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnne32_une-grand-mere-kamikaze_news?search_algo=1.

[9] Ahmed Taha and Jomana Karadsheh, "US: 'Demonic' Militants Sent Women to Bomb Markets in Iraq," *CNN*, Feb 2, 2008, accessed June 2, 2008, http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/02/01/iraq.main/.

[10] Robert Spencer, "Affluent Genocide," *FrontPageMagazine.com* (David Horowitz Freedom Center). Tuesday, Oct 14. 2003, accessed May 11, 2012, http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=15948.

[11] James Bennett, "Arab Press Glorifies Bomber as Heroine," *The New York Times,* Feb. 11, 2002, accessed April 14, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/11/international/middleeast/11BOMB.html

[12] Steven R. Hurst, "Mentally Retarded Women Used in Bombings," *Beirbat.com,* February 1, 2008, accessed April 10, 2011, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1A1-D8UHPR0O1.html.

[13] Taha and Karadsheh, "US: 'Demonic' Militants Sent Women to Bomb Markets in Iraq," *CNN*.

[14] All the volunteers for bombing missions introduce themselves as "the living martyr," or *al shahid al hay,* in their farewell statements. See Reem Rayashi, "Hamas Suicide Farewell Video by Female Terrorist: Killing Zionists is Path to Heaven," Palestinian Media Watch, Aug 1, 2010, accessed 5/8/12, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtrAuM5dooI; or Fatima al Najar in "Une grand-mere kamikaze."

[15] Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses*, (Rodale, 2003), 41.

[16] Ibid, 249.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid, 42.

[19] Ibid, 22.

[20] Robert J. Brym and Bader Araj, "Suicide Bombing as Strategy and Interaction: The Case of the Second Intifada," *Social Forces,* 84, 4 (June 2006): 1970.

[21] See Libby Copeland, "Female Suicide Bomber: The New Factor in Middle East's Deadly Equation," *Washington Post,* April 26, 2002, accessed April 4, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wpdyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A57052-2002Apr26.

[22] See Margaret Weiss, "If She Blows Herself Up, Is She Equal?" *Israel Insider*, Nov 29, 2006, accessed October 20, 2008. http://web.israelinsider.com/views/9976.htm

[23] John F. Burns, "The Mideast turmoil: The Attacker; Bomber Left her Family with a Smile and a Lie", *New York Times*, October 7, 2003,P. A13. Accessed: May 11, 2012.

[24] Paige Whaley Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists: Women and Political Violence* (England: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 12, 13.

[25] The term "sacrifice bombing," generally introduced by Gerhard Scheit, is adopted by Claudia Brunner in "Female Suicide Bombers — Male Suicide Bombing? Looking for Gender in Reporting Suicide Bombing of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Global Society*, vol. 19, no. 1, (January 2005): 29-48.

[26] See Lori Allen, "There Are Many Reasons Why: Bombers and Martyrs in Palestine," *Middle East Report,* no. 223 (Summer 2002): 34-37.

[27] Katrina Jaworski, "The Male Preserve of Martyrdom: Representations of Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers in Australian Newsprint Media," *Feminist Media Studies,* 10:2 (2010): 125.

[28] Ibid, 43.

[29] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 50, 52.

[30] On the cover of Barbara Victor's book, *Army of Roses*, Madame Figaro comments: "The first objective, sensitive, and honest look at what motivates women (and men) to die for a political cause. Parts are shocking, parts make you weep, but throughout, well written with brilliant analysis."

[31] Victor, *Army of Roses*, 7.

[32] Ibid, 105.

[33] Ibid, 109, 110.

[34] Although Dareen Abu Aishesh does not mention Oslo Peace Accord, which was implemented in 1997, her self-sacrifice is part of the second Intifada. This second major national uprising has its roots in the Isreali state's failure to follow the rules of Oslo Peace Accord.

[35] "Femmes Kamikazes," Dailymotion Video, Oct. 26, 2010, accessed April 18, 2012, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xfdwhi_femmes-kamikazes_news?search_algo=1.

[36] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2006), 39.

[37] Acceptance of female volunteers for martyrdom in operations that were previously exclusive to men was hotly debated. Between the start of the second Intifada, in September 2000, and the first bombing mission carried out by a woman, in January 2002, resistance organizations lost many of their men and thus felt the urge to recruit women for various missions. Israel's enforcement of checkpoint security also encouraged the use of women. Resistance organizations understood that in order to pass the checkpoints more easily, they had to change their tactics. Palestinian women refused to be bodily searched by ID soldiers due to their religion and thus could hide explosives beneath their long dresses.

[38] Victor, *Army of Roses* , 30.

[39] Ibid, 31.

[40] Ibrahim Barzak, "Suicide Bomber was Mother of Two," *Jerusalem Post,* Thursday, Jan. 15, 2004, accessed March 18, 2011, http://www.jpost.com/Cooperations/Archives.

[41] Miriam Shaviv, "Fighting for Their Own Liberation," *Jerusalem Post,* February 8, 2002.

[42] See Victor, *Army of Roses*; Barzak, "Suicide Bomber was Mother of Two"; Burcu Pinar Alakoc, "The Motivations of Female Suicide Bombers from a Communication Perspective," (MA Thesis, University of Kansas, 2007); Jan Goodwin, "When the Suicide Bomber is a Woman," *Asian Tribune*, Aug 17, 2007, accessed Oct 10, 2008, http://www.asiantribune.com/index.php?q=node/7021; and Rubin, "Despair Drives Suicide Attacks by Iraqi Women."

[43] Elyse Michelle Max, Demystifying the Palestinian Female Suicide Bomber: An Analysis of Western Newspaper Texts (Kansas City: University of Missouri, 2002), 63.

[44] Diane Taylor, "Making a Spectacle: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo," in *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices From Left to Right*, ed. Alexis Jetter, Annelise Orleck, and Diana Taylor (Hanover: University Press of New England [for] Dartmouth College, 1997), 184.

[45] Belinda Morrissey, *When Women Kill: Questions of Agency and Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

[46] Max, *Demystifying the Palestinian Female Suicide Bomber*, 56.

[47] Roy McCarthy, *Sisters, Mothers, Martyrs. The Guardian,* Dec 5. 2005, accessed May 19, 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/dec/05/gender.israel.

[48] This is quoted in Max, *Demystifying the Palestinian Female Suicide Bomber*, 57.

[49] Schweitzer, *Female Suicide Bombers*, 84.

[50] Max, *Demystifying the Palestinian Female Suicide Bomber*, 57.

[51] Annelise Orleck, "Tradition Unbound: Radical Mothers in International Perspective," in *The Politics of Motherhood*: *Activist Voices from Left to Right,* ed. Annelise Orleck, Diana Taylor, and Alexis Jetter (Hanover: University Press of New England [for] Dartmouth College, 1997), 15 and 16.

[52] Rema Hammami, "Palestinian Motherhood and Political Activism on the West Bank and Gaza Strip," in *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices From Left to Right,* ed. Diana Taylor and Alexis Jetter (Hanover: University Press of New England [for] Dartmouth College, 1997), 163.

[53] Orleck, "Tradition Unbound," 3, 4.

[54] Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 165.

[55] Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyr's Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber* (New York: Oxford, 2005), Plate 22.

[56] Brunner, "Female Suicide Bombers," 36.

[57] *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (*The Middle East*) is an international Arabic newspaper headquartered in London. Launched in 1978 with the approval of the Saudi royal family and government ministers, it is known for its support of Saudi officials.

[58] Quoted in Brunner, "Female Suicide Bombers, 36.

[59] "Femmes Kamikaze"

[60] "Reem Riyashi farewell Sitio web de Hamas," Archives of PMW Palwatch.org. Google Videos, accessed Aug 19, 2009, http://relax.ru/video/view/?id=v1062113ac99.

[61] Ibid.

[62] "Fatma Najar Clip," March 27, 2008, accessed April 23, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IiS-7atoPs&feature=related; see also "Women in Gaza Prepare to Become Suicide Bombers," Memri TV/Al Jazeera, Lebanon, Aug 19, 2006, accessed June 9, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mei1xJuJaHM.

[63] Eric Westervelt, "Female Activists a Force in Male-dominated Gaza," *NPR,* Jan. 5, 2007, accessed July 28, 2011, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6725651

[64] Diana Taylor, Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War," 3rd ed. (London: Duke University Press, 2005), 184.

[65] Ibid, 293.

[66] Ibid, 183.

[67] Ibid, 194, 193, 195.

[68] Rema Hammami in "Palestinian Motherhood and Political Activism on the West Bank and Gaza Strip" argues that during the prisoner exchange in the1980s, many of the Palestinian female political prisoners were released from Israeli prisons. While the mothers among these women were embraced as heroines and were even more empowered within their society, the ones who had not been married before the prison did not get the chance to marry after their return. This of course suggests an antagonism towards the unmarried resistance fighters who had come back alive (167).

[69] McCarthy, *Sisters, Mothers, Martyrs.*

[70] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 192.

[71] "Women in Gaza Prepare to Become Suicide Bombers," *Al-Jazeera Lebanon*, Aug. 19, 2006, accessed June 9, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mei1xJuJaHM.

[72] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 293.

[73] The titles of these videos emphasize this point: "Palestinian Mother Prayed for Son's *Shahada* Death," and "Son's Death Was 'the Best Day of My Life."

[74] Women's Day celebration takes place annually in Gaza Strip and else where in the world. Rema Hammami does not clarify the particular year she is referring to nor could I find the exact date. However, it is clear that events as such in which mothers of the martyrs are invited to be interviewed are common.

[75] Hammami, "Palestinian Motherhood and Political Activism on the West Bank and Gaza Strip," 166.

[76] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* , 193.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Nidal in Arabic means struggle and thus translating umm nidal as the mother of struggle seems right. However, it is customary to call the mother by the name of her first-born male child. Since Mariam Farhat's first child was called Nidal, traditionally she was called Umm Nidal, Nidal's mother.

[79] "Palestinian Mothers Express Joy at Son's Death for Allah," July 22, 2006, accessed May 10, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egwz25fW0Co.

[80] *Kafiyeh* is a traditional Arab headdress fashioned from a square scarf, usually made of cotton. It is typically worn by Arab men as well as some Kurds. Its distinctive woven check pattern may have originated in an ancient Mesopotamian representation of fishing nets or ears of grain. Its prominence increased in the 1960s with the beginning of the Palestinian resistance movement and its adoption by Palestinian politician Yasser Arafat.

[81] A Spartan mother raises her sons to be sacrificed on the altar of civic need (Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists,* 18). Gold Star Mothers is an organization for women who have lost a son or daughter in service to the United States of America (Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists,* 18).

[82] Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists*, 18.

[83] Victor, *Army of Roses*, 41, 43.

[84] Schweitzer, *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?,* 20.

[85] Ferry Biedermann, "The Palestinians' First Female Bomber," *Salon.Com*, June 4, 2008, accessed October 20, 2008, http://www.salon.com/2002/01/31/female_bomber.

[86] Victor, *Army of Roses*, 50.

Chapter Two:

The Body, What Else?
The Female Bomber's Body in Performance

Apart from the display of armaments and the staged background, in all the videos of farewell statements of suicide bombers, it is the body of the paramilitary that performs the ideology of resistance most vividly. Through its performance, this physical being claims a status beyond its biological entity. The corporeal body becomes a symbolic artifact that we are taught to read as a metaphor that "display[s] and reveal[s] hidden 'truths' about the individual,"[1] the organization she is affiliated with, or the ideology she represents. In this chapter, the paramilitary's body is treated as a complex and interconnected series of cultural, political, psychological, and personal entities that act as a stage and claim the screen as an arena for communication.

The somatic body (an internal and subjective environment) is an object for the outside world to observe, evaluate, and react to.[2] The female bomber's performance, her physical appearance, and her violent reaction to occupation leave an unforgettable mark on those who view the videos. While familiar codes and shared symbols may be comprehensible to insiders, metaphors that are the less well known (the image of the Other) can invoke hostility or misunderstanding in those who are outsiders to the culture.

However, neither the violence of the language that promises death nor the display of armory that produces a chilling fear of destruction is sufficient to shake viewers since

images of war, military parades, harangues, and violence are not unfamiliar concepts to viewers of today's news media. It is the bomber's somatic presence, which depicts her fierce determination to annihilate her own body as well as the bodies of the enemy that strikes the global audience as both incomprehensible and irrational as well as irresistibly fascinating. The presence of the bomber on the screen, her virtual existence throughout the performance, provides a "liveness" and a sense of "happening" that lies at the core of the fear in those of us who watch the statements from the safety of our homes.[3] In performing her farewell statement, the "martyr" inhabits a double space: first, the space of her presence, and later, after her death, the space of her physical absence.[4]

The visceral body of the "martyr"[5] on our screen provokes multiple sensations in the viewers. The performative bodies of female bombers on screen pose a challenge to the rules of patriarchy at both the national and international level. The televised performance is received as a threat to international peace as the bomber's bodily transformation into a live bomb that physically endangers the wellbeing of the Other. But even more, the performativity of the bomber's farewell statement intimidates the Other psychologically as the female paramilitary discusses, and at times justifies, violence within a realm of feminist values and ideals. Simultaneously, the female paramilitary's performative presence on screen poses a challenge to resistance authorities who do not feel that the presence of women is in keeping with their fundamentalist doctrines. The position female paramilitaries take with regards to the patriarchal rule is even more interesting because the women's bodily performances of agency and resistance present a new version of Muslim women as individuals who have found their voices and have claimed a new social status within the boundaries of resistance and violence.

This chapter compares two views of the body: one cherishes the flesh as a source of pleasure and life, and the other views the body as a disposable thing that exists to serve the soul. The "somatic society," as Bryan Turner describes it, within which major political and personal issues are both "problematized in the body and expressed through it," focuses on the physical body in its systems of advertising, public relations, stigmatization, consumerism, and self-promotion.[6] Thus, it can be said that while one's physiological existence guarantees that the consumer society will continue, the absence of the flesh is considered to be the end of economic prosperity. In other words, living bodies are the sole beneficiaries of capitalism; that system has no place for the dead in its ideology. The second perspective originates in theology, which throughout history has stirred contradicting views of the body and its purpose. The ideology of the sublime focuses on the soul or the consciousness and demands the sacrifice of the flesh. In theological terms, one can explain the physically nonexistent but metaphorically omnipresent performative body of the "martyr" as a vital player in the resistance.

Following the rules of self-sacrifice for a higher cause, the Palestinian female bomber performs the values of the struggle through and on her body. She leaves herself behind to create an image of a strong and victorious soldier. The female bomber's performance of the new self introduces her as a role model for younger generations. Her public appearance in hijab challenges notions of the body, physical beauty, and freedom in the secularist world at the same times that it deviates from the norms of the fundamentalist view of women. It is the dual impact on the local and international viewers that politicizes the female bomber's public performance and makes it significant. The female resistance fighter transforms the body from that of an ordinary citizen to that

of a paramilitary. The metamorphosis of the private body into a public, weaponized,

militarized, and iconic entity is a process through which the paramilitary consciously

determines her participation in the course of national resistance. Thus, while the physical

body is on display in front of the camera, it serves the purpose of a political performer

who has mastered her emotions and personal beliefs in order to achieve her ideological or

political goals.

The paramilitary's body embodies the transformation of the flesh from an object to

a tool of resistance.[7] This process transforms the weak, oppressed, marginalized,

gendered body and gives it subjectivity and power. This relational agency, as I discussed

in chapter one, does not contrast with the phenomenological body that is subject to

cultural and social doctrines. But I insist that both resistance to and accommodation of

the social structure are displayed on the bodies of the paramilitary women who confront

the authoritative positions that determine their ways and means of living. I echo Foucault

and Nietzsche in stating that the body is political in its very existence, regardless of

whether it passively submits to or actively rejects the hegemony of power. The body is

undeniably a political structure; it is a product of "the unequal and differential effects of

intersecting antagonistic forces," as Nietzsche describes it[8]; in Foucault's words, it is "the

object and the target of power."[9] It is essential to understand the body as a political

artifact capable of both reproduction and extirpation in any discussion of Palestinian

female bombers. The dual positions the "living martyr's" body takes feed into the

creation of the spectacle of resistance that manifests itself in the image the body portrays

in front of the camera. The female bomber's body performs itself within the paradoxical

premises of agent versus object, sublime versus secular, corporeal absence versus

metaphorical presence, and political versus sexual. The female bomber establishes a powerful political presence through her performing body on stage. Her performance challenges the misperceptions of the female body as sexualized, objectified, and passive.

Agent (Political Performer) versus Object

A female volunteer for bombing mission stands in front of the Palestinian flag and the Hamas insignia holding a bazooka. Two other women with belts of explosives strapped around their torsos stand behind her while she talks into the camera. She is confident and comfortable with the camera and completes her statement without referring to notes or losing her train of thought. Calling female bombers the "granddaughters" of Palestine's heroes and the daughters of "steadfast Gaza," she emphasizes that she is the successor of Fatima al-Najar and Reem Saleh Al-Riayashi. Looking into the camera, she promises, "If one of our men dies, a thousand men will set out in his place. We, the women, will set out… We will blow ourselves up." Later she tells the enemy that "from every home, a bomb will set out, and it will explode among the sons of Zion."[10] As she sends her political message of self-sacrifice to the audience, the woman on screen acknowledges and takes pride in the fact that her physical body has become a deadly threat (a bomb). Her performance of confidence and determination is reinforced by the presence of the two other paramilitaries behind her. These bodies, although they are masked, are staged to complete the propaganda of power and resistance.

Performance, the body's conscious appearance in front of the camera to communicate with an audience, presents the paramilitary as the agent of her actions.

When the female paramilitary volunteers to participate in video recordings, she consciously uses her body on stage to convey her political message. Her appearance embodies the authority vested in her as a fighter to carry out a bombing mission and the power she exercises over her own body by transforming it into an explosive device. In doing so, she consciously submits to her political objectification at the hands of the organization that provides her with the equipment for the bombing operation. Simultaneously, however, she acquires relational agency over her body as she makes her last decisions (performing in front of the camera and carrying and detonating the bomb). This section focuses first on the objectification of the female bomber's body as the enactor of the ultimate move for paramilitaries. Second, through a close reading of farewell statement videos, I will elaborate on the female volunteer's deviation from the organization's expectations when she, willingly or otherwise, exposes her emotions.

The specific methodology Palestinian fighters have been using since the second *Intifada* in 2000, the self-sacrificial bombing missions in which the body is used as a weapon, is a new tactic in the history of Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For Palestinian resistance groups, Israel's erection of the separation wall and the new security strategies it is using in the region added to the problems of limited access to military equipment, lack of international support for the Palestinian cause, and new peace agreements between Palestinian authorities and the Israeli government. These and many more issues have resulted in increasing frustration among the young people and have pushed resistance organizations and their members to the verge of the most extreme actions. The development of the practice of using the body and performativity as weapons is more

understandable in the context of the current social and political circumstances in the occupied territories.

When individual citizens become actively involved in the struggle through participation in public performances of resistance such as demonstrations and rallies, they acquire a new status as targets of violence and oppression. Citizens of the refugee camps, who are already oppressed because of the occupation, are naturally prone to engage in extreme violence when they participate in public protest. Yet some choose nonviolent resistance, in the form of demonstrations, commemorative events and rituals, sit-ins, etc. Individuals who choose this path are perceived only as the recipients of violence at this stage. However, immediately after an individual protestor engages in armed struggle, through displaying armory, wearing and using weapons, and performing an act of violence, he or she attains a more serious status as a fighter who not only bargains with his or her own body but also threatens to destroy the other's body as well. The militarized and displayed body of the resistance fighter, especially when it is wrapped in a belt of explosives, transforms the fighter from a recipient to a perpetrator of violence.

The individual who volunteers for "martyrdom", male or female, wears a wide fabric belt that has many pockets full of explosives. This belt is wrapped around the abdomen of the volunteer and is secured in place by duct tape. The individual who wears the belt of explosives can either push a button or pull a string to detonate the explosives but cannot remove it by her/himself. The belt, sometimes referred to as the explosive vest, can be removed only by professionals if the mission should be postponed. The quantity of the explosives in the belt and the belt's position vis-à-vis the bomber's body gives the paramilitary zero chance of survival after the explosion. The individual who

makes the decision to wrap herself in the explosives, knowing that her death is imminent, unites her flesh with the bomb. This deliberate metamorphosis of the body is as essential for the formation of a paramilitary, in Allen Feldman's formulation,[11] as the performance of active and violent resistance is for the power struggle.

When the body is used as a weapon, the individual acquires the status of a warrior, an icon of resistance, and a true hero. This transformation applies even more to women volunteers than it does to men, since the display of armory desexualizes the female fighter, thus eliminating the stigmatization associated with women appearing in public. In other words, the political and powerful image of the female paramilitary offers women a respected social status that is otherwise denied them in conservative cultures. The female body that is adorned with armory is not regarded as an object of voyeurism or sexual pleasure and thus cannot be the cause of men's moral depravity any more. Rather, the power of self-sacrifice and the threat of explosives showcased in the performance place these women in a spiritual and authoritative position that is comparable to the position of men. The female paramilitary presents her transformed body in videos that celebrate this new status. Although her weaponized body is used as a tool by and through which a political goal is achieved, the female bombers assure their audience that they take pride in objectifying their own bodies for a political purpose. Umm Suheib, a "volunteer for martyrdom", threatens the Israeli officials when she declares "I swear by Allah that I will turn my body parts into fire that will burn the occupation soldiers if they move towards my home."[12] In her speech, Reem Saleh Al-Riayashi declares:

> I have always wished that my body would be shrapnel that tears the
> sons of Zion, and I have always wished to knock at the door of
> heaven with the skulls of the sons of Zion. By God, if you break my

> bones and cut off [sic] my body, you will not be able to change my
> faith or change my banner. By God, I wished to be the first female
> who carried out a martyrdom-seeking operation where my body
> would be scattered in the air.[13]

Al-Riyashi's speech indicates her conscious choice to use her own body as a lethal

instrument against the enemy. Her body has become one with the belt of explosives and

splinters she is strapped into, and at the moment of detonation, pieces of her flesh will

strike the Other along with the sharp nails and other weapons in the bomb. As the bomber

acknowledges this metamorphosis in her farewell statement, she emphasizes the role her

body plays in changing the sociopolitical conditions of life in the occupied territories and

in regaining the national identity that was lost in the course of history. The verbal staging

of the weaponized body is an indication of deliberate objectification of one's own

somatic presence. Al-Riyashi treats her body's annihilation as a lifelong dream that is

about to come true. Multiple references to the "scattered" body, broken bones, and "cut

off" flesh showcase her full awareness of and her willingness to transform the flesh into

"shrapnel."[14]

The performativity of Al-Riyashi's resistance plays a significant part in returning

visibility and power to the body whose death is celebrated in her speech. Al-Riyashi's

corporeal existence gains vitality when, and only when, she displays her militarized self

and performs her commitment to violence. Without this performance, which is obviously

intended for public viewing, she could not have claimed international, political, or

spiritual recognition.

The female paramilitary's conscious objectification of her body as a weapon and a

tool does not contradict her position as an active subject. The body of the Palestinian

female fighter, which is influenced by religious doctrine and political necessity, is a

social entity that takes various forms and identities as an object and as an agent (or as both) of resisting and surviving harsh conditions. In their discussions of body and performance, scholars of interactionist theory—Clinton Sanders, Dennis Waskul, and Phillip Vannini, among others—emphasize the versatility of the body and its capacity to "constantly becom[e] something else."[15] Interactionist theory argues that the body, the self, and social interaction are closely interrelated and constantly being reconfigured. Based on interactionist theory's view of the "dramaturgical body" of the performance artist, which is always performed, staged, and presented, I argue that the bodies of political performers (in this case, Palestinian female bombers) are interchangeable.

My analysis of the bodies of female bombers brings the dramaturgical body into conversation with the "phenomenological body," or the somatic body, in the context of self, society, and politics. As the female body undergoes a process of metamorphosis from citizen to nonviolent protestor and to bomber, the woman continues to protect her social status as a mother, sister, and daughter. The embodiment of resistance—or, as Waskul and Vannini describe it, "the process by which the object-body is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and/or transformed as a subject/body"[16]—gains momentum in the female paramilitary's last performance. As she enacts her identity as a bomber, her presence can be interpreted as a corporeal, culturally influenced, object-body, or phenomenological body, and the empowered body of the bomber, the dramaturgical body. It is this embodiment of resistance in the form of performance that enables the paramilitary to gain visibility and thus gain power. The female who volunteers for a bombing mission consciously adapts to the rules of political representation that are both dictated by the organizations at home and, perhaps more

importantly, are comprehensible to international viewers. Her adaptation to the politics of representation enables the female fighter to physically and metaphorically enter and even succeed within the paradigm of resistance.

In *Formations of Violence*, which analyzes the Irish Republican Army (IRA) hunger strikers, Allen Feldman points out that the individual who engages in armed struggle, regardless of his political and ideological views, detaches himself from his body and accepts it as a tool with which certain political goals can be reached. Feldman argues that the paramilitary's body is formed as a "political agent" and a "political object" in its contact with weapons. The body and the weapon occupy "interchangeable positions,"[17] taking both active and passive roles: the paramilitary performs violence against the body of the Other even as his body is subject to the violence of the Other. A reconceptualization of the body as a political agent links the paramilitary to violence and makes the fighter's body an extension of her weapon.[18] Violence, in this context, redefines subjectivities and repositions bodies in such a way that the paramilitary embraces his body's imminent death. Because performing violence on other bodies is a standard action for the paramilitary, his body is subject to the violence imposed by state power. This standardization of "imminent violent death is a determinant condition of paramilitary's life," Feldman notes.[19] When the paramilitary becomes involved with an anti-state organization (guerilla warfare), he anticipates that his body will be tortured, sacrificed, incarcerated, or annihilated. The violence, in this sense, allows the formation of the paramilitary; a process to which Feldman refers as the "rites of political passage".[20]

Feldman's analysis can be extended to highlight the ideological values that set the ground for the individual's choice of self-sacrifice. As a secondary being to the

ideological goal, the somatic body is already assumed limited in scope, doomed to perish, and, more importantly, a stage for the performance of the individual's ideology. Without accepting the virtual nonexistence of one's own body, the ordinary citizen cannot complete the transformation into a paramilitary. I borrow from Feldman in my analysis of Palestinian female fighters. I argue that the female bomber is undeniably aware of how her imminent self-immolation poses a threat to the enemy, whose military and economic power immeasurably surpasses the resistance organizations. Although the female bomber knows that her success in targeting the enemy lies in her own physical elimination, this does not prevent her from completing her mission. This unprecedented commitment is a result of an ideology that decentralizes her goal of protecting the physical body as a purpose of her life or her resistance. On the contrary, the individual believer sees the sacrifice of the flesh as an opportunity for political and spiritual gains and thus willingly submits to it. It is within the concept of the sublime that the decapitated, shredded-into-pieces body of the bomber is considered to be a "triumph of the spirit."[21] References to spiritual gain, an indomitable aspect of the Muslim resistance, is the most powerful tool for recruiting believers. (I will discuss this later in this chapter.)

Patrick Anderson also believes in the role the ideology of "triumph of the spirit" plays in the Turkish hunger strike in the first decade of the twenty-first century. He sees the impact of the sublime as an embodied cultural practice in which:

> "dying" is a representative not of the individual striker's need and desires, but of the group as a whole. In such an economy of representation, a single hunger striker infuses his/her rapidly disappearing flesh with meanings that renounce the individual as the base unit of political action and significance, particularly at the moment when the "sacrifice" is complete.[22]

Even though there is a difference between the ideological motivations behind the violence of each group of resistance fighters, the process of the body's metaphorical transformation is similar in each of the cases I mentioned above. Feldman and Anderson rule out the hunger strikes of IRA members and Turkish political prisoners as acts of "martyrdom" for two very different reasons. Feldman believes that the paramilitary's awareness of political benefits prevents him from achieving martyrdom as it is defined in theology.[23] Anderson, on the other hand, argues that while Bobby Sands, Cesar Chavez, and Mahatma Gandhi were "martyrs" of the movements they generated and were embodiments of the events of their respective movements, the Turkish political prisoners' hunger strike did not seek "martyrdom in individualization."[24] Rather, the Turkish political activists' self-sacrifice represented "multiple solidarities epitomized by their connection to the community."[25] Palestinian paramilitary bombers, however, have found solace in the religious doctrines of Islam and its theological teachings on the spiritual rewards of martyrdom. The women bombers become the icons of resistance but only after their death.

Although hunger strikes and bombings are political acts, the difference lies in the ways the body metamorphoses in each act of self-sacrificial resistance. One can detect a gap between using one's own body as an extension of one's weapon, as Feldman refers to the militarization of the IRA resistance fighters' bodies, and the bombers' metamorphosis of their bodies into weapons. Although the Palestinian bomber is trained to use arms, she does not volunteer for battles. Instead, she volunteers for a very specific operation in which her body and the explosives become one. The completion of the mission at hand

means the extinction of the bomber; there is no possible chance that she will survive. In all other types of armed struggle, the possibility of survival exists. Neither awareness of death nor the use of the body as an extension of one's weapon diminishes the fighter's agency. On the contrary, I believe, the fact that the female bomber pulls the string herself demonstrates her commitment to the cause. This is not to deny the manipulation of minds and bodies by sectarian authorities. The body of the paramilitary functions as a stage on which leaders of resistance organizations perform their ideologies and manifestos of resistance and the glory of martyrdom and jihad. The bodies of the female bombers give these leaders visibility and power.

The armed struggle of both Palestinian bombers and the hunger strikers is similar in one crucial way. Both groups are aware of the performativity of their actions. Feldman argues that the IRA activists' desire to communicate with the outside world has led them to "produce corpses"[26] that are visibly marked by the ideology of resistance. The dead bodies of the hunger strikers carried messages to the public at the national and international level. The performances of the female Palestinian bombers in the video recordings publicize their desire for martyrdom while presenting them as political activists. The women on screen clearly refer to their action as revenge for the massacres, the martyrdom of their sons and family members, and Israel's bombing of the resistance headquarters.

Although religion inspires and has been used to justify and encourage the bombing missions of Palestinians, the "martyrdom" of the bombers has also been used for political purposes. The practice of using the impact of performativity on the masses to promote a political achievement differentiates the "martyrdom" of the bombers from a self-

sacrificial act done solely for religious reasons. The fact that masses of viewers are influenced by watching such performances of violence and self-sacrifice transforms an individualistic, spiritually rewarded act of "martyrdom" done for purely religious reasons into a political performance similar to the IRA members' hunger strike or any other political act of resistance."[27]

The objectification of her body and perceiving it as a tool empowers the freedom fighter in actuality and grants her the autonomy to either save or sacrifice the body. Even if the female fighter is part of the power organization that reshapes her body into a weapon, even if the time and location of the operation are determined by the organizers, the "martyr"-to-be still has some control over her somatic body. After all, she has full authority in the last minutes to decide whether or not to complete the mission, when is the best time to detonate the belt of explosives, and who will be the target of her violence. We should bear in mind that there are many volunteers for bombing missions who at the very last moment decide to surrender themselves[28] or many others who fail to detonate the bombs for various reasons.[29] The existence of those volunteers who decide to leave the mission incomplete attests to their relative agency in objectification of their bodies. This relative agency also extends to those volunteers to carry their missions till the end.

Another fascinating point here that confirms the fighter's agency is the women volunteers' deviation of the cultural norms and ideals that challenge the same organizations they represent. A close study of the farewell statement videos reveals that although these women are motivated enough to complete their task, they are also human beings. The burst of human emotions—when these women expose their feelings at the time of recording or when they respond to their surroundings subconsciously—is in sharp

contrast with objectification of these women as non-human monsters destroying lives or semi-god heroines dying for justice. The corporeal reactions of the performers portray familiar human beings simultaneously betraying the image of indestructible power these women are supposed to visualize for the audience. Besides her choice of methodology (violent vs. passive resistance) the female fighter's attempt to master her emotions, while performing for the public, indicates her understanding of her scripted role as a soldier.

On the television screen, Fatima al-Najar, holding a rifle in left hand, waits for her cue to start. The 57-year-old mother and grandmother of a large family avoids the camera and tries to hide her face behind a piece of paper. She begins by introducing herself and praising the Hamas organization, and then continues to read her statement slowly and carefully. With her hands clearly shaking, she addresses her children to keep up praying and to be patient. At this point, the video stops perhaps to provide a break for Al-Najar. When it restarts, a close-up of Al-Najar's face shows her smiling. This time, she does not have the paper and is more confident in front of the camera. Either because of the instructions she has received during the break or simply because she is done with reading the paper, Al-Najar's hands are not trembling but have a strong grip of the rifle. Behind her, the green flags and Hamas' insignia are still visible. Someone, unseen to us, prompts her to speak again. She pauses some more and then coyly laughs "I don't know what else to say." This last sentence, unrehearsed and as unexpected as it is, positions Al-Najar in an awkward position of naiveté. It appears that she is unable to articulate her feelings without having a chance to rehearse. The film is cut on her nervous smile. Another video clip of Al-Najar shows her laughing while the cameraperson prepares him/herself to record her statement.[30] A few hours after recording this video, the same woman

contradicts her shaky hands and ineloquent speech by her violent reaction to the occupation.

Although the female fighter is expected to perform herself as an undefeatable messenger of God— strong, hard-hearted and fearless— parts of her (as a woman, shy, lively, and free spirited) are infused in her performance. In a way, her natural body betrays the organization's idealism by creating a subtext to the representation of resistance. The burst of emotions, impromptu gestures, and unexpected bodily movements do not necessarily present the bomber's weakness or lack of control. But, on the contrary, they exhibit the volunteer's awareness of her position and her determination to perform herself in a certain way regardless of her inner thought and feelings at the time of recording. This self-discipline to master one's natural reactions not only reaffirms the performer's dedication to represent herself and the sponsoring organization as a capable opposition force, but also leads the individual to the completion of the mission at hand. Furthermore, the exposure of emotions personalizes the videos and grants individualistic characteristics to each performance that is also in sharp contrast to the collective image of resistance the organizations intend to create.

Quite confident in front of the camera and eloquent in delivering her speech, as she does not read from a paper, Mirvat Masoud poses for the camera calmly. Yet, closer to the end of the recording, she shows a bit of nervousness. In the middle of her talk and quite unexpectedly to her, the background silence is broken by children playing noisily and a baby crying. The sound of the quotidian life, similar to what is heard in Akhras' video, interferes with the image of a female fighter with a big rifle in hand. Masoud's determined face remains serious as before but her wandering eyes prove that she has lost

her concentration. At some point, she follows the direction of the sound and attempts to locate the sources and perhaps silence them but remembers that the camera is still on, so comes back to her performance and continues speaking. Finally, when the outside noise resumes, Masoud manages to fixate her eyes on the camera again and finish her speech. She gathers herself, holds on to the rifle at all times, containing her position in front of the camera.[31] Masoud, fully conscious of the world that surrounds her, tries to detach herself in order to fulfill a duty she is committed to. At the time when Masoud is performing herself as a fighter, she has to conceal her personal attachments and emotions. Masoud needs to capitalize on her physical and spiritual transformation into a bomber by leaving herself behind. Although she speaks to her aunts and uncles in her farewell statement, the woman on the screen does not present herself as Mirvat but as a combatant. While in other circumstances, she would respond to the people around her and commingle with normal life, on stage she maintains her role as a savior of her people. As Masoud pulls herself together and continues her speech ignoring the background noise, she and other female fighters learn to leave their personal lives behind, join the armed struggle, and eventually sacrifice themselves.

Ayat Al-Akhras, caught in a similar situation, is not as successful in hiding her emotions. Her performance suffers from a hasty reading, stumbling over the words, lacking the appropriate intonations, and above all, eye contact with the viewers. Akhras is clearly in a rush to finish the statement. As a result she only looks into the camera when she is done reading the paper, which she holds very close to her face until the very end of the video. Each time there is the sound of a siren or a car horn, she is distracted and needs

to recover herself.[32] Although Akhras reads hastily, she tries to use oratory gestures and hand movements to enhance her performance.

In another video, Hanadi Jaradat, a 28-year-old lawyer stands very comfortably in front of the camera and reads her statement from an invisible piece of paper. It seems that nothing pressures her to finish her speech promptly or in a certain way. Instead, quite confidently, she makes frequent eye contact with the camera and reads fluently throughout the recording.[33] The intonations in her voice and the deliberate pauses in her speech create a theatrical quality in her video that stands out compared to other videos of my discussion. Up until the very end of her statement, she looks by far the most polished political performer among the women. Her awareness of the camera and the audience along with her faith in her power to execute her mission provide Jaradat and her video with an aura of confidence, superiority, and strength. She presents herself as an ideal combatant who on her way to reach a political goal sees no obstacle. However, right before the speech ends, Jaradat looks into the camera and suddenly bursts into innocent laughter, which she struggles to control. Covering her mouth and trying to take a deep breath, Jaradat turns her back to the camera and collects herself. This time, she does not look at the camera but to an invisible person who prompts her to move to the side so that the full banner in the background can be captured. She steps aside but does not go out of the frame. Following the camera's zooming on the banner, she giggles again.

Jaradat's uncontrollable and childlike laughter, Al-Riyashi's affectionate gestures towards her children, the same as Al-Najar's trembling hands and the others' nervousness portray ordinary human beings with natural outbursts of emotions. A simple laughter and hand movement come in sharp contrast with the violence and atrocities depicted in the

farewell statements. The attempt to present herself as a strong devotee, along with the fearlessness of her commitment to the self-sacrificial bombing, and the violence she commits shortly after recording this video complicate the analysis of these women's performances and the theatricality of their farewell statement videos. As soon as the emotions are externalized, the bomber crosses the boundaries of monster/ human, evil/ ordinary, unfathomable/ tangible. What appears as anger, fear, or nervousness in these individuals is the person's natural reaction to external stimulus that may interfere with her mission in one way or another. The bomber may fear the disclosure of her safe house, the threat of being located and arrested by the authorities, the possibility of her family members' intervention, or simply death. It is not possible to know the real source of the bomber's agitation. What is clear, however, is the individual's consciousness of her actions and her determination to carry on regardless of her human weaknesses.

The individual's unconscious gestures in front of the camera blur the desired distinction between an indestructible, determined fighter and an emotional human being. In other words, the burst of sensations, in all forms and all degrees imaginable, highlights the multi-dimensionality of resistance fighters and casts doubt on the all-encompassing transformation of the individual paramilitary's body into a weapon of destruction. The failure to completely transform one's body into a bomb proves the performativity, and thus the human agency, at play. Understanding these paramilitaries as real people with real emotions stresses further the performativity of the videos, serving the purpose of this study to view these female bombers as political performers. The paramilitary's gestures, nervousness or ease, and facial expressions unravel the ordinary human beings behind the military jackets, rifles, and aggressive statements, who will carry the operations to the

end without having lost their human doubts, fears, and emotions. These individuals, unable to master their sensations thoroughly, struggle to do so in their performance of resistance and power.

I am not trying to argue here that Jaradat's laughter, Al-Riyashi's motherly feelings, or Al-Akhras' nervousness, for example, should or can excuse these women of the violence they have committed. Nor do I intend to ignore the resistance organizations' awareness of the politics of representation. On the contrary, I believe that the organizations are fully aware of the importance of such emotionally driven behaviors in front of the camera for the outside viewers. They are cognizant of the impact such improvised movements can have on depicting the female bombers and their cause. As a result, they leave those moments of sensationalism intact in the videos. Those brief moments arouse sympathy for the women who otherwise cannot be interpreted as anything other than bloodthirsty, non-human monsters. I believe the fighter's natural reactions have come to serve the organizations without the latter's foreseeing the possibility of such responses. Although in many statements, the bombers address their family members, and even though they all introduce themselves, the woman in front of the camera and the same woman who is able to pull the trigger is not the same person as the one relatives and friends remember. Interviews reveal the shocking effect each bombing has had on the relatives and friends who could not predict such extreme reactions.[34] In summary, by performing her mental and physical transformation for the public, the female paramilitary bridges her past and present and documents her political passage for her viewers.

Desexualized vs. Feminized body in hijab

The triangulation of body, resistance, and performance is embodied in the Palestinian female fighter's hijab. Conservative apparel, much like militarization, empowers the paramilitary. The opposing perceptions of hijab, as a sign of women's oppression or spiritual liberation, play equal parts in my study of these women. Without dismissing any of the point of views above, I analyze these paramilitaries' hijab as another element of performance, which helps them to create the desired image of religious devotion, power, and righteousness. Both the stage set (display of armory) and costumes (hijab) of the performers function in accordance with the desire to portray these women as powerful members of a vast, growing, and global community of Muslim fighters. Hijab and military power not only grant the Muslim woman permission to actively participate in social and political networks of her conservative community, but also connect her to the transnational communities of political activist Muslims worldwide. A comparison between the photographs and videos that have remained from these women before and after the bombing missions lead to the conclusion that these paramilitaries, at the time of recording the videos, have consciously chosen to use hijab as a tool to enhance their political performances.

The performativity of hijab for female paramilitaries demands much attention since noall the women who perform themselves as dedicated believers in front of the camera acted the same in their pre-mission lives. There are pictures that have remained of Wafa Idris and Ayat al-Akhras before their engagement in the struggle, in which these two young women appear with their hair showing, full makeup, jewelry, and non-conservative clothing. Various pictures show Wafa Idris, the first and the most iconic

female bomber, with her mother at a wedding, in her graduation robe, at work in an

ambulance, and as a teenager wearing *kafiyeh*.[35] In none of the pictures or the short video

that shows Idris among her fellow Red Crescent colleagues,[36] does Idris present herself as

an observant Muslim. Ayat al-Akhras' pictures with her fiancé are in sharp contrast with

her last statement video in which she appears as a devoted Muslim. However, all the

women in the farewell statement videos share an orthodox facade in their performances.

They appear in full-length, slightly loose coats in dark colors, and no self-adornment of

any kind. Either white or black headscarves cover the hair and shoulders and reach

beneath the bust line. Some wear *kafiyeh* or scarf, one appears in fatigues, one's coat has

embroidery on it but all are very simple with minimal feminine touches on their

costumes. Rejecting any form of Western appearance at the time of creating the videos is

a sign of these individuals' protest against the Western-backed occupation of their land.

It is crucial to understand that the source of Islamic doctrines, the Qur'an, does not

mandate hijab on women although it advises pious Muslim (men and women) to cover

their private parts and appear modestly in public:

> Tell believers to ward their glances and to cover their private parts;
> this is purer for them. God is well knowing of everything they do,
> tell women to avert their glances and guard their private parts and
> not to display their charms except what normally appears of them.
> They should draw their coverings over their breasts and not show
> their charms except to their husbands. . . .[37]

Observing hijab, thus, is culturally specific among Muslim nations and subject to the

authorities' interpretation of the Qur'an and the *Sharia* (the Islamic rule). Except the

nations under Taliban, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Saudi Arabia, for whom hijab in

public is mandated by law for Muslim and non-Muslim women, other Muslims living in

secular societies are free to choose their way of public appearance. The particular ways in which women observe or are obligated to cover up, the length of their cover, the colors, and the degree to which the face, hair and hands are covered are all indications of the individual's religious devotion or lack of thereof. I echo Norma Moruzzi's analysis of Iranian women's hijab, for instance, which she rightly views as a sign of self-identification for these women. Moruzzi points out the use of vivid colors and creating new fashions under the Islamic Republic's rule that have challenged the fundamentalist regime in Iran over the past decades.[38] Hijab, in this sense, can convey very controversial messages. While showing strands of hair, applying makeup, using colorful fabrics, and wearing tight or shorter versions of veil are considered rebellion against the fundamentalist regime in Iran, covering hair, even when the individual wears blue jeans, means opposing westernization in secular countries such as France and Turkey.

In Palestinian society that does not mandate hijab on women, the female martyrs' observance of conservative hijab and their identical outfits communicate these women's desire to be viewed as devoted Muslim Palestinians ready for jihad. For female volunteers for martyrdom observing hijab is a performative act that legitimizes their political involvement. Without observing the conservative hijab, entrance to the cult of resistance is not possible for the individuals. Hijab, in other words, allows women to actively participate in the male-dominated war field without the fear of being stigmatized for doing so. We need to bear in mind that these women are engaged in activities that can be interpreted as degrading in other circumstances. The female volunteer, when summoned to carry a bombing mission, is contacted by another female or male insurgent. Shortly after, she joins the male-dominated resistance organization for more training,

which begins for her by disappearing from public. The female volunteer is not to have contact with family members for the remaining days to the operation. She spends time with other, often male, comrades preparing for the mission. Finally, when the time is ripe, the female volunteer is transported to the desired location of bombing by total strangers. These behaviors are only acceptable for the family members and the community at large if, and only if, put into a religious context. To put it another way, conservative appearance and appealing to piety legitimize, and later on idealize, these individuals' disorderly behavior.

Performing in conservative hijab and presenting oneself as a true Muslim ascends the status of these women from objects of male desire to independent, strong-willed, and powerful resistance fighters. At least one Islamic Jihad website refers to female "martyrs" as the ones "who have exchanged their perfume for the smell of the land and wear weapons on their arms instead of jewelry."[39] Emphasis on de-femininization of female paramilitaries' bodily transformation attempts to idealize the women's empowerment through militarization and hijab. By rejecting feminine attire, the female fighter establishes her social, political, and ideological position and refuses to oblige to the gender-specific roles assigned to her in patriarchal hierarchy. The female bombers' disconnection from the mundane world and the decadence associated with vivid colors, feminine attire, jewelry, and makeup is evidence of their readiness to fulfill their spiritual duty. This is one major step towards self-purification (*jihad e asghar* or the minor jihad) that automatically elevates the individual to the prestigious status of a true Muslim. Dareen Abu Aishah's statement on hijab is revealing:

> I am a Muslim woman who believes her body belongs to her alone,
> which means that how I look should not play a role in who I am or
> what response I evoke from people who meet me. Wearing hijab
> gives me freedom, because my physical appearance is not an issue.
> True equality means women do not have to display themselves to
> get attention.[40]

According to this feminist statement, hijab empowers Abu Aishah, herself a female

bomber, and other Muslim women and liberates them from the male gaze. Claiming an

equal gender status, hijab politicizes the body and transforms it into a visible icon of

resistance. In this sense, hijab becomes a performative tool for the observer of Islamic

conduct to re-direct the society's view and perception of women. Following the same

concept, in a letter from the front during the Iran-Iraq war, a *basiji* (volunteer combatant)

addresses the women in Iran:

> Dear sister: I don't have any special advice regarding your hijab
> since I know that you have chosen it consciously. You know that
> your hijab is our ummat's [nation's] flag of independence, and your
> invincible umbrella; you are holding the flag of this resistance,
> resistance against the Satan of carnal desire and the Great Satan
> [Western Superpowers].[41]

Referring women's support of the 'holy war'[42] to their observance of hijab places

women's appearance in a metaphorical position. Hijab, in this regard, is not a private

conducting of self anymore but is a political statement and a performative one for that

matter. Like any other insignia such as a cross, a yarmulke, tattoos, body piercing, etc.,

hijab is an indication of a particular viewpoint and thus a political performance as long as

it is worn in public. Refusing to observe the conservative hijab in circumstances in which

such an act is regarded as a deviation from the law is also a political statement in itself. It

should be obvious, however, that motivations for and the political intentions behind such

public performances are extremely variable. Generalization of conservative appearance to

violence is an oversimplification of the resistance in the Middle East; an assumption that has so far failed to produce a solution for the on-going crisis in the region. On the contrary, accepting female bomber's adherence to hijab as a performative tool, a political costume in application, enables us to read the message of this atrocious mode of resistance more clearly.

Islamic feminism presents hijab as an opportunity for women to reach higher social and political status. Zahra Rahnavard—a university professor, political activist, and the author of numerous books and articles on Islam, women, and feminism—argues for the Islamic doctrines' capacity to liberate women from the status of second-class citizens. Islamic rules, and hijab in particular, grant women self-confidence and admission to public activities that are normally inaccessible to them. Islamic feminism further debates for the removal of stigmatization against young women's political activism when those women act within the boundaries of their religious ideologies of self-sacrifice and modesty. This view acknowledges the power of hijab as a weapon for Muslim women with which they are able to claim their equal rights with men.[43] As Minoo Moallem, in her sociopolitical analysis of performativity of war images in Iran observes, it is indeed a "mistake to read women's acceptance of the fundamentalist encouragement to wear the black chador [long veil] as a sign of either passivity or religiosity. Women perceived it rather as a gendered invitation to political participation and as a sign of membership, belonging, and complicity."[44] Rahnavard takes this notion further by claiming that "in the symbolization of hijab as a site of discovery of a true self and the place of Islamic embodiment of divine womanhood, the ethno-religious community of Allah" is able to stand "in opposition to the westernized local elite and a global order."[45]

Middle Eastern women, by engaging in political activity that ultimately and perhaps ideally, may end in "martyrdom", have redefined the same rules that had bound women to the domain of their private homes. It is in the context of appreciating women's resistance, empowerment, and change that I refer to "Islamic Feminism," reflecting female paramilitaries, as " a Muslim and a feminist," in Mahnaz Afkhami's words,[46] without seeing one necessarily opposing the other. The notion of *istishhad* (martyrdom) same as adapting the Islamic rule of conduct, has enabled women paramilitaries to position themselves in an equal status to their male counterparts. This is an ideological position definitely beyond the patriarchal hierarchy that according to the Orientalist view is not available to Muslim women. Either as false consciousness or a strong self-motivating belief, Islam has granted visibility and thus agency for these women. In short, by contextualizing my argument within the Islamic Feminism discourse, I do not intend to describe a fixed identity but to create a new subject position that allows activism on behalf of and with other women. It is in this framework that I will discuss hijab and martyrdom as the two important aspects of female political activism.

Apart from granting women political mobility, hijab, with or without the display of military-affiliations, allows women to talk publicly about their body parts in a culture where referring to the body in public is atypical and unacceptable for younger women. Both the ideology of self-sacrifice for the sublime, indirectly reflected in wearing the hijab, and the actual veil that preserves the flesh from public exposure divert the audience's perception of the body as a sexual object. The individual presents her body as worthy to be protected from decadence and at the same time a tool for reaching the higher cause. Objectifying the body as an instrument of spiritual gain desexualizes the flesh and

thus renders it acceptable for the female fighter to publicly talk about her body parts. The significance and boldness of this acknowledgement becomes apparent only when we put it in the appropriate cultural context and appreciate the power it invests in women to bend cultural, social, and even religious rules. This power extends to the level of legitimizing the Muslim female paramilitary's body parts to commingle with the enemy's flesh at the time of explosion.

In a violent invasion of the Other's space, the bomber's flesh, attached to the explosives, penetrates the body of the Other and renders both unrecognizable in its unification with the Other. In each explosion, bits and pieces of unidentifiable human flesh, body parts and organs of the bomber and her victims, cover a large radius. The bomber's body trespasses the territories, invades the Other's space and exposes its most private parts to the public view. This revelation contradicts Islamic indoctrination according to which Muslims in general, and women in particular, should not expose their bodies to *na mahram* (strangers according to the Sharia). Referring to and emphasizing the transformation of the body parts to bullets and shrapnel, attest to the bomber's belief in the non-existence and the worthlessness of the corporeal body. Furthermore, however, it reveals the female bomber's overcoming sexual objectification associated with her gender. In other words, when the "martyr-to-be" refers to her body, or when in reality she has no control over which parts remain after the explosion and how the remains are seen, she admits her body as a genderless weapon of destruction.

The power of hijab to de-feminize and de-sexualize the female paramilitary's corporeal body is highlighted even further by contrasting it with the news medias' reflections on female bombers. Western media, and occasionally Western scholarship,

makes the female bomber's body visible by markers such as body type, hair color, and facial characteristics. Seeking unification through identical hijab challenges this notion. As Brunner explains, "an abstract image of the Arab woman is being brought into discussion . . . the concept of beauty plays an important role."[47] The descriptions of the female bombers in Australian newsprint media are only a few examples of how women's involvement in bombing operations has been interpreted along misleading paths.[48] Wafa Idris, for instance, has been referred to as "attractive, auburn-hair . . . who wore sleeveless dresses and makeup" as writes Christopher Walker in 2002.[49] Yet, Walker analyzes neither Idris' adaptation to hijab nor her change of conduct as indications of her determination to resist the occupation and cross gender boundaries. He concludes his article by pointing out that such good-looking women with familiar characteristics could not possibly be politically active enough to do what Idris did. Comments such as this convey stereotypical assumptions of female paramilitaries' appearance and motivations while overlooking the possibility of women's conscious engagement in violence. Being the first female bomber, Idris' action was subject to doubt. This is clear in the last sentence in Walker's article that reads: "Israeli police said they were still investigating whether her [Wafa Idris'] action had been intentional or whether the device had detonated prematurely."[50]

While hijab is a gendered invitation to political participation and a sign of membership, belonging, and complicity for religious women, it has different connotations for secularists. Especially if mandated for women, regardless of their point of view or religion, feminists all around the world have described hijab as a vivid implication of submission and oppression. I realize that a discussion of Islamic feminism may give rise

to controversial standpoints as some scholars have declared such discussion "a futile attempt to fit feminism in the Qur'an."[51] I agree with those scholars that theology has proved its incompatibility with the feminist notion of gender equality. Not only Islam but also all other religions have indeed prejudiced against women over the course of history. Yet, it is an unintelligent approach to dismiss the possibility of feminist movements within the realm of Islam at least among nations that are not ruled by fundamentalist regimes. The female bombers, regardless of their personal views on religion, have presented themselves as true Muslims who not only observe the Islamic dress codes, but also adhere to the rules of *jihad fi sabil e Allah* (struggle in the way of God) and *istishhad.*

The similarities between Islamic feminism and Western egalitarian feminism are noticeable in their critiques of the universal patriarchal order. Both criticize objectification and commodification of women in Western societies, both renounce the separation of private and public and attempt to create a direct relationship between individuals and the political community, both aim for a transnational community, and both call for women's political participation. If a woman—a mother of two young children (Reem), a grandmother and the head of a family (Fatima), a university student recently engaged (Ayat), a lawyer (Hanadi)—with no history of violent political activism has reached the point of strapping a belt of explosives around her waist to revenge the enemy's brutality against her people, it seems only a small compromise either to wear the hijab or to remove it for the sake of the operation. As a matter of fact, hijab has been used as an effective tool in carrying the mission within Israeli soil. Muslim women, especially the ones in hijab, successfully prevent bodily search by male Israeli soldiers at the

checkpoints. As a result, at least before the number of female bombers exceeded their male compatriots, women in hijab could pass the checkpoints with more ease. Hiding explosives in loose conservative garments or pretending to be pregnant deceived Israeli soldiers and allowed women to carry their missions forward.[52] Clearly, resistance organizations have manipulated the veil as a political strategy in their favor. But such politicization and manipulation of ideologies cannot be exclusively attributed to Islam.

Adapting to a style of clothing that is in contrast with one's personal belief in order to fulfill a duty is not exclusive to non-conservative resistance fighters either. According to family and friends, Hanadi Jaradat became religious after witnessing the killing of her cousin and brother and never missed a prayer afterwards. However, she had to adopt the western appearance to be able to enter Maxim Restaurant in Haifa, Israel, where she detonated a bag of explosives and killed 22 people. Hours before her bombing attack, Hanadi Jaradat changed from her conservative hijab to a pair of jeans and a ponytail.[53] Her removal of her hijab in the last day of her life, the day of her assigned mission, neither interfered with nor negated her devotion to Islam. On the contrary, it was only one of the steps she had to take to carry her mission forward. In changing one's physical appearance to meet the demands of the operation, the female paramilitary accepts to perform herself differently. For a believer in Islam appearing without the appropriate cover in public is nothing but disgrace unless it is part of the mission in the way of Allah. The same applies to the individual who does not believe in Islamic hijab but wears it to hide the belt of explosives beneath. This role taking, changing one's physical appearance and conduct, is a conscious manipulation of performativity at the service of a political goal. Using the hijab is an example of not just adapting to the rules of performativity but

adapting to the rules of performativity to achieve empowerment and resistance as a Muslim woman.

The single body in hijab is positioned in front of the camera not only to represent devotion to Islamic resistance but also to symbolize all Muslim women. In the process, the individual's identity and emotions are downplayed while the essence of unified resistance is bifurcated in the image of the ideal Muslim female *jihadist* (fighter). The emphasis on the bomber's affiliation with an organization and the embellishment of her gender role as a mother, sister, wife or other positions that are specified in relation to men, de-individualize and classify her further as a member of a large community. It is crucial for the organization to draw on the collectivity of struggle and to prove that the bomber on screen is one of the unaccountable members of the mass of volunteers to come.

Disindividualized bodies in identical costumes or masked faces, the mass of human flesh or the so-called "army of Islam"[54] magnifies the organizations' military as well as ideological power in the region. Stripped of her personal perspectives of war and religion and metamorphosed to a weapon to support an ideology, the paramilitary is regarded solely as flesh wishing to reconcile with her soul in heaven. The impersonal and almost identical farewell-statements, indistinguishable setting and costumes create a faceless *ummat* (unified community of Muslims) always ready to abide by the rules of its spiritual leaders. Depersonalization of the paramilitary's appearance is in accordance with the military standards that create and view the army as a whole; the mass of soldiers who are supposed to be ready to sacrifice their lives, are expected to follow the orders without negotiation, and are recognized as individuals only at the time of their death.

Performing oneself as a devoted Muslim in front of the camera indicates the individual's desire for collectivity and unity with the organization she has been affiliated with, the nation under occupation, and the transnational community of Muslim women who may share her objectives. This transnational sisterhood and the sense of belonging it engenders, empower the paramilitaries in the enemy's eyes, implying the potential growth of violent resistance among the Muslim cultures world over. Politicization of the body connects the individual with a unified collectivity and therefore creates boundaries between one's own community and the community of the Other. The generalization and collectivization further feeds the stereotypical image of Muslims as fundamentalist combatants and thus engenders more atrocities against them. Yet, such illusory portrayal of the global Islamic nation is a desirable image for resistance organizations in displaying their power and recruiting a young generation of soldiers.

Although hijab reaches for the paramilitary's unification with the supporters of armed struggle world wide, the organizations create the farewell statement videos to serve yet another purpose. By portraying the bomber as a recognizable face with a distinctive identity as she introduces herself and a personality that defines the individual within the domain of her very limited performance, they aim at creating heroines for the viewers. Individualization of the live body of the bombers on screen provokes more sympathy among the audience member as the bodies are received as real human beings. The personal information of each "martyr" is highlighted in her videos and posthumous posters. Understanding the necessity of producing distinguishable role models for the community members, the "martyr's" poster includes her name, the date of "martyrdom", the number of casualties caused by her particular bombing mission, and the place of her

attack. The posters also include more personal information such as a picture with "martyr's" children or the individual's wedding pictures.

In the farewell statement videos, the "volunteer for martyrdom" declares her name and sometimes her political affiliations. The female fighter establishes her personhood further through facial expressions, gestures, having eye contact with the audience, giggling, blinking, smiling, or even shivering. The posture and other bodily movements, as well as the voice are unique characteristics of each person who stands in front of the camera. This information will be exclusive to the individual and thus a part of her characterization and personification. Furthermore, the body on stage in the videotapes engenders a sense of intimacy and personification that these recordings create for the international audience. While the dimensions of the crisis and the impact of bombing missions do not change, the reception of the individual perpetrator is affected when she is visualized. The female fighter acquires a real presence through her voice being heard, her somatic gestures viewed, and her emotions, although limited, being perceived by the audience. Her physical appearance in front of the camera surpasses all the stories, descriptions, and personal accounts given by the media and she becomes ever more real as far as a digital recording allows realness. It is indeed the image of the live body on the screen that haunts the viewer.

Corporeal Absence vs. Metaphorical Presence

If the body of the bomber bears such significance for the resistance, as I have argued for in the previous sections, why is its violent consumption necessary for the

continuation of the resistance? What are the reasons for publicization and celebration of "martyrdom" in the Palestinian community? What aspects of the "martyr's" violent annihilation draw hundreds of people to the funeral to commemorate the death? In the cultural context of *istishhad*, how is the body of the female "martyr" treated? And finally, why does the female bomber's "martyrdom" bear more significance for the international news media?

In Islam, reaching the infinite glory of the creator is promised to believers who practice *tahaarat* (purification) and *imaan* (faith). Islam values the impact of *tahaarat* and *imaan* to such an extent that fighting one's own worldly desires, the *jihad e akbar* (the grand Jihad) is given more importance than the *jihad e asghar* (the minor Jihad) against the infidels. The grand Jihad, in which the Muslim believer submerges him/herself in an individual purification process, requires the person to cleanse his/her body of materialistic desires, prepare him/herself to sacrifice his/her worldly existence, and finally to take action and prove his/her commitment.

The word *jihad* connotes activism and the "orthopraxy," in Micheal Winter's words, that defines the nature of Islam. "Orthopraxy" rather than "orthodoxy" refers to Islam as a religion in which "one participates in the meanings of being a Muslim through ritual, not merely through a profession of faith."[55] This is a performative understanding of faith that resonates further in the martyrdom volunteers' performance of resistance and violence for the public view. However, Islam is neither the first nor the only doctrine that prioritizes the soul over the corporeal body. The body has been identified as the symbol of moral corruption that has to be subdued by discipline to restore the order of the Christian, Judaic, and Buddhist philosophies among others. Contextualizing death within

the boundaries of theocracy gives meaning to one's expiration; it highlights martyrdom as the sacrifice of the perishable flesh to save and elevate the everlasting soul thus rendering natural death a less desirable ending to the true believer's life. According to this train of thought, death is not a sign of depression or indifference towards life but it is the love of life that drives volunteers for martyrdom to choose the path that leads to the soul's eternity as opposed to the temporary life of the corporeal body.

Furthermore, understanding the concept of self-sacrifice in relation to the notion of the sublime extends the role of the individual beyond the scope of her physical annihilation. As the guarantor of the continuation of resistance against injustice, martyrdom becomes "a site of representation where death is given not only a voice but also a life"[56] since it echoes in the nation's consciousness. This glorified death is identifiable in secular and religious ideologies. While the latter perspective may define death as a passage to the other life, the former ideology does not view the nationalist paramilitary's death as an ending either. In fact, both doctrines promise a new socio-political beginning for the community the martyr leaves behind.

For women, following the path of *istishhad* is a double purification compared to men since in patriarchal society femininity bears a contagious impurity in itself. Seeking martyrdom not only showcases the female volunteer's detachment from worldly desires but also elevates the individual from an icon of decadence to a genderless role model. In other words, self-sacrifice de-genders the female fighter first and then heroicizes her for abandoning her instinctive role to deceive men. The heroicization and idealization of female combatants, especially the martyrdom seekers, and the necessity of resisting the occupation, lead many women to volunteer for armed struggle in general and bombing

missions in particular. *Jihad e akbar* against one's own desires leads the individual to follow the path of *istishhad* to the *jihad e asghar*, or protesting the injustice in the world. Although both levels of Jihad have their impact beyond the private world of the individual, *Jihad e asghar* functions in a broader socio-political level. The purified believer, who has mastered her own being, now is responsible to cleanse the world. Both the somatic body and the material world are risked here in the way of God.

References to willful sacrifice of the flesh to protest the injustice are evident in the bombers' statements. "We are confident in the support of Allah," reads one statement while another advises the fellow Palestinians not to "wait for any Arab president or king, but direct your appeal to Allah, the king of kings."[57]As natural and accidental death is interpreted as undesirable for wasting the body, returning the flesh to the creator, or to put it another way, giving blood in the way of the sublime, gains an idealized priority. This mentality explains the semiotics of blood in wall graffiti, slogans, and literature that promotes martyrs irrigating the flower of resistance with their blood.

The hero proffers his own blood as a sacrificial gift, as in the lines from The Islamic Anthem Festival reveals, "The child shouts/ from my blood / O Jerusalem / I'll give you drink."[58] Variations of the same theme of irrigating the land and resistance by the martyrs' blood appears in the songs and poems sponsored by Palestinian resistance organizations. "My homeland / I irrigate the soil of your borders" reads a poem in Palestinian Front Line People (PFLP)'s website or "Palestine is a green tree whose thirst can only be quenched with the blood of the martyrs" reads another broadcasted by Fatah Movement.[59] "When the blood of the martyr's irrigates the land / then roses appear" is posted in Hamas website while a song by Al-Qala' band, affiliated with the PFLP, reads:

"I will fight until the last drop / for the land is calling me / then make from my body torches and from my love / bombs for the homeland / what am I? / I am a fida'i" (a self-sacrificer).[60] The ideology that supports the sacrifice of blood for a higher cause has been falsely interpreted as the love of death over life. Rather, sacrifice of flesh is an inevitable step in resisting the higher political authority especially in circumstances in which there is a technological imbalance between the two sides of the conflict.

Besides the religious values, altruistic ideologies may drive the individuals to choose the path of self-sacrifice. Allen Feldman's discussion of the paramilitary's conscious submission to being physically violated through death, arrest, or torture at the time of his/her involvement in the armed struggle as "social death" falls in this category. According to Feldman, "the paramilitary's career is experientially and cognitively structured around two polarities: imprisonment or violent death leading to political 'martyrdom'."[61] In a broader view, however, the paramilitary's self-immolation benefits the patriarchal resistant organization to establish itself as an identifiable power institution in the region. Each member's death marks the organization's power in wasting the flesh. Analyzing the disappearance of the political activists during the Argentine's Dirty War period, Diana Taylor argues for the necessity of the consumption of the female flesh for the patriarchy to survive. Taylor elaborates on the waste of the flesh that resonates the power of the authority who desires such sacrifice, concluding that "only by controlling She, can He define himself, either as the military man or as the progressive Argentine intellectual."[62] Taylor's disposition of the military junta's dictatorial feminization of the Other, or the submission of women, is applicable to my discussion of Palestinian women.

The female bomber also submits to the rules and norms of the authoritative organizations and patriarchal culture within which she has to operate. Similar to the Argentine political activist, the Palestinian female bomber accepts to sacrifice herself for nationalistic, religious, or political purposes. Both individuals, in bargaining their lives serve the patriarchy, yet simultaneously are revived as activists in the public's memory. The glorification and remembrance of the martyred / disappeared have a political impact on the consciousness of the authorities; this indirectly empowers these women activists. The female bomber's conscious choice of a war strategy that renders her immolation unavoidable, her performance in the videos, and more importantly, her violence set her apart from the Argentine political activist. On one hand, the bomber's annihilation, a desirable death that means the destruction of the enemy, emphasizes the individual's subjectivity. On the other hand, the bomber and the organization that sponsors her spectacularize her death and use it as a propaganda and pedagogical tool to train and recruit more volunteers. The absence of the bomber from our real world, the fact that the circulation of her video means the completion of a bombing mission, hence, the corporeal death of the bomber, are clear indications of potential for violence to circulate. Therefore, the audience of the farewell statement videos is invited to draw the conclusion that bombing missions will not cease unless a major change occurs in the superpowers' foreign policy.

Spectacularization of death begins in the farewell videos in which the female paramilitary attests to her willful self-sacrifice and invites her audience to receive her as a victim and a heroine. "I am the mother of two martyrs, and I will sacrifice myself as a martyr, Allah willing, I will turn my blood into bombs that will burn them [Israeli

forces]" a volunteer for martyrdom declares.[63] More than once, Umm Suheib, in her statement, mentions her being the descendent of eight family members killed by occupation forces.[64] The presence of the corporeal body in the farewell statement video attests to the paramilitary's victimization under the oppression and aids the organizations to fabricate a desirable narrative for the bombing missions.

While the body of the bomber as the figure of authority, especially at the time of executing its power does not take center stage but is deliberately kept hidden from the public view, the body of the martyr-to-be as a victim becomes public through remembering and retelling the atrocities of the past. Re-construction of past experiences, in the form of narratives, has recently become the main part of the process of resisting the injustice as well as taking the position of victimhood. Scholars of memory and trauma studies in Europe and America "have shown both a persistent belief in disclosure and a political belief in its potential benefits to both the individual and the community."[65] Remembering is by definition speaking out, according to these scholars, in a way that documents an incident, which in this case is resisting the occupation by taking violent measures.[66] In documentation of the bomber's mission, retelling the history is meant not only to inform the international public of the unknown, but also to reinforce understanding of the events from the Palestinian point of view and thus to provoke the younger generation to get involved in the struggle. It is perhaps this last reason that motivates the Palestinian organizations the most to arrange for the recording of the bomber's last farewell statement, believing that such self-presentation grants the individual and the organization a forum to articulate their missions, political stance, and demands.

The woman on screen is to be perceived as both a victim and an unforgiving agent of retaliatory ruination simultaneously. Creating a narrative using language and her body, the female "volunteer for martyrdom" presents herself as a victim who justifies her own violence in the context of the Other's occupation, oppression, and hostility. She refers to herself as *al shahida 'al-hay*, which translates to the living-martyr, the female witness, one who testifies, and the woman who sacrifices herself. These multifarious meanings present the concept of *shahid*, *shahida*, and also *istishhad* as versatile and open to various interpretations. As a witness and a testifier, the female bomber on screen takes the position of an ordinary citizen and a fighter simultaneously. Her living body is meant to represent what Laurie Vickeroy refers to as a "suffering body," which is able to render "unimaginable experience tangible to readers," while her holding a machine gun confirms her readiness to kill.[67] In other words, she steps in front of the camera as one of the very few individuals who has gotten a chance to communicate with the outside world the reality of life under occupation, the victimization of the Palestinians, and the ultimate transformation of individual citizens to potential members of the armed struggle. Her reflection on her side of the story aims at gaining the audiences' attention, sympathy, and ideally active reaction. This is only achieved, however, if her presence is perceived as 'real' and the 'truth' in the context of the struggle for freedom.

Edward Mallot, in his studies of the literature of trauma, views the physical body as a text for the audience member to read and understand the performer's experiences. The living body on the stage plays an undeniable role in connecting with the sympathizers among the audience and making the point. Mallot quotes Sandra Soo-Jin Lee to affirm that "in cases where memory of events and experiences are continually challenged,

undermined and erased by other more authoritative forces, the body is often presented in testament of the truth."[68] Mike Featherstone, in his discussion of the consumer culture, asserts the same notion of the truth projecting from the live body. He explains that the prevalent popular culture encourages the viewer to believe (or find it hard to disbelieve) the bodily representations in the mainstream media. Thus, he continues, "the controlled use of certain tricks of bodily deportment work largely at an unconscious level rather than a conscious level," nonetheless manipulating and exploiting the audience's mind.[69]

I believe that the resistance authorities apply the same strategies in regard to the audience's reception at the time of producing the videos. Receiving the body as a text and the manifestation of truth works well to entice sympathy among their viewers. The resistance organizations' use of western spectacularizing media is quite ironic when they use the same strategies to oppose the western superpowers' manipulation of the audience members. The paramilitary gives meaning to her death by performing her dedication to the sublime for the audience. Observers watch the performance, hear the statement, and bear witness to the act of self-sacrifice and thus are, one way or the other, affected by the impact of the bomber's death. The performativity of the bomber's action reiterates her death as "martyrdom": a holy, self-sacrificial, and political death. The liveness of the bomber's death, the performance of her volunteering for martyrdom, renders the sacrifice of the flesh more real for the audience. Death in this case becomes, as Phelan puts it, "an act that can only achieve meaning in and through the observation of the other, the spectator-witness,"[70] because the western superpowers' "collective fantasy insists that the real is that which is observable and capable of being apprehended."[71] Here, Phelan criticizes the hegemonic understanding of the spectacularizing media that is not exclusive

to the western hemisphere in any sense of the word. But as I mentioned above, it is used in the hands of those who criticize the capitalist consumption of the media and the manipulation of its audience members.

The body takes a unique position in relation to death through performance in front of the camera, which provides the corporeal body a visibility right before its annihilation. The presence of the fighter in front of the camera empowers the body as a metaphorical icon of resistance while, simultaneously, confirming its inevitable physical destruction (absence). This absence (physical death), however, is the guarantor of the "martyr's" eternal presence. The bomber's body language is capable of manipulating the feelings of the audience. The fact that the bomber's story is not told by others but that she is in charge of narrating the stories of her entire nation enables her to acquire a certain autonomy in relation to the public viewer. The bomber's visceral adherence to a transnational community poses a deadly threat for the audience outside of the Palestinian culture by exaggerating the destructive power that the resistance organization possesses. As part of the strategy of the resistance, the paramilitary succumbs to portray herself as member of a vast, real or imaginary, community of believers in her cause who would continue her path should she be killed in the course of action.

Mirvat Masoud praises other Islamic fighters across the world "from Iraq to Chechnya, from Palestine to Philippines"[72] who have courage to stand up against injustice. Masoud's appeal to a transnational community of Muslims embodies a desire for expansion of the support for the ideology she is fighting for while lending to the generalization of Muslims' worldwide. She blames the Arab leaders for their passivity by positioning herself in a dead-end situation that leaves her no other choice but to take the

matters in her own hand. She addresses not her own people but the international audience and pleads for help in a way implying that Arab leaders' interference, albeit in favor of Palestine, can eliminate the need for women's self-sacrificial resistance. The international negligence, in other words, victimizes Palestinians in Masoud's view.

Dareen Abu Aishah uses the same strategy in bringing all Palestinian women under the same umbrella when she declares: " . . . every Palestinian woman will give birth to an army of *martyrs*" [emphasis mine].[73] This virtual community of Muslim believers is the one that other Islamist leaders have addressed in the Middle East. Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of the 1978 revolution in Iran, advised Muslims: "Don't be afraid of the tumult of those in power because, with the will of God, this century is the century of the victory of the moataz'afan [the oppressed] over the mostakbaran [the oppressors] and justice over falsehood."[74] Appealing to the imagined community of masses of people who share the same ideologies reinforces the power of the organizations and their leaders. It is also quite empowering for the individual volunteer who, in reality, has to face death in solitude. Especially in the case of bombers, when they reach their target and are about to detonate the belt of explosives, they act isolated from their comrades. The very last decision, in when and where to pull the trigger, is made by the bomber alone although her awareness of the impact she has on her community and the struggle supports her to complete her mission.

Assuming that the whole national and transnational communities support her decision empowers the paramilitary, and yet, it has resulted in antagonization of Muslims as bloodthirsty and death-loving communities. While the majority of Muslims do not

contribute to this misperception of Islam, the leaders of fundamentalist groups naturally fantasize recruiting the whole nation of Islam into their jihad.

For the organizations to revive the spirit of resistance, it is crucial to use all means available to remind the public of the heroes and heroines who have lost their lives resisting the occupation. The doctrines of *istishhad* and struggle are performed in various ways for the public whose internalization of these ideologies guarantees the survival of resistance and resistance organization. Spectacularization of death leaves martyrs and the ideology of martyrdom omnipresent in the Palestinian community. Posters, wall graffiti, videos, and public funerals foreground the everlasting presence of the *shahida* (female martyr)'s immortal souls and their honorable death. The image of the martyr—posed in front of the al-Aqsa mosque, fully-armed, embellished by verses of Qur'an and flowers— resonates the individual's divine-backed strength and victory. The *shahida*'s posters on the walls secure her as an agent of sociopolitical change and a respected person (in the eyes of her supporters) regardless of her gender. Her virtual presence has a panopticon effect on the masses, especially the younger women, who are constantly reminded of the values and significance of resistance.

Michael Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, argues that within the panoptic institution, "a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use," fewer people exercise power while the masses are affected by it. I use the term "panoptican" as a semiotic, usually iconographic, but omnipresent, ideological power that implies an indirect pressure on the masses. Although my take on "panopticism" does not bind the individuals to solitary confinement, it demands the members of the community to interact and ultimately internalize its values. The whole

community becomes an institution of panopticism.[75] Images of tulips and poppies, bloody

doves entangled in barbed wires, children throwing stones and Molotov cocktails, and the

map of Palestine torn into pieces under the boots of the Israeli army, provide the populace

recurring points of reference to the oppression under the occupying forces. This

panoptican effect works on the sub-conscious level of the masses in internalizing the

ideologies of resistance and "martyrdom". The eyes of the "martyrs" that look at the

pedestrians at all times, their names appearing as streets names, their videos broadcasting

continuously are constant reminders that the struggle still persists and that volunteers for

istishhad are still needed. I will refer to this effect as the spectacle of resistance in chapter

three.

Apart from the videotapes and iconography of resistance, the body of the "martyr"

is remembered and the ideology of "martyrdom" reinforced through funerals,

demonstrations, and other public commemoration of the *shahid*. As Khalili puts it the

"martyr's" "qualitative transformation from a mortal member of the community to an

imperishable embodiment of the nation's abstract values" makes her "worthy of

commemoration."[76] To awaken the masses' sense of belonging and responsibility, often

organization leaders, and at times independent individuals, arrange for demonstrations or

sit-ins to commemorate the deceased or to prevent Israeli officials from demolishing the

bomber's house. Cultural events are scheduled in universities, community centers, and

schools in honor of the "martyrs" thus accentuating the significance of self-sacrificial

resistance in Palestinian culture. The ceremonial and ritualistic processions and

gatherings that follow each "martyr's" death are public performances of remembrance in

which the participants in the funerals internalize the doctrines of resistance and *istishhad*.

They witness, testify by being present, perform their protest throughout the funerals, and ultimately prepare for self-sacrifice. "Martyrdom" is not a personal gain any more but is celebrated as a communal achievement for the supporters of the Palestinian cause. The iconography of blood sacrifice interconnects the individual's actual death with more abstract concepts such as national identity, transnational resistance against injustice, and spiritual empowerment.

Funerary ceremonies serve a range of political functions. The "martyr's" funeral is a process of collectivization and publicization of the individual's death. Analyzing the iconography of resistance in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebannon, Laleh Khalili refers to commemoration of self-sacrificial death and resistance as "always staged or performed for a public or an audience."[77] She elaborates that commemoration demands the audience's political reaction, critique of the present, and moral accountability while charting a map of the future. It is the dialogic nature of commemoration, resonating in constant interaction with the participants that makes creation of the farewell statement videos as well as public funerals necessary for the resistant organizations. Arranged by the organizations, albeit also based on the cultural norms of Palestinian society, collectivization of the paramilitary's death intends to not only rationalize self-sacrifice as an inevitable part of resistance, but also to temper the "martyr's" family's distress over their loss. As "martyrdom" becomes an accepted and promoted communal commitment to the ideology of *jihad fi sabil Allah* (struggle in the way of God), the loss of a loved one is also shared with the whole nation.

In fact, violent death, an anticipated and desired mode of resistance, is a reoccurring phenomenon among the young generations hence making the experience of

loss a commonality as well. The sense of communal belonging, promulgated in the "martyr's" funerals, helps to transform the ceremony into something similar to a wedding as the "martyr's" funeral is sometimes referred to. Khalili elaborates that the "funeral-as-wedding reaffirms hope amidst death, and allows for transformation—however fleeting—of wasted youth and human loss into a meaningful and heroic death than can give dignity and honor" back to the Palestinian society.[78] In this commemoration of the self-sacrificial death, "the grieving family of the "martyr" is expected to ululate while weeping, and guests are served sweetened—rather than bitter—coffee."[79] A large group of comrades, family members, neighbors, and friends hold processions from the "martyr's" house to the cemetery accompanied by the female family members' lamentations. This public performance of commemoration is completed by the militiamen shooting several times in the air. This is a common practice in weddings as well as "martyr's" funeral processions.

When the community assembles to participate in a collective performance of resistance (remembering the "martyrs"), it consciously or unconsciously practices what Peggy Phelan calls the "art of death."[80] In the rituals associated with death, the participants rehearse their communal behaviors that further unite them as one nation. The gender-specific gestures such as older women's beating the breast, women wailing, men chanting slogans, or older men reciting Qur'an are examples of the collective behavior that involves a big portion of the community, unifies the masses, and empowers the oppressed in the course of struggle. Public funerals, usually turned into mass demonstrations, are "publicly enacted by the bodies that bear [the] consequences"[81] of death. The living bodies that attend the funerals are enabled to endure pain as part of a larger community. Joseph Roach defines this expressive movement, funeral /

demonstration, as a "performative" cultural memory through which the bodies of the attendees document, enact, and transfer the values and norms.[82] Funeral processions that at times take the form of demonstrations are vivid examples of remembrance through the bodies of the participants whose movement is an expression of rage, whose purpose and ideology is echoed on the posters they carry and slogans they shout, and whose action is a psychological rehearsal for further involvement.

Among the groups of mourners and demonstrators, the most vital groups are the children and young adults who are constantly reminded of and trained to internalize the importance of self-sacrifice for a greater cause. Didactic elements of the spectacle of "martyrdom" extend to the capacity of the images to portray the organizations behind the operations as powerful institutions in full authority over their members. By demonstrating the power to waste the flesh of its own members, the organization claims access to a long-list of volunteers for *istishhad*. Performing its authority to waste is crucial for the organization to establish itself as a political power. The attendance of the resistance organization officials in the "martyr's" funerals or the presence of the paramilitary in the non-violent demonstrations are two examples of these institutions' claiming the protests. Indeed the fully armed and masked fighters, marching with the crowd of mourners and firing bullets in the air, display the military as well as the ideological power that the resistant organizations possess over the "martyr" and over the living bodies of the members of the community.

Traditionally bound to attend the funerals and pay respects to the immediate family of the deceased, in the "martyr's" funeral the living bodies' presence is meant to replace the "martyr's" corporeal absence. Children and young members of the society are

especially encouraged to participate in the ceremonies to reflect on what Joseph Roach has called the "symbolic embodiment of loss and renewal."[83] In other words, the youth attending the funerals represent the birth of the new generation of volunteers for self-sacrifice. The process of remembrance, renewal, and embodiment is what Roach, in *Cities of the Dead*, calls "surrogation." The cultural reproduction and re-creation of surrogation "does not begin or end but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric."[84] This process explains the community as a whole partaking in a collective act of honoring, remembering, and regenerating the values: an attempt to find an identical replacement for the members lost to death.

In the funeral processions, the community of mourners consciously performs its willingness to re-create the glories of the past. Roach predicts the inevitable failure of surrogation explaining that "the fit cannot be exact" due to the collective's selective memory.[85] The concept of Joseph Roach's "surrogation" can be used in my study, albeit with a twist. Although I agree with Roach that the surrogated body cannot possibly be the duplicate of the lost one, nonetheless the purpose of collective commemoration is achieved. The Palestinian communities, eager to remember their heroes and revive the national identity, participate in surrogation without necessarily seeking to find the exact match. Instead, the new generation of resistance fighters is born entertaining similar ideologies and shared hopes after each ceremony. The participants not only attain a collective identity, but also revive the values and memories of the past.

The process of surrogation begins immediately after the martyr's death, when the next volunteers for "martyrdom" pursue the comparable ideological and political goals as

their predecessors. A prevailing memory of the absent body (the martyr) is evolved when the viewers either identify with the bomber or feel intimidated by its presence. My emphasis here is on the role the organizations play to reinforce the surrogation and create a situation for collective training. The surrogate bodies of the survivors, the Palestinian youth, bear witness to the violence, learn the cultural values throughout their life (I refer to this as training), and ultimately try to fulfill their duty as it is expected of them by substituting themselves for "martyrs".

Women bombers have declared in their farewell statements that each volunteer follows her predecessors in destroying the enemy while encouraging her viewers to continue her path. Dareen Abu Aishah declares: "I wanted to be the second woman to carry out a martyr operation and take revenge for the blood of the martyrs and the destruction of the sanctity of al-Aqsa mosque."[86] This physical substitution for a desirable position that pre-exists to each "martyr", the embodiment of the ideology of *istishhad*, and the replacement of the *shahid* are parts and parcels of that "elusive entity"[87] that the volunteer of a bombing mission needs to aspire to.

With or without the support of the organizations, members of the "martyr's" family also arrange funerals in honor of their late deceased. While the majority of these processions are to fulfill customary expectations, some can become very political. For instance, one month after Wafa Idris' death, Maria Alvanou attests, her mother arranged for a symbolic funeral. Idris' empty coffin, draped in Palestinian flag, was carried throughout Ramallah accompanied by more than two thousand mourners who chanted joyfully and showed posters of other "martyrs" with pride.[88] Idris' mother, consciously or otherwise, submitted to spectacularization of her daughter's violent self-sacrifice,

strengthening the family's ties with the collective ideologies of her community. But more so, this unconventional ceremony secured Wafa's position as the first female paramilitary *shahida*.

Wafa Idris' bombing mission marked the first bombing done by a woman and, secured her "martyrdom" as an intentional act of self-sacrifice. Many argued that Wafa Idris had been assigned as a carrier of the bomb and not the detonator of the explosives. Referring to her violent action as a mistake and an accident, some newspaper columnists and media reporters tried in vain to deny Wafa and other women's agency in violent resistance. This funerary demonstration marked Wafa Idris as a "martyr" in the public's mind, but more so persuaded the fundamentalist organization leaders to announce her as the first female bomber in Palestinian history. It was only after the recognition of Idris' death as an act of "martyrdom" that the organizations such as Hamas and Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade changed their policies and officially accepted female volunteers for bombing missions. Since Wafa Idris' "martyrdom", *istishhad* has become a platform for Muslim women to claim equality with men.

The collective response to one of the community member's, Wafa Idris', "martyrdom" signifies the public's reception of the individual's death as a triumphant incident. It is indeed that victory over the powerful enemy, and not death, that is celebrated within the community and is staged in public spaces in order to attract the international media's attention. The funeral offers the community an opportunity "to affirm its semiautonomous but discreetly submerged existence"[89] against the dominant power in the form of a collective performance. It is the same death occasion that provides an arena for individuals, especially the youth, to express and re-invent themselves.

Conclusion

The body of the resistance fighter, any body engaged in resisting the authoritative power, is part of a collective entity of all (active and passive) people who defy the hegemony of power. The body of the population manifests itself in the body of the fighter who chooses to actively oppose the oppression. This single body, representative of the masses of bodies, ideologies and beliefs, determination and hope for change, is not an isolated soul any more but is multiplied through its politicization. This new body does not end after its corporeal extinction but becomes iconic both in somatic capacities and in its relation to other bodies. It resists force exercised upon it by other bodies and at the same time applies force to other bodies. In this way, the paramilitary's body—engaged in violence and being exposed to various forms of violence against the body such as arrest, torture, imprisonment, etc—takes new forms. In other words, the process of politicization renders private to public, individualistic to collective, corporeal to metaphoric, yet without losing the semantic characteristics of a human being.

In order to have a long-lasting impact on the audience, the paramilitary needs to present the power she and her affiliated organization have against the enemy. Obviously, neither the artillery on display in front of the female bomber nor the reality of resistance are able to compete with the advanced and complicated equipment the state possesses. In fact, exhibition of armory does not portray a desirable picture of the resistance but it is the reflections of faith and commitment that completes the image of threat the paramilitary aims to visualize. Performance is one and perhaps the most effective tool in reaching the national and international audience. Through performance, the female

bomber gains the visibility and a podium to announce her existence as a political opponent of the state before submitting to death.

The female volunteer for martyrdom consciously leaves herself behind, and tries to master her emotions, in order to perform her new identity as a strong and dedicated heroine. Although at times the eruptions of sensations may disturb her performance of strength, by performing her ideology and resistance, she succeeds in drawing the audience's attention and sympathy, hence, contributing to the pedagogy of "martyrdom". The female paramilitary consciously chooses to perform her ideological and political positions in a combination of costuming (hijab) and set (display of machine guns) for her audience at home and abroad. Hijab, as an Islamic rule, becomes the iconic element of resistance that connects the paramilitary and her organization to the sublime (the source of power).

On stage, the bomber transforms from an invisible protestor (before posing for the camera) to a visible icon of power and resistance for the audience of videotapes, and later to a victimized legend for the whole nation. The bomber becomes a heroine who has committed a courageous act, although her heroism will be recognized, appreciated, and promoted only after her death. The dead body of the "martyr" poses another serious threat for the superpower when she becomes a role model for the generations who would follow her path. The "martyr", after literal death, is individualized, glorified, and remembered. She becomes a symbol of powerful counter-state resistance. The crucial role of the body does not end with its death. But the body— physically or metaphorically — is quite powerful in its existence as well as in its death.

Notes:

[1] Jessica R. Johnston, *The American Body in Context: An Anthology* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), xvii.

[2] Ibid.

[3] In her introduction to *The Ends of Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), Peggy Phelan refers to this liveness as a "way of happening that renders performance live and authentic" (10).

[4] Andy Warhol refers to the "double space" the dead inhabit in his discussion of death, images, and performativity. See Peggy Phelan, "Andy Warhol, Performances of Death in America," in *Performing the Body*, *Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (New York: Routledge, 1999), 227.

[5] In chapter Two, I have used quotation marks for *martyr* and *martyrdom* whenever I have referred to these concepts from the point of view of the supporters of Palestinian cause. In other circumstances, when I talk about these concepts in general terms, quotations marks are not used.

[6] Turner, Bryan S., *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 1, 7.

[7] Dennis D. Waskul and Phillip Vannini, "The Body in Symbolic Interaction," in *Body/Embodiment: Symbolic Interaction and the Sociology of the Body*, ed. Dennis D. Waskul and Phillip Vannini (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 3.

[8] Quoted in Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 176.

[9] Quoted in Johnston, *The American Body in Context,* xvii.

[10] "Hamas Women Vow to Blow Themselves Up among Apes and Pigs." Al-Aqsa television, Dec. 30, 2008, accessed Jan. 23, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBRuYdI5I7s

[11] Feldman, *Formations of Violence*,100.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Quoted in Maria Alvanou, "Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers: The Interplaying Effects of Islam, Nationalism, and Honor Culture," National Defense College Working Paper, no. 3, Strategic Research and Policy Center (National Defense College, Israeli Defense Force, Tel Aviv, May 2007), http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terror+Groups/Palestinian+Women+Suicide+Bombers+-+by+Maria+Alvanou.htm, 44.

[14] "Reem Riyashi Farewell Hamas Video," accessed Aug. 19, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRDuKzC23GI.

[15] Clinton R. Sanders, "Viewing the Body: An Overview, Explanation, and Extension," in *Body/Embodiment: Symbolic Interaction and the Sociology of the Body*, ed. Dennis D. Waskul and Phillip Vannini (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 283.

[16] Waskul and Vannini, "The Body in Symbolic Interaction," 3.

[17] Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 101–102.

[18] Ibid, 528–529.

[19] Ibid, 106.

[20] Ibid,100.

[21] Oliver and Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs' Square,* 25.

[22] Patrick Anderson, "'To Lie Down to Death for Days': The Turkish Hunger Strike, 2000–2003," in *Violence Performed: Local Roots and Global Routes of Conflict*, ed. Patrick Anderson and Jisha Menon (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 209.

[23] Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 219.

[24] Anderson, "'To lie down to death for days,'" 197.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 129.

[27] "Hamas Women Vow to Blow Themselves up among Apes and Pigs." YouTube.com, originally aired on Al-Aqsa television, December 30, 2008. Accessed: January 23, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBRuYdI5I7s.
[28] Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005), 121.

[29] Both Pierre Rehov and the History Channel have interviewed individual volunteers for bombing missions in Israeli prisons, Rehov for his documentary *Suicide Killers* (2006) and the History Channel for *Inside the Mind of a Suicide Bomber* (2006). These individuals failed to detonate their explosives or decided against doing so for various reasons.

[30] "Fatima al Najar," Siteinstitute.org, Nov. 27, 2006, accessed April 19, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAzmPNmfx_U.
[31] See Mervat Masoud's video, accessed May 11, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oSL–fAMWCA&NR=1.
[32] See "Al Shahid Ayat al-Akhras," accessed June 12, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1KakNCUn4A.
[33] "Testament d'une kamikaze Palestinienne anti-Sioniste," Dailymotion video, Nov. 26, 2008, accessed Aug. 19, 2009, http://www.blinkx.com/watch-video/testament-une-kamikaze-palestinienne-anti-sionisme/rAPcsk8yRwLMnZ9P33k0nA
[34] Barbara Victor (*Army of Roses*), Rosemarie Skaine (*Female Suicide Bombers*), and Ann Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg (*The Road to Martyrs' Square*) conducted interviews with family members, friends, and neighbors of the "suicide bombers."

[35] *Kafiyeh* is a traditional Arab headdress. See endnote 80 in chapter one.

[36] "Kamikaze 47, l'histoire de wafa Idriss," DailyMotion Video, May 10, 2007, accessed April 18, 2012, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x34z55_kamikaze-47-l-histoire-de-wafa-idri_news?search_algo=1.

[37] Qur'an, Surah 24: 30-31.

[38] Norma Claire Moruzzi, "Trying to Look Different: Hijab as the Self-Presentation of Social Distinctions," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28, no. 2 (2008): 235.

[39] Quoted in Max, *Demystifying the Palestinian Female Suicide Bomber*, 64.

[40] Quoted In Victor, *Army of Roses,* 106.

[41] Quoted in Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 149.

[42] The Islamic Republic regime called the war against Iraq "the holy war." Although Iraqis are also Muslim, Iran's authority, the supreme leader Khomeini, encouraged the nation to fight the Ba'ath regime. Khomeini accused Saddam of not conducting his government according to the doctrines of Islam.

[43] Zahra Rahnavard, *The Message of Hijab* (London: Al-Hoda Publishers, 1990), 9. (Translations mine)
[44] Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*, 110.

[45] Rahnavard, *The Message of Hijab*, 17.

[46] Valentine M. Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate," *Signs* 27, no. 4 (2002): 1152.

[47] Quoted in Jaworski, "The Male Preserve of Martyrdom," 126.

[48] Ibid., 123.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents," 1152.

[52] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism,* 178.

[53] John F. Burns, "The Mideast Turmoil: The Attacker; Bomber Left Her Family With a Smile and a Lie", In *New York Times,* October 7, 2003, P. A13. Accessed: June 11, 2012.

http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/07/world/the-mideast-turmoil-the-attacker-bomber-left-her-family-with-a-smile-and-a-lie.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm

[54] Fundamentalist regimes and organizations view entire nations as a potential commodity. Khomeini wanted to create an army of 20 million young Iranians who would volunteer for *jihad* against global imperialism, defend the country, and promote Islam. Children are potential soldiers in the eyes of Palestinian resistance organizations; the children of today train to become future soldiers and potential martyrs. Israeli children, boys and girls alike, also train to become soldiers. When they become young adults, they will serve in the military for three years to fight the rebels and fortify the state.

[55] Michael Winter, "Islamic Attitudes towards the Human Body," in *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*, ed. Jane Marie Law (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 37.

[56] Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*, 111.

[57] "Hamas Women Vow to Blow Themselves Up among Apes and Pigs."

[58] Oliver and Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs' Square*, 91.

[59] Ibid., 92.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 105.

[62] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts,* 16.

[63] "Hamas Women Vow to Blow Themselves Up among Apes and Pigs."

[64] Ibid.

[65] J. Edward Mallot, "Body Politics and the Body Politic: Memory as Human Inscription in What the Body Remembers," *Interventions* 8, no. 2 (July 2006): 167.

[66] In *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration,* Laleh Khalili analyzes the pedagogy of resistance in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. In her thorough study of the means of, motivations for, and historiography of resistance in refugee camps, Khalili describes UNESCO-sponsored educational programs for children in the camps. After the 1967 war, the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) had to reach an accommodation with the state of Israel in order to continue its work in the area. As part of the agreement, UNRWA agreed to modify textbooks to exclude any hostile references to Israel. This means that "if there were any institutionalized instruction on Palestinian history, it had to be done through the initiative of individual teachers" (71).

[67] Laurie Vickeroy refers to the narrator of the past as a "suffering body" who remembers past experiences but suffers in retelling her stories; She is quoted in Mallot, "Body Politics and the Body Politic," 166.

[68] Mallot, "Body Politics and the Body Politic," 167.

[69] Quoted in Mike Featherstone, "The Body in Consumer Culture," in *The American Body in Context: An Anthology*, ed. Jessica R. Johnston (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), 96.

[70] Phelan, "Andy Warhol," 229.

[71] I have used the theories of Allen Feldman, Michael Foucault, Diana Taylor, and Peggy Phelan in my analysis of Palestinian female bombers. I am aware of the fundamental distinctions among these scholars' perspectives. While visibility and publicity are signs of power and autonomy in the analysis of Feldman, Taylor, and Foucault, Phelan interprets visibility as a "trap" for the performer because it summons "surveillance and law" (*Unmarked*, 6). Phelan argues that visibility provokes fetishism, voyeurism, and the "colonialist/imperial appetite for possession" and thus places the performer in the position of inferior. Phelan's argument raises valid points about the artistic representations of the Other and by the Other (women). However, she also identifies language (titles) as an effective tool for reading between the lines of a representation and as a point of clarification for the reader/spectator of the representation. I argue that the words and language female bombers use in their statements to communicate with their audience, the armory they display, and the hijab they adhere to allow these women to become visible without being the object of fetishism or voyeurism. It is true that their visibility is subject to the state's surveillance and violence, and yet they become visible only after they have committed violence against the state. This attests to the women's power as fighters who require visibility and are aware of its consequences.

[72] See Mervat Masoud's video, accessed May 11, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oSL–fAMWCA&NR=1.

[73] See "Dareen Abu Aisheh."

[74] Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*, 10.

[75] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 195–228.

[76] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*, 141.

[77] Ibid., 91.

[78] Ibid., 124-125.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Phelan, "Andy Warhol," 229.

[81] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 26.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid, 14.

[84] Ibid, 2.

[85] Ibid.

[86] See "Palestinian Women Martyrs Against Israeli Occupation," *Aztlan.net,* accessed April 18, 2012, http://www.aztlan.net/women_martyrs.htm.

[87] Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 3.

[88] Alvanou, "Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers," 15.

[89] Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 60.

Chapter Three:

The Audience for the Spectacle of Conflict

In a YouTube video entitled "Future Terrorists," a group of preschool Palestinian girls dance for a large crowd of adults. The performers, all wearing traditional clothes and hijab, begin the scene with Palestinian folkloric dancing and then part into two groups, each standing on one side of the stage. Five little girls then emerge on center stage, impersonating the first five Palestinian female bombers: Wafa Idris, Dareen Abu Aisheh, Reem Saleh al-Riyashi, Hanadi Jaradat, and Ayat al-Akhras. The music that accompanies the performance praises the "daughters of jihad" who have sacrificed their lives for the Palestinian cause. The song glorifies martyrdom and promises the enemy's defeat as a "heavenly reward for the true resistance fighters of Palestine."[1]

The first performer enacts Reem Saleh al-Riyashi, although this is chronologically inaccurate, since al-Riyashi was the fifth bomber, not the first. The little girl wears military fatigues, a vest filled with plastic grenades, and a green bandana around her head. She carries a toy machine gun and a baby doll. Next is Wafa Idris, wearing a graduation robe. Unlike the others, her short curly hair is visible. She is followed by Hanadi Jaradat, wearing a white scarf and waving a plastic machine gun in the air. Ayat al-Akhras wears a *kafiyeh*[2], and Abu Aisheh wears a belt of explosives and a toy sword that she swings around her head. Each performer steps forward to

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dance the heroine she represents when the song calls her name. After each scene is complete, the performer steps back and joins the group of dancing girls, whose presence emphasizes the existence of the numerous volunteers for *istishhad* who would follow the path of the first female martyrs.

Similar concepts are explored in another YouTube video, called "Israeli Brainwashed Children," which depicts Israeli boys and girls learning how to use weapons. In a series of pictures, children are photographed in various circumstances practicing their shooting skills while male adult instructors help them. One photograph shows little girls writing on missiles with markers, while another image shows a group of children armed with machine guns, marching in the streets as they smile for the camera.[3] The content of each video makes clear that the anonymous individuals who produced them support the notion of armed struggle, even though they come from different ideological places. The videos were produced to promote and spectacularize military power, either of Palestinian resistance organizations or the Israeli Defense Forces. However, the individuals who uploaded these videos to YouTube obviously disagree with the practice of raising children as the next generation of soldiers. This is clear from the wording of the titles (using the words "brainwashed" and "terrorists"). And yet the spectacle on display in the videos continues to serve the propaganda purposes of their producers in portraying a threatening image of power for viewers around the world.

These videos are significant because they reinforce the values and ideologies of

Palestinian resistance organizations and Israeli state authorities, respectively. The images of children marching in the streets with toy guns, posing as adult soldiers in front of wall murals that depict martyrs, or impersonating soldiers and martyrs on stage are as chilling as other spectacles of war. Each side of the conflict has invested in spectacularizing its power, hence legitimizing its violence against the enemy. Such spectacles of the conflict between Palestine and Israel are aimed at the audience within and beyond the geographical borders of the two countries. They include a wide range of visual, artistic, cultural, and political representations, from military parades to wall graffiti and television programs that promote violence against the Other.

How audiences receive the spectacle of war is as complicated and multilayered a phenomenon as the conflict itself and the various ways it is spectacularized. While it is easy to imagine that geographical borders are the sole determining factors in how viewers respond to these representations of war, neither the spectacle of power in the war zone areas nor the ways such spectacles represent the Other indicate all there is to how audiences respond to the spectacle.

This chapter focuses on spectators' interactions with the spectacle. It is the complex, multidimensional, and mutual relationship between spectacles and audiences that most interests me. I examine both the spectacle of self-defense and resistance (as Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters characterize their actions) and the audiences who see such spectacles. Both local audiences, who have first-hand experiences of the spectacle, and global audiences, who have access via the Internet, are central to this

study. The study of the spectacle and spectatorship is important for my arguments

for two reasons. First, Palestinian female bombers consciously participate in

formulating the spectacle of resistance by appearing in front of the camera. Their

presence in photographs on street walls and shop windows and in their live

performances for the camera are integral parts of the spectacle of resistance. Second,

the emergence of female paramilitaries is not a sudden phenomenon; a socio-political

process is what creates these bombers. To understand this process, one needs to

explore the pedagogy with which the resistance trains members of Palestinian society.

This discussion may seem to contradict my previous arguments about the agency of

paramilitaries. However, highlighting how spectacles train participants in the conflict

(on both sides) does not negate the choice individuals have. The spectacle of the

conflict, the physical and representational presence of occupation forces and

resistance fighters, sets the background for the ideological formation of the

paramilitary.

I will look at videos and photographs of children involved in the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict in order to provide answers for some of the fundamental questions

I have been struggling with. How is the spectator of resistance or self-defense seen as

an inseparable part of the spectacle by viewers outside the culture who see only

images of "terror"? To what extent is the spectacle able to transform the mindset of

the masses and create a dominant, and presumably unified, political stance for each

side of the conflict? How and at what point do citizens who are going about their daily

lives become part of a spectacle? In other words, what are the intersections when the spectator becomes part of the spectacle in the eyes of international viewers?

An endoscopic study of how spectacles of war are created and received makes possible a broader understanding of the theatricality of war images and their impact on the communal response to the violence of war. In order to understand various layers of the spectacle of war, I first investigate the spectacle of military intervention and the inevitability that the power of military dominance will be spectacularized. I will also analyze Palestinian resistance organizations' reclaiming of the spectacle in order to establish their position of power in the region and educate the masses. In their efforts to create an arena for national and ideological identity formation among Palestinians, resistance organizations use the same practices of spectacularization that they criticize the Western world for using. My discussion of how resistance organizations involve local spectators in formulating, advocating, and practicing the ideologies of resistance emphasizes the local viewers' agency in allowing themselves to become immersed in the spectacle and then in attempting to engage other viewers. I argue that there is no neutral bystander in the psychology of the spectacle. Regardless of the ideological and political stance of individual spectators, at some point during their witnessing, they participate in the creation of spectacle, become part of it, and thus complete it. I am interested in the process by which the viewer becomes the "spect-actor," not only by absorbing the values and ideals of the spectacle on display but also by becoming one with it, feeding into it, and finally completing it. "Spect-actor," a term coined by

Augusto Boal, refers to Boal's desire to humanize passive spectators by transforming

audience members into subjects and provoking action among them. The spect-actor

participates in and becomes one with the "poetics of the oppressed" when he/she

participates in a "rehearsal of revolution," as Boal calls the theatre of the people.[4]

The third section looks at local resistance against spectacles of ideological

resistance. The existence of local audiences who disapprove of the violent implications

of national struggle against the occupation is important and worthy of analysis. My

experience of living under a fundamentalist regime, witnessing a revolution, and living

through eight years of war with a neighboring country as well as the fact that Iranians

have always resisted the totalitarian regimes that have ruled them leads me to mistrust

spectacles of power and their representation at the international level. By bringing the

segment of Palestinian audiences that does not support violent resistance to the

forefront, I propose an alternative view of the spectacle of war that challenges the

prevalent notion that Muslim nations in general and Palestinians in particular submit

unequivocally to violent resistance and fanaticism. This stereotypical assumption

views Muslims as nihilistic and incomprehensible people who lack the political and

cultural capacity to oppose totalitarian regimes. This section will examine how

individual spectators of the spectacle of resistance acknowledge that they are

spectators, recognize their scripted roles, and choose to perform themselves

differently from the roles the organizers of the theatre of resistance intend for them.

In previous chapters, I referred to female bombers as political performers. Here,

I examine another level of political performance, a spontaneous performance of local resistance to ideological resistance. I examine the actions of local activists who protest violent resistance, who seek peaceful solutions to the conflict, and who perform their protests by marching in the streets alongside Israeli activists. I call them performers because they recognize their cultural and political scripted roles and reject them. These activists recognize the punitive consequences of their actions but refuse to conform to the norms of their societies.

The Spectacle of the Occupation

The Israeli occupying force spectacularizes its power every day for residents of the Palestinian refugee camps and the occupied territories, not only through its physical presence in the region but also through how the war changes public space after each bombing, shooting, military raid, and house demolition. The material consequences of war such as the ruins of demolished Palestinian houses are visual spectacles that remind Palestinians of the IDF's power to destroy families and lives. The residents of the camps inevitably become part of the spectacle of occupation because they live under the surveillance of the occupiers at all times. Checkpoints, watchtowers, and the separation wall physically incarcerate the Palestinians in the overpopulated Gaza Strip and the West Bank, forcing locals to participate in and complete the spectacle of the occupation. In other words, without the existence of Palestinians behind barbed wire and checkpoints, the occupation would lose its

meaning.

The omnipresence of the military—IDF soldiers or tanks parading the streets, checkpoints, separation wall, watch towers, etc.—are spectacles through which the occupation force seeks to produce "shock and awe," a form of spectacularized violence that, in Henry Giroux's words, "excites and incites"[5] its viewers as a strategy for winning the battle and minimizing (or at least concealing) local resistance. Other forms of the exercise of power—such as demolishing the family homes of bombers or constructing highways that pass through Palestinians' homes, farms, and gardens—degrade the residents of the occupied territories. Not only the spectacles but also the direct impact of the occupation are intended to force Palestinians to accept their assigned roles as racialized, incarcerated inferiors.

As I explained in chapter one, both Israeli and Western media amplify the power and terror of the Palestinian resistance organizations in order to justify the violence of occupation. They present resistance organizations as powerfully destructive terrorists that necessitate a strong response from the occupying forces. The spectacle of military power and dominance helps with the state's identity formation (as a dominant force) while it simultaneously intimidates the Palestinians. Of course, Israel is not the only state to perform its dominance in spectacular ways. The United States, among other western nations, is well known for its intentional creation of a spectacular military presence. In his critique of the George W. Bush foreign policy that resulted in the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Giroux explains:

> the spectacularization of military power as a primary pedagogical tool to incorporate the populace into the racial fantasies of empire and [an] illusion of national triumphalism [was] packaged as a victory of civilization over barbarism. As acts of terrorism and the modalities of the spectacle converge, a new species of technological magic is produced in which shock becomes the structuring principle in creating certain conditions of reception for the images and discourses of terrorism and fear.[6]

The spectacle of shock and awe, the display of the military power, is an example of Giroux's " spectacle of terrorism." Giroux defines the spectacle of terrorism as an "expression of state and corporate power" that is "largely constructed around fear and terror."[7] He further explains that the spectacle of terrorism is "the right to embrace lawlessness."[8] War reportage in the media adds to the pedagogy of the spectacle of terrorism by using the images of violence, oppression, and fanaticism and relating them to the culture of the Other without setting it in historical and political contexts. Spectacles of war depict one side of the story and focus on just a few aspects of the culture of the enemy. Their goal is to have spectators internalize the message that the enemy is barbaric and must be defeated as a first step toward making the enemy "more like us." Most states that employ military spectacle of power ignore the UN's charter of Human Rights and order those they would oppress to succumb to their military power and accept defeat.

By using various means of controlling the Palestinians, the Israeli military tries to dismantle any spectacle of resistance that the residents of the occupied territories might create. Through its exhibitions of military superiority, Israel demands the absolute cooperation of refugee camp residents with its goals and their passive

submission to its socio-political dominance. In this way, Israel creates a "mystifying spectacle," in Emily Roxworthy's words, of its domination. Although the Israeli occupation has proven to be unsuccessful—in the sense that Palestinians are still resisting and have refused to accept Israel's domination—Israel has fantasized the silence and absolute subordination of local and even international viewers. In her analysis of Japanese-American internment after Pearl Harbor during World War II, Roxworthy uses the term "mystifying spectacles of counterespionage," by which she means the ways that the U.S Former Burrow of Investogation (FBI) discouraged the American peoples' "participation [in counterespionage] in favor of passive spectatorship."[9] Roxworthy argues that by changing its strategy from "recruiting the American public into enlightened co-participants" to discouraging members of the public from taking on unofficial roles that should be filled by FBI agents,[10] the FBI attempted to monopolize the power of who could identify and handle the suspected enemy. My analysis of the Israeli occupation of Palestine draws on Roxworthy's notion of a mystifying spectacle that imposes silence and submissiveness on the masses.

The separation wall is a good example of a mystifying spectacle because Israel's intention is that it will silence both occupied Palestinians and the global audience. The separation wall also showcases the desire of Israeli officials to impose passive spectatorship on Palestinians and conceal local resistance. The cement wall, which extends over 435 miles, separates the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem

from the Israeli state. Construction began in the summer of 2002 and continues to this date. Israeli officials argue that the wall is designed "to prevent attacks," and they cite "a decrease in the number of deadly bombings."[11] One year before the project began, an Israeli regional council chair, Rani Trinan, told Independent Media Review Analysis that "every settlement is in a battle for survival. The definition may be an agricultural fence, and the financing may be done by the agricultural ministry, but it's actually camouflage for a security separation."[12] Agricultural minister Shalom Simhon agreed: "I want this project done in full. I don't mind that it creates separation, even if the government hasn't decided on separation because the situation on the ground justifies it."[13] These quotes make it clear that one goal of the wall is to maintain security for Israeli citizens. What these officials and others do not reveal to the public as clearly is their desire to spectacularize the power of the Israeli state for the residents of the occupied territories.

Even though the separation wall is not a visually attractive artifact, its architectural craftsmanship, both in size and precision of execution, puts it in the category of a spectacular visual element. Its indestructible façade, its massive size (it is 25 feet high and will be over 400 miles long when it is completed), and its omnipresence in a vast area that covers 58 cities, towns, and villages[14] remind spectators of the state's position of authority in the region. The wall engenders feelings of humiliation, impotence, and defeat among Palestinians, who are always aware that their entire nation is incarcerated. Although the wall is meant to separate

Palestinians and limit their intrusion into Israeli society,[15] the absence of aesthetic expression on the Israeli side of the wall can be interpreted as an attempt to create a mystifying spectacle for the international audience. While Palestinians have used their side of the wall as a site for artistic and political expression, the Israeli side of the wall remains untouched (to the best of my knowledge). Surprisingly, it has not been used for advertisement purposes either. The banality of the wall at the Israeli side, the blandness of the grey cement and barbed wire, and its uninteresting repetitive design suggest that Israeli officials do not want to draw the global audience's attention to its massive presence.

The wall, this spectacular piece of infrastructure, is created to protect the Israeli population. The architects of the wall, the politicians who imagined it and then ordered it to be built, imagined that separating the two nations would bring peace for Israel. What lies behind the wall, however, is meant to be forgotten. For Israeli politicians, the incidents that take place behind the wall should not be the subject of international attention and are not the responsibility of the Israeli government. Instead, they encourage international viewers to see the peaceful, modern, so-called democratic culture of Israel that has many things in common with the western world. The wall, in essence, acts as the barrier to prevent the impure, violent, and backward Other from fully participating in Israeli society. The United States has constructed a smaller version of this wall in Iraq to secure the Green Zone in areas that are more prone to terrorist attacks. In both instances, the wall represents both the failure of negotiation

and the desire of an occupying force to construct an ideal community on the other side of the wall. The occupying forces (Israeli or American) have appealed to the wall as a transparent, non-existent backdrop beyond which life that is worthy of the attention of international viewers does not exist. And for the local audience of the spectacle, the physically impenetrable structure is a barrier that threatens their very existence.

Regardless of the actual and representational strength of the occupation, the Israeli government has not been entirely successful in pacifying the Palestinians through the "shock and awe" of the spectacle of war. Instead, Israel's use of violence often agitates oppressed Palestinians and leads them to create a theatre of resistance. The actions of Palestinians under the occupation—claiming public spaces through demonstrations and public gatherings, engaging in nonviolent resistance, arming themselves for struggle—complete and simultaneously challenge the spectacle of the state's power. The presence of those who live in the camps, for whom the spectacle of military intervention is created, threatens exhibitions of power when spectators attempt to deconstruct the spectacle. The Palestinian youths who throw stones at IDF soldiers or Palestinians who participate in a sit-in that postpones a house demolition shatter the illusion that the nation has submitted to occupation and oppression. And yet the spectacle of occupation is completed by the presence of Palestinians who, as residents of the occupied territories, involuntarily become parts of the spectacle.

In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord defines the spectacle not as "a collection of images" but as "a social relation between people that is mediated by

images."[16] The relationship between the viewers of the spectacle and spectacular imagery and the impact each has on the other, Debord argues, is at the core of the formation of the spectacle. The language of the spectacle, likewise, "consists of signs of the dominant system"[17] that lead spectators to absorb the spectacle and align themselves with it regardless of their individual sociopolitical status. The spectacle represents what is desirable in a society, even if it is not possible in reality, and promises visibility for whoever follows the rules of the predominant ideal.[18] Debord defines the spectacle as a commodity within capitalist culture, something that is prepared to entice the spectator to consume material goods. I believe that the spectacle of values, political strategies, and power operates in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the same way, although the predominant values and desired behavior are quite different. The IDF spectacularizes its power for the oppressed in order to encourage them to consume its values and conform to its rules of conduct.

Baz Kershaw sees the spectacle as constitutive of the "performative society,"[19] in which all the people become performers of their lifestyles for each other.[20] The spectacle communicates with its recipients the status quo that should be implemented and conformed to. In other words, "the spectator is fundamentally engaged in the active construction of meaning."[21] The spectacle is a constant exchange between the spectator and the values, metaphors, and ideals that shape the spectacle. Either by submitting to the message of the spectacle or rejecting it, the spectator maintains a relationship between herself and the spectacle. This interaction is necessary if the

process of spectacularization is to be completed. A vivid example of this relationship

is how Palestinians stand in line for hours, waiting to pass through Israeli checkpoints

so they can go to their jobs, farms, or schools located on the other side of the wall. The

fact that Israeli occupiers force local residents to go through the checkpoints every day

accentuates their presence in and dominance over the lives of the Palestinians. At the

same time, the fact that Palestinians need to reach the other side (as a matter of

economic survival in most cases) gives meaning to the checkpoints. The same

relationship between the spectacle and the spectator exists in the case of the resistance

organizations and the local and global audience for the spectacles they create.

The Spectacle and the Theatricality of Resistance

The Spectacle of Resistance

In opposition to the spectacle of the military intervention, authorities within

Palestinian resistance organizations form another spectacle for local and international

audiences. They spectacularize their resistance for the local audience in order to

neutralize the physical and psychological impact of the occupation. The spectacles of

resistance and martyrdom they create are intended to overshadow feelings of national

humiliation and defeat. The spectacle of martyrdom—posters of martyrs, spray-

painted slogans in public spaces, and symbols that promise victory and promote the

ideological strength of the nation, the presence of resistance fighters, and the videos made by volunteers for *istishhad* that circulate among the nation— prompt Palestinians to think of a future when their nation will be liberated. Resistance groups also create monuments, gatherings, demonstrations, and television programs to display their own power and the unity of the nation. Those who view these spectacles are invited to believe in this power and take part in armed struggle against the enemy. Henry Giroux has coined the phrase "the spectacle of terror" to describe spectacles that are designed to control the thinking and behavior of spectators. "Demanding a certain mode of attentiveness or gaze elicited through phantasmagoric practices, including various rites of passage, parades, pageantry, advertisements," the authoritative power claims absolute power and control over both minds and socio-political activity.[22]

In Palestine, the images of power and dominance in such spectacles are amplified through the religious devotion and ideological commitment of resistance fighters. Instead of refuting the stereotypical view of Muslims as bloodthirsty and death-loving people, the spectacle of martyrdom stresses the power of Islamic religious beliefs. The spectacle of martyrdom presents the decision to pursue armed resistance as an ideological certainty that is shared among Muslims worldwide. For the international viewer of the spectacle of resistance, images of rows and rows of young men and women dressed in identical military fatigues who are armed and ready to sacrifice their lives are intimidating. The western world perceives this body of young

volunteers as a deadly threat, a spectacle of terror.

The video of the dancing girls that I began the chapter with is one of many spectacles that have been created by resistance organizations in which children and young adults are depicted as embracing the culture of martyrdom. In the video, the song that accompanies their dance and the props and costumes help these young dancers embody the image of their "heroines" on stage. The little girls become surrogates for the glorified "martyrs", surrogated bodies, in Joseph Roach's words.[23] As the dancers leave the stage, the camera cuts to the audience, which is giving the performance a standing ovation. Obviously the adults who watched the dancers perform embrace the ideology of violent resistance. The entire event is part of the pedagogy of martyrdom.

This video creates an image that fits all of the criteria of the spectacle as David Rockwell and Bruce Mau define it.[24] It is brief (only a few minutes long), it is bold in the message it conveys and thus "big" in its depiction of children as future bombers, and it connects the members of the audience as a collective group. The audience members in the video are completely immersed in their experience of spectatorship, and they are (presumably) transformed by the emotions they feel as they watch.[25] Although for Rockwell and Mau, the physical size of the spectacle plays an important role in creating what Baz Kershaw calls the "Wow! factor"[26] for viewers, size can be measured in other ways, for example in terms of a spectacle's impact on the psyches of audience members. The "bigness" of the farewell statement videos of bombers, for

instance, lies not in their size but in their psychological effect on viewers. In other words, size is not what it used to be. In his discussion of the relationship between theatrical spectacle and activism, Kershaw notes that "global digitalization . . . has scaled down the world," and because of this, "spectacle can now be minute."[27] The media does much to increase the size of the footprint of spectacular events by providing a variety of perspectives and by offering repeated access to the record of the event. The Internet provides almost unlimited access to many video clips, images, and television reports about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which magnifies the impact of spectacles of resistance that take place in Palestine.

The video of the dancing girls and photographs I have described earlier depict children doing actions that support the war. These images spectacularize the influence and power of both Israeli and Palestinian authorities over the generations to come. Images of child trainees in the camps practicing their shooting skills, children carrying both toy and real guns while playing, and little girls writing notes on weapons of mass destruction are spectacles of war that have a great impact on local and international audiences on multiple levels. First, the spectacle of children at war implies that the whole nation supports the violence of the resistance movement. Second, it showcases the resistance groups' power of excess over the bodies of volunteers for self-sacrifice. Their power to recruit young soldiers and expose the bodies of those soldiers to the violence of war is aggrandized in these pictures. Their capacity to waste flesh and replace it with new bodies is captivating in itself. Kershaw believes that "one of the

key paradoxes of spectacle" is that it "deals with the human in inhuman ways." The spectacle "multiplies power through excessive waste; it plays on the visceral mainly through the visual; it can attract and repel in the same instant."[28] The power of resistance organizations to use the volunteers' physical and psychological beings is threatening and yet painfully fascinating, and the audience members who watch the bodies on display can sense the degree of power that was necessary to motivate, organize, and manipulate these bodies.

In addition, displaying the spectacle of children embracing the armed struggle facilitates the engagement of youth in violent resistance. Teaching children to participate in the theatre of war normalizes and legitimizes violence for them. The political situation in the occupied areas permits children to exercise their power during their role-playing activities. Just as violent video games and animation normalize violence for children around the world, spectacles of power normalize violence for Palestinian and Israeli children. They learn to become comfortable with weapons from an early age. As they watch adults using violence against the Other, repeatedly witness violent death and confrontation, children adapt to violence and accept it as part of their daily lives. Submitting to the ideology that justifies violence seldom raises concerns for those whose childhood is filled with violence, as Huesmann et al. have found in their research on the impact of violent television on children. Their findings suggest that "childhood exposure to media violence predicts young adult aggressive behaviors for both males and females."[29]

It is difficult to underestimate the influence of childhood experiences on adult behavior. Children who grow up internalizing values and ideologies of the sociopolitical structures they live in act in accordance with those values and ideologies when they grow older, especially if their families reinforce the dominant values of the culture. This does not mean that all individuals living in certain conditions develop the same perspectives on the world. But if the family encourages the child to internalize the spectacularized values of the dominant power, there is a good chance the child will become a strong advocate for those values when s/he grows up.

In addition, the social environment predisposes Palestinian children to accept violent solutions. In his studies on altruism and aggression, Ervin Staub has found that children who are the victims of physical attacks or humiliation are very likely to become aggressive rather than altruistic in adulthood.[30] Other scholars emphasize social conditions as well. In *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood, and Community*, Pia Christensen and Margaret O'Brian emphasize the influence of public spaces on childhood development. They see the street as "an important site and vehicle for children's construction of social and cultural identity."[31] Hugh Matthews and Caitlin Cahill also emphasize the importance of public spaces as places where young people learn the semiotics of their social environment and practice the social behaviors of adulthood.[32] Although Christensen, O'Brian, Matthews, and Cahill studied children of various ethnic backgrounds in North American and European countries, their findings on the impact of the social environment can be extended to

children around the globe.

The Theatricality of Resistance

How authorities use visual representations of their values and how their

supporters consciously participate in such representations can be analyzed using

Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait's notion of theatricality, which they define as the

"performer's actions and the spectator's reactions." Theatricality, according to them,

"is a way of describing what performers and what spectators do together in the making

of the 'theatrical event.'"[33] In her chapter "Theatricality and Civil Society," Davis

argues that the difference between theatricality and the theatrical hinges on the audience:

"Theatricality is not likely to be present when a performance is so absorbing that the

audience forgets that it is spectating."[34] In other words, theatricality pertains when

citizens realize that their behavior is scripted and that the predominant values of a

dominant power are being staged around them. This definition of theatricality confirms

the agency of spectators: they recognize the unrealness of the performance, understand

their scripted roles and the importance of their position, and choose to play along.

Female bombers provide a good example of theatricality: they are aware that they are

consciously participating in a spectacle of resistance that is designed to dismantle the

spectacle of power the occupation has created. Their awareness of the politics of

visibility draws them to become protagonists in the theatre of resistance. In this sense,

resistance fighters are spect-actors.

"Spect-actor," a term Augusto Boal coined in 1974, refers to viewers who choose to play a part in forming a theatrical spectacle instead of passively watching. Using such terminology in the context of a war-torn occupied territory might be considered a stretch. Yet I believe that applying Boal's concept of theatre illuminates a new perspective on the performativity of female martyrdom. In *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal criticizes Aristotelian and aristocratic theatres for alienating spectators and confining them to the position of passive recipients. Boal argues that in the theatre of Bertolt Brecht and his contemporaries, the spectator is encouraged to "delegate power" to the characters "to act in his place."[35] Boal proposes the "Joker system"[36] instead, in which all the witnesses become participants and protagonists of the theatre, trying out solutions, changing the dramatic action. Rejecting the theatre of "repose and equilibrium,"[37] Boal envisions an art form that is capable of bringing images of social life into public spaces where the people can receive them and use them to change an oppressive social system. In his mind, theatre is not a revolution in itself, but a "rehearsal of revolution"[38] that transforms the spectators into active subjects. The theatre of the oppressed is the "poetics of liberation."[39] According to Boal, "Within its fictitious limits, the experience is a concrete one."[40] To illustrate his idea, he gives an example of a performer/spect-actor who acts out how to organize a strike on stage, thus creating a concrete experience of organizing a strike in real life.

It is this conscious embodiment of performance and the performing body that

allows for the discussion of female paramilitaries as spect-actors in the theatre of

resistance. Even though the body of the female bomber disappears in her performance

or resistance, her visibility continues in the conscious memory of her community. Her

spectators become the surrogate bodies within which the bomber continues to live as a

heroine and a role model. The fact that her performance happens once, and only once,

is significant. In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Peggy Phelan argues that a

performance lives only in the moment of its creation; reproduction of performance

changes it into something else. "To the degree that performance attempts to enter the

economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology," she

argues.[41] Phelan argues that each performance lives only in the minds and memories of

the spectators, and indeed it is this interaction between the performance and the

spectator that is performative.[42] The power of the "martyrs" (in photographs, videos,

posters, etc) emerges from the very ephemerality of their performances, and this

ensures their political visibility. This power continues to engage the masses of

spectators in the doctrines of resistance. The paramilitary as spect-actor continues to

play her part in the theatricality of the struggle even in her physical absence.

In the spectacle of war in general and the spectacle of martyrdom in particular,

there is a sense of stylization and unrealness that pertains to theatricality. In the

dancing video, certain audience members pay a great deal of attention to the details of

hijab, movements, and props. One of the audience members gets up several times to fix

the costume of one of the dancers on the stage. This man, who is sitting in the first

row videotaping the production, is either the director or a parent of one of the performers, and he seems obsessed with the notion of having a picture-perfect cast. Three times during the show, he approaches the stage and attempts to fix the costume of a performer or the position of a prop. He is not participating at the level of the interactive audience responses that are desired in some live performances. His participation is also different from the spect-actorship in Boal's theatre in which spectators take turns performing on stage. Rather, he is focused on an ideological engagement with the production that seeks to create an image that is identical to the image of the heroine. He is watching and recording the event but is obviously disturbed by the imperfect representation of the female bombers. Evidently, he is not impressed by this reenactment and thus desires to redo it or improve the imagery. He is aware of the theatricality, the unrealness of the show, while at the same time he envisions its impact on the rest of the audience. He thus feels a responsibility to perfect the imagery and correct the errors he sees in the production. Whether he is the director of the show or a parent who has agreed to have his daughter perform as a female bomber, the man in the video has a clear understanding of the extent of the production's reach. His concern that the female performer he interacts with represents her character accurately motivates him to take part in the completion of the spectacle on display.

The rehearsed farewell statements of the female bombers, crowds of soldiers in identical military attire, and embellished pictures of the "martyrs" happily posing for the camera are all examples of the spectacle of the resistance for propaganda purposes.

Yet these same pictures and videos attest to the subjects' awareness of creating a

spectacle and willingness to be a part of it. Although the theatricality of the spectacle

on display at times succeeds in blurring the boundaries between the real and the

spectacle for its spect-actors, it does not affect the paramilitary's consciousness of her

action. From the point of view of resistance organizations, visual and cultural

representations of war present violence, pain, and loss as necessary, rewarding, and

even desirable. Through their visualizations of war, resistance authorities create an

omnipresent backdrop for the masses of people and encourage them to make its ideal

goals their own.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to Palestinian culture. Many scholars have

documented how oppressed societies transform into ideo-political stages. As I have

delivered in previous chapters, using performance theory, Diana Taylor's book

Disappearing Acts investigates the role of spectacle in forming and idealizing national

unity and how the hegemonic powers during Argentina's Dirty War imagined the

nation as a scripted, rehearsed, and staged concept. Likewise, in *Acting the Right Part*,

Xiomei Chen makes similar observations about China during the Cultural Revolution.

Chen elaborates on the Maoist regime's theatricalization of the streets, introducing

"model theatre"[43] and large-scale parades as instruments of propaganda and national

unification. In addition, Minoo Moallem's reading of Iran after the 1978 revolution in

Between Warrior Brothers and Veiled Sisters offers an account of the Islamic regime's

desire to create the *ummat* (the united nation of Islam).[44] Moallem explores how the

literary and visual theatricalization of public space promotes the concept of an *ummat*

that would inevitably support the fundamentalist regime. These scholars emphasize

how totalitarian regimes use an entire society as a stage for theatricalizing power and

an ideology that ideally will construct a collective identity. They also point to the

voluntary participation of spectators in the creation of spectacles. Taylor's

"performance of nation-ness,"[45] Chen's model theatre, and Moallem's discussion of

the display of the "civic body"[46] all refer to how authorities and their supporters (local

spect-actors) use public space as a stage where citizens can exhibit their commitment

to and conformity with their scripted roles as advocates of a regime.

While in Argentina, China, and Iran, local totalitarian regimes have oppressed

their own people, in Palestine, both foreign occupiers and local authorities have

dominated the people. The spectacle of martyrdom in Palestine, therefore, has

contradictory influences on locals. But the examples Taylor, Chen, and Moallem

analyze, performing support in the context of a totalitarian regime can be a sign of

support for the regime, but it can also be done to avoid punishment for disagreeing

with the regime's goals. Authorities demand such demonstrations of support. Chen

observes that in such regimes, the entire society is "a stage on which is enacted an

ongoing political drama that has all the actors scrambling to perform the 'right' parts in

order to ensure their political survival."[47] As an example of the consequences of

deviating from the goals of the regime, she notes that her mother, a professional

actress, was banned from the stage because she was seen as a "remnant of the

bourgeois culture."[48] This is an example of a relatively mild consequence for deviating from the hegemonic norm within a totalitarian regime. In Iran and elsewhere, harsh laws have sought the complete annihilation of individuals and groups who deviate from the rules of the dictators.

In Palestine, where the struggle against the occupier is theatricalized frequently, resistance organizations have used the cultural and ideological values of the people to emphasize the glory of self-sacrifice. The spectacle of martyrdom is displayed throughout the public and private spaces of the lives of Palestinians. Resistance organizations face the difficult task of voicing their perspective to a broad public without military equipment or international support. They use refugee camps as their stage and as many foot soldiers as their society can afford. This is perhaps an oversimplification of the phenomenon that I refer to as "training," the informal but mandatory tutelage that all citizens living under totalitarian regimes are forced to undergo in order to appear to be in compliance with the norms of their society. Conservative, fundamentalist, and totalitarian regimes have turned their societies into a stage where citizens perform their commitment and dedication to the hegemonic power.

With the theories of Boal and Davis in mind, I return to the video of the little dancers that I introduced earlier. The dancing Palestinian girls on stage establish the female bombers as role models for the audience members. It is assumed that the children within the audience desire the same roles as the dancers and ultimately the

same social status as the "martyrs". This spectacle of resistance and self-sacrifice depicts what Palestinian society is capable of delivering. It pushes the boundaries of what is acceptable and permissible in order to present what is ideologically and politically desirable and indeed expected of the audience. Children and young people are the main targets of the spectacle of resistance because they provide the future forces of struggle. Depicting children as future "martyrs" on stage serves the purpose of training active participants in the theatricalization of struggle against the enemy. For me, the most intriguing aspect of this video is the children who imitate the adult heroines. Even though they play their roles with great enthusiasm, we cannot ignore that children are always more gullible than adults. Even though these girls and other children participate in the theatre of resistance by performing their scripted roles, their involvement is not entirely an act of consciousness. Thus, they are part of the theatricality of war without becoming spect-actors in it. In the course of their lifelong rehearsals, children experience and perhaps internalize the spectacle of resistance. However, some of these children grow into adults who dismiss the ideology of resistance and refuse to conform to their scripted roles. Members of Palestinian society who are disturbed by the staginess and compulsoriness of the spectacle of resistance perform their Resistance against resistance itself. I will discuss their performance of Resistance later in this chapter. First, though, I explore the theatricalization of public space.

Public Space as Stage

Using public space as a stage serves the purpose of encouraging the Palestinian public to continue resistance. The ways the public space is used as a stage for the masses of people to both witness and take part in the formation of values and collective identities closely resemble the theatre Boal proposes.

Authoritative regimes envision that the masses will participate in and contribute to their power structure. They create the spectacle of resistance to encourage the masses to unite against the enemy. For example, Ayat allah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, led the Revolution in the name of *mostaz'afan* (the oppressed). He instructed the nation to unite against the oppressor, whom he identified as both the bourgeoisie inside and imperialists outside the country. The theatricality of his revolutionary doctrines manifested itself in the *basijis* (volunteers for martyrdom), who openly exhibited their support of the Islamic Republic. During the Iran-Iraq War, these volunteer members of the militia wore golden keys around their necks to emphasize their access to paradise upon their "martyrdom" on the front lines. They paraded in the streets (and still do) and marched in more organized settings before their supreme leader (Khomeini) to symbolize the younger generation's commitment to the revolution. Women supporters also participated in the theatricality of the revolution by wearing the most conservative and old-fashioned kind of hijab in dull colors, avoiding any form of beautification. Their attire attested to their protest against westernization, capitalism, and other non-theocratic values.[49] By encouraging the

public to become part of the theatre of the revolution, Khomeini's regime urged the nation to internalize revolutionary values and transform itself into an ideal *ummat* that would not challenge the state but would share its doctrines and thus secure its survival.

Through the theatricalization of power (or war), Palestinian resistance organizations and their members seek to engage the public, to convince it that it is essential to comply with new norms. The spectacles they create impose the doctrines of the new hegemony of power. Focusing on how the nation is oppressed by outside forces works well for resistance organizations in Palestine, just as it worked well for the fundamentalist regime in Iran. In this sense, leaders in both countries created a theatre of the oppressed that invited citizens to participate en masse in overthrowing their oppressors. Authorities in resistance organizations in Palestine encourage the public to participate in this theatre in a variety of ways. One way is to cover the surfaces of public spaces of the refugee camps with pictures and paintings of "martyrs". Posters, banners, spray paintings, and graffiti cover walls, shop windows, and public spaces, incessantly reiterating the political and ideological messages of resistance organizations. These doctrines are echoed on national television and radio programs, during extracurricular activities and at camps for children and teenagers, and in the visual arts and films. Symbols and texts referring to the conflict glorify violence and legitimize its use against the Other as the only solution for survival. The ideology of resistance is engraved in the consciousness of people in both their private and public lives.

This theatricalization of public space mandates that Palestinian citizens commit to the values of the resistance organizations. In this way, the theatricalization of public space provides scripts for local residents about certain behaviors and attitudes that members of the international audience might perceive as spontaneous and uncoerced. The theatricalization of public space in the occupied territories is reinforced by the material consequences of war. The bullet holes in walls, the ruins of demolished homes, and the frequency of violence against Palestinians are constant reminders of the ongoing occupation.[50] Checkpoints, the separation wall, military raids, shootings, and arrests have a strong impact on the physical and psychological well-being of locals. Individual witnesses are thus immersed in the trauma of the occupation and are transformed by its power and omnipresence. The spectacles that war creates—the martyred, incarcerated, tortured, and bullet-ridden bodies of Palestinian fighters—communicate the motivations of struggle for those who survive. The sites of destruction and violence are spectacles in themselves: they surround the oppressed and set the psychological ground for other forms of spectacle that resistance authorities create. The spectacles of war and occupation—houses turned into rubble, dead bodies, etc.— are enough for local spectators even without the interference of a mediatized spectacle produced by the Palestinian authorities.

One of these fabricated spectacles is the use of public space as a canvas for visual arts that promote the values of the resistance. A photograph of a wall mural painted by "Fatah adherents in the heart of Gaza City"[51] features many of the major

icons of the nationalist uprising: a map of Palestine, soldiers showing the victory sign, guns and candles, masked fighters, and the head of an eagle. The wall painting was done in honor of the return of Yasir Arafat and some of the nationalist dignitaries in 1993.[52] The "return" to the "dear country" is celebrated in messages inscribed in various fonts. In the middle of the mural is a verse from the Qur'an: "We are victorious and we have given you THE victory."[53] In the right top corner of the mural, the Palestinian flag, in the shape of a candle, contains graffiti that says "*aatefah*" (kindness or love). The semiotics of resistance, nationalistic ideology, trust in Islam and its promise of victory, the readiness of young soldiers to take the path of *istishhad*, and finally love and dedication for leaders are vividly present in this wall mural. Both in size and content, this expression of ideology is a spectacle that cannot be missed. Children who play in the narrow streets and adults who pass through them are exposed to this painting every day. This and other wall decorations become the backdrop of the public stages. Local audiences are constantly surrounded by ideological slogans, depictions of the values of the resistance and Islam, and images of "martyrs" and spiritual leaders who demand that individuals fulfill their social and ideological expectations. Resistance authorities see local audiences as comprised of spect-actors who will ideally participate in the resistance.

The international viewer can be led to interpret the local audience as the spect-actor as well. The person who photographed the image of the wall mural I have just described implies that young people are internalizing the values of resistance: he or she

produced an image of the wall mural with five children who are smiling for the camera, showing the V (for Victory) sign, and competing to be in the frame. The photographer's deliberate choice to document the positive reaction of children to the spectacle of resistance pushes the global audience to draw a specific conclusion. The local audience of the painting, the children's jubilation, and the photographer's camera angle work together to convince the international audience that all Palestinian children are trained to become "martyrs". The photograph suggests that the children are only too happy to fulfill their scripted roles. The fact that the children pose for an outsider's camera can be interpreted as either their spontaneous rehearsal for the real world (when they will perhaps follow the "martyrs'" path) or their childish expression of joy at the sight of a foreign observer.[54] The camera has contributed to the creation of the spectacle of terror by emphasizing that the children provide surrogated bodies that may replace the nation's "martyrs".

I do not suggest that these children will certainly grow up to become bombers or militants, nor do I draw the conclusion that these children are fully aware of the politics of representation in this particular photograph or ones similar to it. Yet I do not dismiss these hypotheses either. Instead, I try to read the impact of pictures on local and global audiences. The public space as stage has a panopticon[55] effect on the masses. The very fact that the ideology of the resistance is so visible means that the public's reaction to the status quo is constantly monitored by resistance authorities and by other members of the society. Individuals feel that they are constantly being

watched and thus feel the pressure to perform the roles that are expected of them.

The Presence or Absence of the Local Audience in Visual Images

The visual insignias that are made available to the global audience shape how international spectators understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Whether or not members of the local audience are included in images, photographs, and video clips seems to have little impact on how the global audience receives spectacles of resistance. International consumers of the videos or photographs that convey these spectacles assume that local spect-actors spontaneously contribute to the spectacle of resistance, even when local citizens are not included in those images.

In this dissertation, the term "immediate audience" refers to local viewers of a spectacle whose presence is visible to the global audience. For instance, both the audience members who attend the little Palestinian girls' dance and the young dancers who showcase their capacity to remember and immortalize the bombers are the immediate audience of the spectacle of the event. The participation of both groups in the production—their physical presence, their mental and ideological commitment to the content of the production, and their physical vulnerability as future "martyrs"— contributes to the effectiveness of the theatricality of resistance. Both the physical presence of the little girls on stage and the bodies of the audience members who encourage the children to remember the "martyrs" and, ultimately, to volunteer for the

armed struggle are likely to have a strong impact on international viewers. Baz

Kershaw argues that spectacles aim to produce strong reactions among those who view

them by touching "highly sensitive spots in the changing nature of the human psyche

by dealing directly with extremities of power."[56] International viewers of the YouTube

video of the dance are likely to see only a horrifying spectacle of terror and to assume

that large segments of the Palestinian population support this message. The effect on

such viewers is likely to be a commitment to doing whatever it takes to prevent more

bombing attacks, no matter what it takes, even if that means more destruction and

more violence.

International audiences often assume that local spectators' positive response to

the spectacle of violence is unforced and expresses their true feelings. The mere fact of

the presence of locals at such spectacles is interpreted as willingness to participate in

violence. In one photograph, we see the back of a young man who has paused in front

of two posters mounted on a wall. A handwritten notice announces that a bombing

mission has been carried out by Fatah members. On the top right corner of the notice,

a bomber's picture is mounted.[57] The local spectator is barely present in this picture,

and his reaction to the armed struggle is not visible. However, by including a local in

the picture, the photographer invites global spectators to become voyeurs who enter

his private moment of receiving the information. International viewers thus analyze

two images: the photograph of the statement on the wall and the combination of the

posters and the man who is looking at them closely. If the "martyr's" poster is

intimidating because of the threat it poses to the global audience, pairing the local viewer with the "martyr's" portrait is even more threatening because it showcases a live body that we are invited to assume, sympathizes with the "martyr" in the picture. Although we do not see any implications of sympathy for the bombing mission, we cannot detect any clues that would suggest otherwise. Therefore, it is easier to receive the image as a threat. We are encouraged to assume that the local will take the path of *istishhad* and become the next martyr. Even the passive presence of the anonymous bystander can be taken as a threat to the global audience, who may interpret the viewer of the spectacle as a supporter of jihad.

This image in fact adds to the oppression of the man in the image because he is not given an opportunity to convey his point of view. The global audience is left with two versions of extreme views of Palestinians: one conveyed by Fatah that focuses on violence and the other informed by an Orientalist view of Muslims that silences the local viewer. Neither of these views is capable of offering an accurate image of Palestinian resistance.

Images of the spectacle of war are effective even when no local spectators are present. It is likely that the global audience imagines and creates a local virtual audience. By virtual audience, I refer to the imaginary spect-actors who are not necessarily visible in the pictures or videotapes but are nonetheless assumed to be affected by the power of the spectacle in a way that poses a danger to the world. The global audience imagines the presence of a unified nation of supportive spect-actors

who embrace the ideology of *istishhad*. The atrocities committed by fundamentalist organizations against the enemy, as well as against their own people, contribute, and rightly so, to their negative image. These organizations are the masterminds behind the spectacle of resistance. They seek to monumentalize the ideologies of martyrdom and jihad for the masses as the only path to victory. The messages of the spectacles that resistance organizations create are successful to the extent that they recruit new troops and present a threat to Israel. However, it is not accurate to assume that the message of the resistance organizations is one the entire nation embraces. Many Palestinians do not share the politics of the spectacle on display.

Performing Resistance against the Spectacle

Among the local spectators are those who actively support the spectacle of resistance on display—those whom resistance organizations target as the ideal viewers and who follow the path laid before them and willingly take part in creating spectacles. But there are others who oppose the spectacle of violent resistance. These viewers are not usually at the center of the discourse on issues in the Middle East. For these people, the spectacles on display are too destructive, and they alienate themselves from them and the powers that create them. Palestinian viewers who do not embrace the status quo and are not impressed by the power of the spectacle are inevitably alienated for refusing to participate.

The sanctions for refusing to participate can be very severe. There are times when resistance organizations respond violently to those who openly oppose their agenda, to the point that they seek to eliminate rebels altogether. The performativity of the protests these locals create challenges resistance organizations because it proves the performers' awareness of their ability to deconstruct their assigned roles. The spectators constitute subjectivity by performing their protest against the status quo.[58] The performativity of the spectators' protest reframes their sociopolitical position. It distinguishes them from spect-actors in the spectacle of resistance. This performative differentiation from the agenda of resistance organizations defines protestors as dangerous enemies who must be annihilated.

One recent example of this performativity occurred in July 2011, when a group of Jewish-Israeli political activists took to the streets of east Jerusalem to oppose the Israeli state's violence against the occupied territories. Demanding UN recognition of Palestine as a state, this group condemned the expansion of settlements in east Jerusalem. The Israelis in this group of activists did not perform solidarity with their government, as Israeli citizens are expected to. Instead, they took to the streets and invited their Arab-Israeli brothers and sisters to join them in protesting the injustice of the occupation. They claimed public space by carrying banners and placards that demanded an end to the expansion of the settlements and criticized the Israeli government's use of violence against Palestinians.[59] In these joint rallies, the actions of Jewish and Arab Israeli activists challenged both Israeli and Palestinian governments

by performing a different identity that revealed that the biased assumptions of each nation are not universal. The actions of this group questioned the us-versus-them stance of the leaders of both nations. Palestinians presented a spectacle against the ideological and nationalistic unity Palestinian resistance organizations promote. The fact that they openly cooperated with Israeli political activists was a tacit criticism of the antagonism of resistance organizations toward the entire nation of Israel. The fact that the Palestinian protestors joined the Israelis was a critical moment in the history of the conflict.

None of the groups who participated in the rally denied the right of the Other to exist in the region, and they affirmed their common desire for peace and coexistence. Each group risked being stigmatized because they associated with the Other. This risk was serious. Palestinians who are perceived as cooperating with Israeli authorities are called "collaborators" and are subject to physical abuse, social ostracization, and, in extreme circumstances, execution. Members of the Palestinian public alienate the so-called collaborator and warn him/her to resign his/her contact with the Israeli party (an employer or a contact, if the individual is suspected of spying). If the individual refuses to submit to this demand, he/she may face execution at the hands of vigilantes or members of resistance organizations.[60] It is in this sociopolitical context that the performativity of Israeli- Palestinian demonstrations should be understood.

Conclusion

The pedagogical aspect of resistance brings to the fore the vital issue of reception and the crucial role the audience plays in each conflict. The audience here is not just the passive bystander who watches at his/her will from the distance. It also includes spectators who are inevitably drawn into a conflict against their will.

No member of the audience for the spectacles described above, however, should be regarded as neutral bystander in terms of the politics of representation. The witnesses to an event take the role of passive spectator, conscious spect-actor, or determined performer. Whether or not their participation is voluntary, all audience members become part of the spectacle of power. Regardless of the position an audience member takes, or is required to take, he or she affects the formation and execution of each spectacle of power. The subjectivity of the spectator in actively opposing spectacles, knowingly submitting to them, or purposefully participating in constructing them is restored as the individual makes performative choices in dealing with the trauma of the conflict.

I have referred to the spectacle as a powerful force that intimidates viewers and insists on their submission to its message, the ideological representation that encourages the masses to become involved in the theatricality of resistance, and finally the courageous choice to perform opposition to the predominant values of power structures. The discussion of spectatorship and the subjectivity of the spectator in relation to the spectacle is also crucial in understanding female bombers as self-aware

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political performers. Women paramilitaries are witnesses to the atrocities of war, as

are all the other residents of the occupied territories. Their strategy for coping with the

conflict is not shared among the whole nation. However, it attests to these individuals'

spect- actorship in the theatricality of resistance. These particular audience members

become spectacles in themselves and major participants in the theatricality of

resistance. The bombers' performance of violence is part of a larger theatre, a nation's

quest for help. Seeing the atrocities they commit as not related to inherent

bloodthirstiness and culturally promoted belligerence but as a political performance of

protest opens up possibilities for understanding the phenomenon of "suicide

bombing". Once we understand the nature of spectatorship vis-à-vis war for both local

and global audiences, our new look at the events we see in the media may contribute

to attitudes and beliefs that have the potential to lead to a permanent solution.

Notes:

[1] "Future Terrorists," Oct. 4, 2008, accessed Oct. 27, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17nR4kgtZzs.
[2] A traditional Arab headdress. See note 80, chapter one.
[3] "Israeli Brainwashed Children," accessed Feb. 7, 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?V=P5P4ML1GF_W&feature=related.

[4] Augusto Boal, *The Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communication Group, 1985), 122, 141, 154, 155.

[5] Henry A. Giroux, *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 7.

[6] Ibid, 24–25.

[7] Ibid, 30.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Emily Roxworthy, *The Spectacle of Japanese American Trauma: Racial Performativity and World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 73.

[10] Ibid.

[11] See "Palestinians Say Israel Proposed 'Impossible' Borders," *France 24, International News,* Jan. 29, 2012, accessed March 22, 2012, http://www.france24.com/en/20120129-palestinians-say-israel-proposed-impossible-borders.

[12] Mazal Mualem, "Slowly, Slowly a Green Line Wall is Going Up Anyway," *Ha'aretz,* July 17, 2001, accessed April 16, 2012, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/slowly-slowly-a-green-line-wall-is-going-up-anyway-1.64135.

[13] Ibid.

[14] See "The Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities: A Follow Up Report on Access Issues in 'Stage A' Localities," *Report of the Mission to the Humanitarian and Emergency Policy Group (HEPG) of the Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC),* no. 3, Nov. 30, 2003, accessed March 22, 2012, http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/BDD222DF1DF3712185256E4C006C1D75. See also: "Palestinians Say Israel Proposed 'Impossible' Borders."

[15] See "Israeli Separation Barrier," *Kill A Can,* accessed March 22, 2012, http://killacan.com/israeli-separation-barrier.

[16] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press, 2006), 1.

[17] Ibid, 8.

[18] Ibid, 9-11 .

[19] Baz Kershaw, "Curiosity and Contempt: On Spectacle, the Human, and Activism," *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 4 (2003): 593.

[20] Ibid, 605.

[21] Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 22.

[22] Giroux, *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism*, 29.

[23] See Roach, *Cities of the Dead,* 2; and my discussion on surrogation in chapter 2.

[24] Different section of David Rockwell and Bruce Mau, *Spectacle* (New York: Phaidon, 2006).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Kershaw, *"*Curiosity or Contempt*",* 596.

[27] Ibid, 594.

[28] Ibid.

[29] L, Rowell Huesmann et al, "Longitudinal Relations Between Children's Exposure to TV Violence and their Aggressive and Violence Behavior in Young Adulthood: 1977-1992", (*Developmental Psychology*, 39, no.4, 2003), 201.

[30] Ervin Staub, "A Conception of the Determinants and Development of Altruism and Aggression: Motives, the Self, and the Environment," in *Altruism and Aggression: Biological and Social Origins,* ed. Carolyn Zahn-Waxler, E. Mark Cummings, and Ronald Iannoti (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 135.

[31] See Pia Christensen and Margaret O'Brian's chapter "Children in the City: Introducing New Perspectives," in *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood, and Community,* ed. Pia Christensen and Margaret O'Brian (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003), 5.

[32] Cahill is quoted in Hugh Matthews, "The Street as a Liminal Space: The Barbed Spaces of Childhood," in *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood, and Community,* ed. Pia Christensen & Margaret O'Brian (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003), 108.

[33] Sauter is quoted in Thomas Postlewait, "Theatricality: an Introduction," in *Theatricality,* ed. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 22–23.

[34] Davis and Postlewait, *Theatricality,* 128.

[35] Boal, *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, 155.

[36] Ibid, 180-189.

[37] Ibid, 105.

[38] Ibid, 122.

[39] Ibid, 155.

[40] Ibid, 141.

[41] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 146.

[42] Ibid, 147.

[43] Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theatre and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 73–122.

[44] Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*, 5, 13.

[45] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 92.

[46] Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*, 62.

[47] Chen, *Acting the Right Part*, 75.

[48] Ibid, 41.

[49] See Moallem in *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*.

[50] This is based on the author's personal web searches throughout the years 2008–2012. The photographs of the cities and villages in the occupied territories found on the Internet and the various documentaries that are listed in my bibliography are evidence of the material consequences of military raids in the region.

[51] Oliver and Steinberg, *The Road to Martyr's Square*, Plate 37.

[52] Following the Oslo Accord in 1993, Yaser Arafat the leader of Palestinians' national struggle returned to Gaza strip after 27 years of exile. This incident, which took place in July 1, 1994, was celebrated by Palestinians.

[53] Qur'an, 48:1. Translation is mine.

[54] Oliver and Steinberg, *The Road to Martyr's Square*, Plate 35.

[55] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison,* 201.

[56] Kershaw, "Curiosity or Contempt" *,* 592.

[57] See the picture in *The Road to Martyr's Square*, Plate 5.

[58] Here I borrow from Judith Butler's concept of the construction of subjectivity through performance. She writes that "gender acts are not performed by the subject but they performatively constitute a subject that is the effect of discourse rather than the cause of it." See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 136.

[59] See "Israeli, Palestinians in joint Jerusalem rally," *Ma'an News Agency,* July, 15, 2011, accessed April 16, 2012, http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=405329.

[60] See Victor's *Army of Roses* and Oliver and Steinberg's *The Road to Martyr's Square.* Also see, Rehov's *Suicide Killer* and Miller and Shah's *Death in Gaza.*

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