Mosaics of Resistance
Political Identity Expression in Palestinian Youth Subcultures

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This thesis examines contemporary transnational Palestinian hip-hop as part of a continuum of politically informed and informing cultural expression, emphasizing the increasing heterogeneity of ideals and visions for Palestinian national liberation in response to a series of expulsions, defeats, and treatises. It traces the relationship between politics and the poem-song from the late 18th century to the present, and there is a focus on the noticeable shifts in the geopolitical landscape at pivotal moments throughout the 20th century—the 1948 *Nakba*, the 1967 *Naksa*, and most importantly, the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords—to reveal how the Palestinian situation has become what it is today, and what role the poem-song has played and continues to play in that evolution both within the historic homeland and without. Its focus is on contemporary Palestinian hip-hop and delves into an interpretive textual analysis of specific songs written and performed by contemporary Palestinian rappers and hip-hop artists from around the world to delineate a possible shared vision of or affiliation with Palestine. What we find in our analysis is a mosaic of opinions, identifications, and preoccupations that sometimes converge with one another and demonstrate a continuity with pre-Oslo resistance culture, while at other times diverge completely into their own new territory.

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Dedication

To my parents, for instilling in me a sense of justice, a love for learning, and an awareness of Palestine.

To my paternal grandfather, Ibrahim, and my maternal grandmother, Layla, for teaching me that having an education was more important than having a husband.

To my partner and best friend, for growing alongside me, and inspiring me always to challenge myself.

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Introduction

Music and poetry, together in the form of the poem-song, have long played an important role in Arab and Palestinian culture and politics. As Sinan Antoon puts it, "poetry is the archive (diwan) of the Arabs" (66), and hip-hop, being a form of poem-song, while "a contested cultural form in Palestine and among youth" (Maira 71) for a variety of reasons which will be discussed later in this thesis, can be seen as a natural artistic fit in this archive. The pre-Islamic period in the Arab world, known as the *jahiliyya*, or the era of ignorance, is accessible through the poetry that has been passed down orally over the ages. We see this demonstrated in Palestine specifically as early as 1799, with Sheikh Youssef Jarrar's poetic declaration to the people of Nablus, calling them to unite against Napoleon's army. Music in particular begins to have a more prominent role in Palestinian political life during the British Mandate period, a time when Palestinian nationalism and national consciousness begins to truly crystallize in a modern sense, and we see its earliest manifestations in the establishment of funds and newspapers, and the increased political demonstrations that attempt to challenge the still nascent Zionist presence in the land.

Palestinian culture, like all Arab culture, is a predominantly oral culture, where histories and genealogies are committed to memory and passed down in families from mouth to ear, and political demonstrations are practiced in everyday spaces, permeating social life on several levels. It is common, for example, in the Arab world, to witness people singing political anthems of praise or protest at weddings and other social celebrations. The boundary between personal accomplishment or celebration and national or political engagement is often blurred both socially and lyrically, as we will see in a number of poem-songs we examine in this thesis, as well as in

the reception and criticism of certain songs by Palestinians themselves. In earlier Palestinian folklore, romantic love and the nation are often intertwined, and that trend is carried on into the contemporary Palestinian resistance music of those in the West Bank, '48 Palestine (or Israel proper), and the surrounding refugee camps. The trend wanes however, in the music produced after the Oslo Accords, by second and third generation displaced Palestinian youths in *shattat* (diaspora), living in Western countries such as the U.S. and U.K, further from Palestine itself.

While a natural fragmentation between urban and traditional communities has been an intrinsic feature of Palestinian society, Israel's founding and continued policies have exacerbated that fragmentation. What was once a peasant-bourgeois divide has become an increasingly fractured landscape resulting in a number of different time-space registers for Palestinian resistance music to arise from. In the post-Oslo era, we can identify five major locales through which to see these musical iterations of resistance: '"48" ("*al-dakhil*", or what is often called Israel proper), three different occupation regimes in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, the refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries and finally the *shattat*", or the global diaspora. Under this amplified fragmentation, as well as the new, increasingly militarized post-Oslo geopolitical landscape, Palestinian music has undergone a radical shift from military songs to more representational work, creating what scholars have identified as a translocal Palestinian hip-hop subculture. This dissertation will argue that contemporary hip-hop artists of Palestinian heritage around the world redefine Palestinian resistance and identity via their music (which is always both creative and political) in the form of both subcultural and countercultural work. Using an interpretive, textual approach, it takes '48 Palestinian artists like Tamer Nafar, Jowan Safadi, and Maysa Daw as its primary locus, treating their most controversial releases as texts, and compares them to other hip-hop iterations from artists in the West Bank, Gaza, the Arab

world, and the wider *shattat*, to reveal an ethos of resistance that is not univocal but various and oftentimes contradictory, depending on the individual or collective's socio-political reality. We compare these different iterations of Palestinian hip-hop to investigate what Thornton calls "the micro-structures of power entailed in the cultural competition that goes on between more closely associated social groups" (208). Furthermore, I argue that since its earliest iterations in the late 1990s, Palestinian hip-hop has become the site around which a larger alternative music scene has congregated, where different musical practices have mapped out "a range of increasingly specific stylistic combinations within an ongoing process of differentiation and complexification" (Straw 497). I am using Straw's definition here of a "scene" as "that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (494), as well as his definition of what can be called "alternative". Straw divorces the notion of "alternative" music from its relationship with the stylistic qualities of a music described as such, and redefines it in terms of being a musical activity that establishes "a distinctive relationship to historical time and geographical location" (497). I would like to add to this definition the political and cultural dimensions, to argue that the "alternative" within subordinate cultures is that which is produced by artists with a distinctive relationship to both the politics of the dominant culture and the traditions of the parent culture, making Palestinian hip-hop an alternative hip-hop within the Israeli occupation state, and ultimately rendering the larger music community to which Palestinian hip-hop belongs an alternative scene within the Palestinian population itself. Spiraling out from the first iterations of Palestinian hip-hop by the '48 band DAM, who made their mark with the seminal song "Who's a Terrorist?", young Palestinian artists in this budding alternative scene share a common sense of purpose based in "an affective

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link between two terms: contemporary musical practices, on the one hand, and the musical heritage which is seen to render this contemporary activity appropriate to a given context, on the other" (494). In addition to this, I argue that '48 Palestinian artists often function, not merely as subcultural, but countercultural actors in both their parent Palestinian culture and the Israeli state, due to their positionality as Palestinians within Israel.

The phenomenon of a Palestinian youth subculture built around hip-hop has already been observed by scholars such as David McDonald, Sunaina Maira, and Ted Swedenberg along the lines of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. However, their studies have focused primarily on the hip-hop produced and performed by artists within and around historic Palestine and have situated them in their studies as a local youth subculture akin to the Punk and Mod rockers observed by Hall and Hebdige, with little attention to their transnational outgrowth. There has not yet been an extensive study that includes the global expressions of Palestinian hip-hop worldwide, partially because many of them only appeared on the scene within the last five years; nor has there been critical attention given to the ways that these expressions deviate from one another and from their parent culture. Furthermore, little to no attention has been given to the wider musical scene that has spread from the first iterations of Palestinian hip-hop, nor to the counter-cultural potential of '48 Palestinians within both Israeli and Palestinian culture.

While many young hip-hop artists today acknowledge and criticize the occupying power as well as their oppressed parent culture, the degree to which they identify with the traditions of the parent cultures varies across locales. This puts a number of artists within the same movement, whose work may be musically aligned in many ways, at conceptual odds with one another. By performing an interpretive analysis of a series of songs by young Palestinians worldwide, treating the songs as texts, as well as a number of major political poem-songs

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released throughout the 20th century, we will see how these post-Oslo groups both conform to and deviate from articulations of Palestine the nation and Palestinian identity and resistance before Oslo as part of a larger, heterogenous transnational youth subculture, as well as how they intersect with and deviate from one another. We will also take a close look at the variations as well as similarities in their immediate preoccupations, chosen subject-matter, style of delivery, and the visual rhetoric of their music videos, to see how articulations of resistance, identity, and the nation are affected by locale. Using the framework of the Birmingham School as a launching point, I am taking a textual approach to the subcultural phenomenon of Palestinian hip-hop rather than a sociological/anthropological or ethnomusical approach, interpreting the songs' lyrics, sound features, and visuals used in video clips. Our focus is on symbol and meaning rather than organization and interaction, but because culture, "as a pattern of beliefs and values or even ideologies, cannot be separated from action and social organization" (Thornton 4) the former is more often than not informed by and infused with the latter and vice versa. Translations of Arabic songs into English are my own unless otherwise indicated.

To what extent, however, can we speak of occupied Palestinian youth subcultures within the same framework as post-war working class British youth? In applying this framework, I do not mean to negate the reality of a purely Jewish Israeli working-class that is, in its own way, subordinate to dominant Israeli culture. Ella Shohat has written extensively on working-class Jewish communities who are, for the most part, non-Ashkenazi Jews who are paid less, and whose towns are given less support than Ashkenazi Jews by their governments. The struggles faced by Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in Israel underlines the racial aspect intrinsically tied to Israeli class politics. While the state is clear in its ethno-religious construction, it is more opaque about its treatment of Jews of color. Professing to be a state for Jews, the reality it conceals is its

preference for *white* Jews. But our concern here is with the state's distinction between Jew and non-Jew, a distinction which explicitly places the Jew above the non-Jew, enforcing a class distinction that subordinates, in fact works to actively efface the culture of the latter and gives cultural dominance to the former. Thus, we take the '48 Palestinian (those living in Israel), the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the wider *shattat* as our "working-class" actor, with the awareness that each of these localities comes with its own forms of subordination that, while uniting Palestinians, also makes them distinct from one another in a number of ways. We also recognize the transnational hip-hop subculture is one amidst a number of larger "taste cultures" that have become prominent among Palestinian youths who congregate at clubs, bars, and public spaces around their preferred genre of music, and who work together to build bridges between their separated communities and battle the ethnic divisions that Israel leverages against them.

While Palestinian youth subcultures mimic the British youth observed by Hall and Hebdige, whose framework of subcultures is utilized here to characterize Palestinian youth in and around the Palestinian political hip-hop scene as a distinct subculture, they diverge from '50s British youth in a number of ways: in the existential threat posed by the reality of being constantly exposed to occupational violence; in their hyper-politicized awareness of both their present circumstance and the past that created it (accompanied by an internalized criticality of self because of its dissonance with the order of the hegemon); in their religiosity and the depth to which faith and dogma are intertwined with their politic; and ultimately, in their aims as a movement, and the extent to which they *are* a movement. Furthermore, while most Palestinians do not have enough power or presence in the dominant culture to be a counter-culture, I argue that '48 Palestinians like DAM do in fact function as both a Palestinian subculture and both a

Palestinian and Israeli counterculture. Because they are able to extend and develop what Hall calls a "practical critique" of Israeli hegemony "from a privileged position inside it, they come to inhabit, embody, and express many of the contradictions of the system itself" (*Resistance* 55), and can be categorized as being in-between a Palestinian subculture and Palestinian Israeli counterculture. Their Hebrew songs, for example, can be characterized as Israeli countercultural material, while their work addressing sexual repression and gender inequality within Palestine can be read a Palestinian countercultural production. While their counterparts in the West Bank, Gaza, and abroad remain on the periphery of Israeli culture and contend with its military occupation as racially subordinate outsiders living in *shattat* or under direct occupation, '48 Palestinians, who sing and speak in Hebrew, and live their lives inside Israel, are in constant struggle with Israeli hegemony, resisting assimilation, erasure, and exploitation. Nafar and Safadi's "Awal Bawal" specifically addresses the experience of being in constant resistance to assimilation and exposed to military conscription efforts by people in their own communities working with the Israeli government. They oscillate between middle-class counterculture and working-class subculture because they "inhabit" the dominant culture and "are strategically placed", in ways which their counterparts in the Occupied Territories are not, "to generalize an internal contradiction for the society as a whole" (Hall 55). Thus, much of the work of '48 Palestinians is better characterized as counter-cultural—both within the parent culture through their engagement in queer activism and self-critical work that addresses sexuality and gender inequality, as well as within Israel as Israelis through their Hebrew songs.

The most prominent of the contemporary groups whose work we will examine in later chapters is DAM, a' 48 hip-hop group formed by Tamer Nafar and his brother Suhail from the '48 town Lyd. Much of DAM's hip-hop may not be recognizable as Palestinian resistance music

at all, but as Israeli subcultural or even countercultural music. As we'll see in the third chapter, the vision of Palestine and its role in the imagining of a just future depends heavily on where the artists happen to be. For many, such as those in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as in the refugee camps, what dominates is a sense of danger and urgency. Being always under threat of attack, their songs vary between ideas of fighting back, standing strong, or being absolutely helpless and in need of a savior. The deliberate use of Bedouin accents and hypermasculinized performances harken back to the era of the *fida'iyin* and lay emphasis on the need to remain steadfast and rooted in tradition, themes which are often in direct contrast to the work of '48 Palestinians who caricature the hypermasculine hero and criticize the notions of *sumud* (steadfastness) and tradition. Further away, the vision of Palestine is more romantic, offering itself to a more cosmopolitan, transnational character that appears, at the same time, more empowered in its message. Shadia Mansour, for example, a British Palestinian rap artist, holds no aggression back in her lyrics or her music video performance, and St. Levant is characteristic in his self-referential songs where he uses his own multicultural background to map out his meaning of Palestine, oftentimes mentioning Palestine only peripherally if at all.

'48 Palestinians seem less concerned with Palestine and more concerned with their own day to day struggles as Palestinians in Israel. Their use of hip-hop aligns more closely with that of original African American rappers like Tupac and the NWA, dealing with issues such as police brutality, social inequality, and the state's neglect of their neighborhoods. Thus, while McDonald defines Palestinian resistance music as "the conscious use of any music in the service of the larger project of Palestinian self-determination" (6), I argue that there are an increasing number of instances of what we call resistance music that do not adhere to this characterization, and that are contested by the larger Palestinian community also working towards liberation.

Palestinian resistance music being produced by contemporary artists is no longer confined to narratives of loss and hopes for self-determination but has come to include expressions of self-assertion in intersectional locales of oppression and misrepresentation, creating a new ethos of resistance that involves a broad spectrum of liberation practices and discourses that range from the collective political body to the personal gendered and sexual body.

Outside of Palestine, new legislation in the U.S. continues to systemically outlaw engagement with Palestinian resistance practices such as BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanction), creating more tensions for Palestinians abroad to contend with in both their music and their everyday lives. In addition, '48 Palestinian hip-hop, as well as the work of artists in *shattat* such as Saint Levant, is often only tangentially related to Palestinian resistance culture via the artists ' personal heritage. For many like the St. Levant, contemporary Palestinian resistance culture is rooted in the memory of what would now be called a nation but is more accurately described as a collectivity determined by land and a budding (but never fully realized) national consciousness. Memory has thus become a major player in current conceptions of Palestinian liberation, a return to a pre-nakba way of life, but memory and way of life varies from one person to the next. Maira demonstrates that there is debate among young Palestinian activists about what constitutes "true", "authentic" or "proper" Palestinian culture, and these discussions of authenticity are largely centered around the contestation of hip-hop as a genuine musical genre for Palestinian representation, and questions about whether or not the behavior of people associated with the hip hop and larger alternative music scene should be accepted by the larger Palestinian community. Some see hip-hop as a form of western infiltration into Arab culture, not unlike the Zionist state itself, and still others, concerned with cultural purity (which often means sexual purity) are more worried about the behaviors associated with hip-hop corrupting the youth.

Much like Palestine's fractured political landscape, Palestinian resistance music is similarly heterogenous and, as the geopolitical events of the twentieth and twenty-first century unfold, it becomes more diverse, with iterations of resistance that not only deviate from but contradict one another. Rather than being the use of music in service of Palestinian self-determination, I argue that Palestinian resistance music today encompasses all musical expression that gives agency to Palestinians and people of Palestinian heritage to tell their story and share their perspective and subjective experience of the world, resulting in a heterogenous mosaic of imaginings of Palestine. Furthermore, I argue that the hip-hop subculture is part of a larger alternative Palestinian music scene that includes other genres such as trap, techno, trip hop, and trance, all of which are spaces of political engagement associated with sexual as well as national liberation and queer activism. By many in the camps and occupied territories, these spaces are considered obscene and not representative of "pure" Palestinian tradition and culture, putting much of the contemporary, more liberal iterations of Palestinian cultural resistance at odds with the majority of Palestine. As Hall remarks, "movements which disturb a society's normative contours mark the inception of troubling times – especially for those sections of the population who have made an overwhelming commitment to the continuation of the *status quo*" (*Resistance* 56). Thus, for many in Palestine, the new youth subcultures coming together around hip-hop and other forms of new music pose a threat to the traditional way of Palestinian life.

Hall posits that the broader term "Youth Culture", "in the singular and with capital letters", is premised on "the view that what happened to 'youth 'in [the post-war] period is radically and qualitatively different from anything that had happened before" (8) and in the case of post-Oslo youth, it is safe to say that those Maira dubs as *jil Oslo* (or the Oslo generation), much like post-war working-class British youth, did experience something radically and

qualitatively different than anything in the past, because the entire stage of world politics was being reformed. The advent of the United States as a unipolar world power coupled with technological development, enhanced satellite networks and communication systems meant more advanced occupational machinery and counterinsurgency tactics for Palestinians to face. Hall notes that, in post-war Britain, "there were distinctively new historical features…which should make us wary of…the tendency to adopt a static or circular view of history and so rob the post-war period of its historical specificity" (*Questions* 10). Hebdige underlines this fact in his book, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, saying that "a generational consciousness *did* emerge amongst the young in the post-war period, and even where experience was shared between parents and children this experience was likely to be differently interpreted, expressed and handled by the two groups" (79). Similarly, there has been an observable emergence of a generational consciousness among Palestinian youth in the post-Oslo period that manifests most obviously in the material of their cultural productions and the variant forms of their cultural resistance. However, Hall uses the concept of subcultures to lay out the intermediary levels that hide within what he calls the "catch-all idea" of "Youth Culture" in order to "*reconstruct* 'subcultures 'in terms of their relation, first, to 'parent 'cultures, and, through that, to the dominant culture, or better, to the struggle between dominant and subordinate cultures" (9). Like Hall, we are concerned not with all Palestinian youth, but with those youth "where a response to their situation took a distinctive subcultural form" (9) here the form of hip-hop that paved the way for a wider alternative scene where all those considered "deviant" by both the dominant and parent culture could congregate and find refuge.

Since the first iterations of Palestinian hip-hop in the late 1990s, the contemporary Palestinian music scene has expanded into what Thornton would call a wider "club culture",

which in itself "is not a unitary culture but a cluster of subcultures which share this territorial affiliation, but maintain their own dress codes, dance styles, music genres and catalogue of authorized and illicit rituals" (200). It is particularly those rituals which the broader Palestinian community fears or condemns as corrupting youth. As Thornton points out, "Taking part in club cultures…builds further affinities, socializing participants into a knowledge of (and frequently a belief in) the likes and dislikes, meanings and values of the culture" (200). Palestinian youth who congregate in clubs together based on their musical tastes are, in the eyes of those concerned with cultural purity, vulnerable to the illicit behaviors associated with clubs and club culture at large. Furthermore, Thornton's assertion of clubs as "refuges for the young where their rules hold sway" (202) is especially true for Palestinian youth today, especially queer Palestinians who congregate at the parties held by BLTNM and Jazar Crew, parties which are specifically intended to create spaces of refuge for those considered "deviant". As Hall puts it, ""When the codes of traditional culture are broken, and new social impulses are set free, they are impossible fully to contain. Open the door to 'permissiveness 'and a more profound sexual liberation may follow" (*Resistance* 52). The anxiety of the snow-ball effect that engagement in these different musical subcultures might have on youth is what constitutes perhaps the largest contentions among Palestinian youth today.

Hall describes how generational consciousness took an intense form in British working class subcultures after the second world war because youth "felt and experienced itself as 'different', especially when this difference was inscribed in activities and interests to which 'age', principally, provided the passport" (40). This is akin to the myriad of youth organizations and NGOs that were founded in Palestine after the Oslo Accords. Youth were brought together in programs like the P2PP and to work together on peacekeeping and collaborative solutions for

their situations. However, as Hall makes clear, these efforts do not "necessarily mean that a sense of class was thereby obliterated" (*Resistance* 40) and similarly, the class-like distinction between Israeli and Palestinian did not disappear. In fact, programs like the P2PP often reinforced the already imbalanced relationships between the groups by giving Israelis, more often than not, the upper hand in project dynamics. While these youths were experiencing a world different from their parents and being offered new opportunities for movement in their world, giving them a sense of autonomy and difference from the parent culture, they were still being reinscribed into the dynamic that their parents were put in, that of subordination to Israeli Jews.

Similarly, in the moment of collaboration after Oslo was founded the beginnings of what would become the Palestinian queer rights organization AlQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian society. Its inception in 2001 was the result of collaboration between Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups, and it was established "informally under the umbrella of Jerusalem Open House (JOH), an Israeli LGBT organization, with members meeting in JOH spaces to explore questions of sexual orientation" (Alqaisiya 30). Unfortunately, however, because the initiative was founded in the midst of the beginning of the Second Intifada, the collaboration soon ended as the intifada unfolded. JOH had hitherto identified itself as "apolitical", but the continuing Second Intifada forced Palestinians in alQaws to confront the political implications of being the queer members of a people under occupation, to ask what it meant to be Palestinian and queer, and to develop a queer critique of Palestinian occupation. This challenged JOH's self-identification as an apolitical organization and exposed the reality that this dedication to an apolitical approach to queerness in many ways, "reproduced the colonizer/colonized dynamic" (30) because Palestinian queerness became grounded "in Israeli LGBT spaces, which precluded the possibility of questioning their very Palestinian-ness, that is,

the reality of their existence under a colonial regime" (30). Alqaisiya quotes alQaws director Hanan Maikey, who explains how "We couldn't use the word 'occupation 'because this 'apolitical 'Zionist organization wouldn't allow it. . . . In 2005 we decided to split from JOH" (30).

There are innumerable tensions within the space of contemporary Palestinian activism that demonstrate themselves in debates between activists, musicians, and academics working to decide what is and isn't "authentically" Palestinian, what is and isn't helpful to the movement. In the realm of contemporary Palestinian hip-hop subculture, in the broader political music and club scene to which it belongs, and in the intertwined space of queer Palestinian activism, there are a myriad of tensions and questions about what type of resistance and activism is authentic. Even more pressing for Palestinian youth at large is the question of what types of music and their associated behaviors constitute authentic or "pure" Palestinian expression and culture.

As Maira points out in her book, *Jil Oslo*, hip hop has become "a contested cultural form in Palestine and among youth" (71) for a variety of reasons, including its perceived association with "Western" ideals, the perception of it as a colonial form of expression, questions of its place in an "authentic" Palestinian culture, dispute as to whether it is even "good" musically, and its perceived ability to "corrupt" youth and especially women, as events involving hip hop performances and groups are often seen by more traditional communities as too "loose". While many fear hip-hop as an infiltrating, Westernizing force within Palestine, Palestinian hip-hop "cannot be compartmentalized as simply a 'Western 'cultural form as it interacts with and draws on diverse cultural expressions" (Maira 37). For '48 Palestinians, for example, hip-hop has become a "pedagogical medium to address the absence of Palestinian history and culture in the Israeli school curriculum, not to mention mainstream Israeli media and discourse" (Maira 55).

Furthermore, while hip hop is contested in the Palestinian community and among Palestinians as to whether or not it should be considered true national culture, "the boundaries of 'proper ' national culture are often ambiguously defined, and…they overlap with the boundaries of appropriate social behavior in constituting moral-political identities for youth" (Maira 81). However, Maira also notes that while anxieties over cultural authenticity are understandable, "cultural purity has an enduring association with sexual purity, so that behaviors associated with the 'foreign 'are viewed as morally corrupting of women and youth through their tainting by the other/colonizer" (93).

For example, Tamer Nafar and Amal Murkus 'address of honor killing in their song, "If I could go back in time", created tension and controversy among Palestinian activists and writers, sparking the response of Lila Abu Lughod and Maya Mikdasi in which they express their "disappointment" in DAM for reproducing "the logic that situates Palestinian victims in a culture from which welfare workers, legal personnel, social workers, and other agents of social control in the Israeli state must save them" (*Jadaliyya* 4). They argue that the song, and the music video, which takes place in a political and contextual vacuum, "reinforces, and perhaps justifies in the eyes of many, the conviction that it is Palestinians 'backwardness and lack of civilization that should be blamed for violence against women in the community" (4). DAM, whose work often diverges from typical resistance narratives of self-determination and national liberation, and moves into categories of self-critique and counter-cultural discussions of the parent Palestinian culture, a perspective available to them by way of their positionality as Palestinian citizens of Israeli, responded to these accusations by citing the various forms of intercultural work their music engages with that goes beyond the good/bad, occupied/occupier narrative, and challenges the very purity of Palestinian (and especially Muslim Palestinian) culture itself. Similarly,

debates within the closely associated (and often intertwined) queer community have cited similar fears of upholding the subtler frameworks of pinkwashing and homonationalism that delegitimize Palestinian culture and justify its erasure due to its "backwardness". As Hall claims, "Identities are…constituted within, not outside representation" (*Questions* 4) and for contemporary Palestinian activists, musicians, and youths in these spaces, it is precisely the repeated representation of Palestine as a backwards, sexually repressed and repressive culture that creates the greatest tensions among activists within the movement for liberation.

As is evidenced by the numerous tensions between activists, manifest in the aforementioned conversations, "The perception of cultural and national inauthenticity is deeply imbued by a gendered and sexual imaginary" (Maira 94). Furthermore, as Frances Hasso demonstrates in their essay, "Modernity and Gender in Arab Accounts of the 1948 and 1967 Defeats", the question of gender, and particularly the role and honor of women, has been a central point of contention among Palestinian activists since Israel's inception. Earlier nationalists addressed the issue of gender only opaquely by assuming that the modernization of Palestine would require, "women's political participation, mobilization in war efforts, education, employment, and equal citizenship rights in the "public sphere." The project, particularly when envisioned by men, however, left gender inequality in so-called private realms either unaddressed or only vaguely considered" (492). Moreover, queer Palestinians experience their own kind of othering by the Palestinian community, and are often implicated in situations where hip-hop scene goers are considered "westernized" or nonconforming to "proper" Palestinian culture. Perhaps the biggest limitation that Palestinian youth subcultures like the hip-hop and LGBTQ+ scene, which often overlap, face is that there isn't a consensus on what Palestinian cultural productions are considered "Palestinian culture" let alone "Palestinian national culture".

The hip-hop subculture within historic Palestine, and the larger alternative music scene as a whole, are all spaces now associated with sexual liberty and queerdom. By many in the camps and occupied territories, these spaces are considered obscene and not representative of "pure" Palestinian tradition and culture, even though queer activism in Palestine is deeply grounded "in a sociopolitical context that does not elide the colonial reality of Palestine" (Alqaisiya 31) but that instead positions queerdom in Palestine as "an essential element of the Palestinian struggle to eradicate Zionist settler colonialism" (Alqaisiya 29). Furthermore, queer activist organizations like alQaws work to dismantle the ongoing pinkwashing efforts of the Israeli state which aggregate the difficulties for Palestinian artists to address sexual and gender inequality in their own societies.

Resistance is one of three key themes that arise time and again throughout this dissertation, sometimes independently, but more often, as part of a larger trinity alongside "identity" and "nationality". The Palestinian identity, as we will see, is entangled within a nationality that appears to exist only in resistance (hence the popular Palestinian chant, "existence is resistance"). Palestine today exists on the margins of the modern nation as a consistent imposition, a name screamed over the walls of power. Palestine forces itself into the discussion of nations in the absence of official representation. After the Arab defeat in '67, each of the surrounding constructed nations fell back on their Sykes Picot boundaries, retreating to their Lebaneseness, Syrianness, Egyptianness, according to the agreed upon borders. Not surprisingly, borders, as we will see, play a huge role in Palestinian consciousness. They are places of great anxiety, fear, and trauma. They are where the Palestinian is reminded: you are the left-over, the liminal, the one that didn't fit. According to Khalidi, the "quintessential Palestinian experience, which illustrates some of the most basic issues raised by Palestinian identity, takes

place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint, where identities are checked and verified"
(*Palestinian Identity* 1). Because it is constantly silenced, unacknowledged, and forced into
liminality wherever it goes, the Palestinian nation exists always in resistance, and the Palestinian
who is to identify with that nation must do so in an act of resistance, if at all. As citizens in other
countries, their Palestinianness has no administrative representation or marker. They must resist
melting into their citizenship by asserting Palestinianness in their own representation of
themselves. They must resist Israelification and Arabification and assert their Palestinianness on-
top of Israeli Arabness if they live within Israel's borders, on-top of Jordanianness if they live in
Jordan, etc. They must resist dissolving into "the refugee" by asserting Palestinianness in the
camps and host countries. As St Levant puts it in "Nirvana in Gaza", "A Palestinian is a
foreigner, émigré by nature...all he plants is by his own hands". Otherwise, in the absence of
institutions that secure national self-identification, Palestinianness goes off in a thousand
different directions, some of which, especially in the case of '48 Palestinians, might be more
accurately classified as a subculture or counterculture independent of national resistance. What
this has created is a mosaic; different conceptions, memories, and romanticizations of a Palestine
that can only be gleaned through the stained-glass mirror of cultural production from all over the
world, from film and poetry to music and visual art. In this dissertation, I will focus primarily on
the budding phenomenon happening in the musical realm: the advent of hip-hop as the newest,
currently most prominent mode of Palestinian identity expression among young people across
transnational Palestine.

As Thomas Szasz relates in the opening lines of *The Second Sin*, "Understanding
language is…the key to understanding man; and the control of language, to the control of man.
Hence it is that men struggle…today perhaps most of all over language. For to control the Word

is to be the Definer" (xvii). A theme that we will see, time and again, in Palestinian music and poetry across the twentieth and twenty-first century, is this struggle for control of the word, control over one's own narrative. As we will observe more closely throughout the dissertation, representation and agency over the narrative of one's own existence is a central concern in Palestinian cultural production, among both artists today and those of the past. What has hindered the Palestinian reclamation of narrative over the last 80 years of struggle is the lack of a unified, administrative body and singular vision for the future of Palestine, brought on in large part by a fundamental characteristic of Palestinian reality: fragmentation, both inherent and imposed. This has thus resulted in what I have described as a mosaic of resistance that at times converge, but oftentimes diverge from and even contradict one another, in terms of their themes, perspectives, and preoccupations. As people of Palestinian heritage become more and more isolated from one another as well as from their own roots, their relation to the Palestinian nation and its memory drift further and further apart. Without a unified, overarching project of self-determination with clearly defined goals, the story of Palestine has become a collection of subjective, individual stories that emerge from a shared memory but extend towards an endless plethora of varying visions for the future.

Fragmentation has long been an inherent characteristic of Palestinian political identity. Throughout history, the Palestinian population appears to go through a kind of ebb and flow, with people throughout the nation coming together for moments where a collective consciousness appears to coalesce before being scattered again, and the nature of both the coalescence and fragmentation fluctuates as well. For example, earlier, pre-*Tanzimat* populations were deeply rooted in *asabiyya*, a concept of the rooting of loyalties developed by Ibn Khaldun that we will discuss further in following chapters. At some points, bonds are formed in the name

of protecting the territory, as we see in the Nabulsi resistance of 1799; at other times, divisions are drawn based on class, as with the urbans and rurals of the early 20ᵗʰ century; then again they are formed around a shared tragedy and trauma, observable in the post-48 period; later, they're drawn on religious affiliation and today, most of all, on geography. However, we will also see elements that resurface time and again throughout the 20ᵗʰ century that never truly dissolve, despite changes in the way the population divides itself. McDonald notes how, after the '67 defeat, "camp dwellers began to identify themselves not by indigenous identity formations such as family, *hamula* (larger kinship groups), or ancestral village but rather by political ideology and party affiliation" (89). It is during this time that the archetype of Palestinian nationalism underwent a shift from the image of *sumud* (steadfastness) to that of the militarized refugee, making armed resistance a fundamental aspect of the Palestinian experience. According to Baumgarten, "since 1948, three separate and distinct Palestinian movements, with differing ideologies, approaches, and even, to an extent, goals, have arisen in succession: the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), Fatah, and Hamas" (26). She asserts that these movements are "best understood as 'faces 'or 'phases'…of Palestinian nationalism" (26). Not only, however, do these and other movements exist as phases in succession, but also at times as faces simultaneously, often colliding in their own struggle for power and becoming a hindrance for Palestinian self-determination. This overlap of powers reaches its peak in the years leading up to the First Intifada, when Hamas 'rise to power threatens the PLO's hegemony, isolating the population of Gaza from the rest of the Palestinian population. Thus we can already see how, from its earliest conceptions, the project of Palestinian self-determination has been fraught with division from both within and without, coalescing for brief moments around tragedy or the threat of a common enemy.

Tragedy, and namely the tragedy of defeat, became another integral characteristic of Palestinian identity, which, throughout the late 20th century, became almost synonymous with resistance. The *Nakba* itself came to be inscribed into the identity of those who were now landless, or as Darwish laments, "it has since become difficult to disentangle the identity from the defeat" (15). After Oslo, this narrative of defeat is replaced with one of defiance, and militarization is replaced with representation, but the tragedies of the *Nakba* ('48), *Naksa* ('67), and *Sabra wa Shatila* massacres continue to loom over its conception. Moreover, the nationalism embedded in earlier cultural resistance begins to dissipate in the work of contemporary subcultural actors. '48 Palestinians, for example, appear more occupied with the acquisition of civil rights as citizens within Israel than with self-determination and the re-establishment of a Palestinian nation, while in Gaza, artists like MC Abdul are more concerned with the psychological damage being created by constant war and life under the threat of spontaneous bombing.

This dissertation is divided chronologically into three chapters, with the intent of tracing the increased fragmentation of Palestinian identity within the turbulent political sphere of the colonial Middle East, as it is expressed in cultural productions of the times. The purpose of this is to understand how the major geopolitical shifts of the late 19th and early 20th century were being internalized and commemorated in Palestinian national memory, and to observe the trajectory and gradual splitting apart that eventually led to the mosaic of Palestinian identity expression and alternative music scene that we observe today. While there have been studies exploring the role of music, poetry, and popular culture in the creation of Palestinian political identity, they have all discussed Palestine and the purposes of Palestinian culture as a homogenous whole or have examined practices particular to place. Rashid Khalidi, in his many

books on Palestinian national consciousness and identity, has argued for the existence of a collective territorial identity that has existed since the early Ottoman period, and has focused mainly on cultural production in the realm of historiographies and newspapers, but has left out the role of youth and popular culture in the promulgation of these ideas. Others, such as Swedenburg and Maira, give serious attention to popular culture and youth culture, but their discussions remain focused within Israel and the Occupied Territories, not taking into consideration the role of Palestinian artists in diaspora and how they fit in the larger image of Palestinian youth culture. Ted Swedenburg, for example, explores the role of recent and contemporary popular culture, and particularly hip-hop, among Palestinian youth living inside Israel proper. Swedenburg mainly discusses the role and experience of '48 Palestinians in challenging Zionist hegemony via hip-hop and other contemporary cultural productions to argue for their existence as an Israeli subculture. Sunaina Maira's book *Jil Oslo* (*The Oslo Generation*), goes into depth on the role of youth culture and hip hop in the struggle for Palestinian national liberation. Maira's book argues for the fact that, since Oslo, hip hop has become a powerful subcultural force in Palestine, providing a platform for young people to express their political views, challenge traditional gender roles, and build a sense of collective identity and community, but her study also remains within the confines of Palestine as historical landmass without exploring the transnational hip-hop phenomenon sparked by the Oslo Generation, nor the larger musical scene that has congregated around it. By tracing the history of the poem song throughout the twentieth century, I demonstrate the common origins of resistance that these diverging threads emerge from, and how the image of resistance shifted and solidified throughout the century before the decisive scattering created by the Oslo Accords. Thus, while there remain common points among the wider Palestinian community that create a sense of community,

namely memory, land, the tragedies of defeat and displacement, and their shared involvement with various types of resistance, we will see how the faces of that resistance become more and more various, particular, personal, and contradictory in their visions and political goals among Palestinian youth today.

Chapter 1 traces the early relationship between political reality, collectivity, and the poem-song in Palestine, beginning with the 1799 Nabulsi revolt and leading up to the First Intifada, and is divided into four time periods. The Nabulsi coalition against Napoleon's forces is one of the earliest recorded moments of union among the Palestinian population and is embodied in the poem-song of Sheikh Yussef Jarrar. It is important to note, however, that this was not an uncommon practice in the Arab world. In their *Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, Hamid Algar and Mounah Khouri assert that the classic Arab poetic tradition "has rarely relinquished its vital role as a vehicle for the portrayal and articulation of the social and intellectual trends of the time" (3). Palestinian poetry, and henceforth the poem-song, being written in classical Arabic, is inevitably a part of this larger Arab tradition. Darwish asserts that "Our poetry is not a substitute for nor a rival to modern Arabic poetry; it is an indivisible part of it, one of the tributaries of the mainstream" (qtd. in Johnson-Davies viii). Throughout the mid to late 1800s, we begin to see the earliest conceptions of a broader Palestinian national consciousness being expressed in what Elmessiri calls a "neo-classical" style among popular folk poets and poet-singers. In his book, *The Palestinian Wedding,* Elmessiri states that the productions of this period were the "manifestation of a new, though still latent, Arab self-consciousness on both the literary and political levels" (1). Consequently, this was also the time of the first instances of European Jewish mass migrations to the region.

This was followed by a period of struggle in the early 20ᵗʰ century for national independence from the Ottomans until 1917, when Palestine came under British colonization. This budding resistance was then agitated by Britain's subsequent issuing of the Balfour Declaration, which favored the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. By 1920, grassroots uprisings began to sprout in opposition to foreign invasion until crystallizing into something particularly "Palestinian", coming into full force during the British Mandate period. Poets such as Ibrahim Tuqan, 'Abd al-Rahim Mahmud, and Abu Salma played "an active role in the revolution, not only by articulating the people's hopes and aspirations, but also by actually participating in the struggle" (Elmessiri 2). As we will see in this chapter, the cultural production of the period is marked by the emergence of the poet-warrior or poet-politician, whose poem-songs are sung in protests and in prisons, and who are as involved physically in the struggle as they are intellectually.

With the great expulsion and establishment of the Israeli state in '48, there would be born a new historical marker in Palestinian national consciousness: the *Nakba*—as well as a new kind of fragmentation for the population, with millions confined to the West Bank and Gaza and millions more in refugee camps around the Levant. After '48, themes of hopelessness and helplessness dominated the Palestinian poetic and musical scene, but by the mid to late 1950s, anticolonial movements began to sprout across the Arab world, and artists from all over these newly liberated nation states became involved in the Palestinian struggle. The Palestinian resistance song would be composed and sung by Egyptians, Lebanese, and Tunisians among others across the Arab world, reaching its height during the '60s with the rise of Nasir and the Pan-Arab dream, reigniting a more hopeful, nationalistic Palestinian imagination within a larger Pan-Arab framework, a coalescence larger than any Palestine had seen before. The Arab defeat

of '67 however, not only destroyed the Pan-Arab ideal and resulted in new landscapes of disintegration, but created yet another marker of tragedy for the Palestinian nation: the *Naksa*. Once again, the population was subject to further fragmentation, but also the formation of new coalitions with the rise of Fatah and the *fida iyin.* This is an interesting moment in the progressive pulse of Palestinian coalescence and fragmentation because Fatah, which would later become the military wing of the PLO, became the center around which the post-'67 Palestinian resistance was built, but its headquarters were to be found across the refugee camps of the Arab world rather than within Palestine. The most popular music of this time became militant chants and songs that glorified courage and armed struggle, partly as a result of the people's faith in this new, purely Palestinian order, and more-so thanks to the PLO's funding of cultural activities that served to solidify its influence. The PLO would face a series of challenges however, from politically turbulent host countries to rising Islamist groups, until its hegemony would be undermined by Hamas and the First Intifada.

Chapter 2 is something of a transitional chapter that explores the large and numerous cultural and political shifts that took place in the period between the late '80s and early 2000s. In the second chapter, our discussion moves into what I will call "the Intifada period". Intifada is an Arabic word meaning revolt and comes from the Arabic root "n-f-d", to shake up or clean out. Not surprisingly then, this is the period where Palestinian culture, and especially music, gets "shaken up" with the introduction of an entirely new genre of protest song: hip-hop. Most interestingly, this musical shake up happens in the brief period of peace between the first and Second Intifada that was created by the signing of the Oslo Accords. We will explore the beginnings of this hip-hop phenomenon inside '48, where '48 Palestinians, specifically Tamer Nafar and his brother Suheil, inspired by African American artists like Biggy and Tupac,

collaborate with Israeli Jewish artist, Subliminal, to create music for purposes independent of Palestinian nationalism. We will also look at responses from larger politico-academic names on the Palestinian scene, namely Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said, who at this time were the leading intellectual representatives of the Palestinian people, to see how their reactions align with newer conceptions of Palestinian identity being espoused by young hip-hop artists around the world. In Darwish particularly, we will also look more closely into the relationship between politics and the poem-song in Arab culture via his poem about Imru 'al Qays, a 6th century Arab king often thought of as the father of Arabic poetry. Finally in this chapter, I will also briefly recall some of the key moments in the development of Palestinian and African American solidarity throughout the 20th century. The purpose of this chapter is to bring together the numerous streams of influence, from political to cultural, that were amalgamated during the time of the Oslo Accords, setting the stage for the emergence of a wholly new cultural practice in Palestine: hip-hop.

Chapter 3 engages directly with the content being produced by Palestinian hip hop artists around the world over the last two decades. Taking DAM and the '48 Palestinian experience as our central locus, we map out the key elements of convergence that arise from the shared history that these transnational expressions emerge from and the divergent and contradictory mosaic of visions they emerge into. The first and most important convergence we observe being achieved or attempted in the music, regardless of place, is the reclamation of narrative and agency for representation. We will explore and highlight the main themes that linger on and spill over into the 21st century from 20th century resistance culture, and how preoccupations with these themes diverge among the different groups. These include, but aren't limited to, an overall sense of dispossession and desperation, a lack of agency over one's own body as well as one's narrative,

space and performativity, the role of gender, sexuality, and hypermasculinity, and the inequality inherent in the social and political structure of the state inside Israel proper.

To conclude, I will look at other cultural practices being explored by Palestinian youth in the creation and expression of political identity, namely film. We will briefly examine a number of films that have recently been produced by Palestinian filmmakers to highlight the parallels between the two cultural spaces. Films and film festivals dedicated to presenting the Palestinian experience also emerged around 20 years ago, almost in perfect parallel with the hip-hop scene. I conclude in this way partly because there are many parallels to be observed between Palestinian film and hip-hop, particularly the mosaic of narratives that they create around ideas of Palestinian self-determination based on the writers'/directors 'personal experience, the location of the film, and the tone in which they present the story. Another reason I conclude in this way is because I am interested in looking at political identity expression across the transnational Palestinian film industry in the future.

Chapter 1
Politics and the Poem-Song in Palestine

Napoleon's invasion of Palestine in 1799, a brief conquest that ended in the failure to
seize Jerusalem, inspired one of the earliest cultural and military mobilizations in southern Syria.
This moment is embodied in a poem by Shaykh Yusuf Jarrar calling on the leaders of Jabal
Nablus to unite against the French forces.

> House of Tuqan, draw your swords
>
> and mount your precious saddles.
>
> House of Nimr, you mighty tigers,
>
> straighten your courageous lines.
>
> Muhammad Uthman, mobilize your men,
>
> mobilize the heroes from all directions.
>
> Ahmad al-Qasim, you bold lion,
>
> prow of the advancing lines.[1] (qtd. by Doumani 22)

In addition to singling out and identifying the area's leading clans, Jarrar's poem exposes
the logic of loyalties in Palestine. The poem calls on the houses to protect the mount of Nablus,
but never mentions the Ottoman Empire, "much less the need to protect the empire or the glory
and honor of serving the sultan" (Doumani 23). Instead, the poem stresses "local identification
above all else (―Oh! you Nabulsis…advance together on Acre)" (Doumani 23). Shaykh

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[1] translated by Doumani

Youssef goads Nablus's ruling clans to bring their strengths together to protect the land, but with an intentional vagueness as to where their loyalties lie. Rather than beginning the poem by saying he'd received a letter of Napoleon's advance from Istanbul, he says that he has received word "from afar", aptly describing "the relationship between Palestine and the central government, which, except for token garrisons in Jerusalem and some of the coastal towns such as Jaffa, did not maintain a permanent military presence in this area" (Doumani 24). With its rich agricultural land, and its relatively vibrant urban life, Nablus and its hinterland were an economic center in Palestine, functioning, like the rest of the districts in southern Syria (*bilad al sham*), with a certain amount of autonomy throughout the eighteenth and first of half of the nineteenth century (Doumani 27).

1.1 Pre-*Tanzimat*

Before the Ottoman Empire began modernizing its administration in what is known as the Tanzimat period, there existed semi-autonomous, peripheral districts in the Palestine area like Nablus: closed-circuit spaces where local clans could practice a certain degree of power and, as is common to tribal settings, where a tension over the acquisition of that power was always present. Baruch Kimmerling notes how, in the Southern Syrian districts, known collectively as 'Palestine', Ottoman rule "was sufficiently weak enough for the local clans…to rule defacto local areas and impose 'law and order' in the name of the empire...The authority of Istanbul was mostly exercised within the cities and some of the hinterland, and along the main roads" (55), leaving places like Nablus to the authority of local clans. Shaykh Youssef's poem indirectly exposes the kind of tensions within the community that this autonomy left room for, in this case: the power struggle between two leading clans in the Nablus region—the urban Tuqans and the rural Jarrars. According to Doumani, the "basis of collective solidarity was the organization of peasant society

into clans (*hamulas*): patrilineal descent groups related by the fifth degree from a common ancestor" (31) such as Jarrars and Tuqans. By taking the initiative to call the community to action, Jarrar undermines the status of the town's current *mutasallim*, Khalil Tuqan, and his whole *hamula*, by projecting "himself as first among equals and [claiming] local leadership in the fight against external forces that threatened Jabal Nablus and its way of life" (Doumani 25). This differentiation also sheds light on the already tenuous nature of Palestinian class distribution and the tensions between the rural peasantry and urban land-owners which would contribute to the fragmentation of Palestinian society under Israeli rule in the 20th century. Furthermore, as we will see moving forward, the poem as a whole demonstrates the inextricable relationship between the poem-song and politics in Palestinian culture, a relationship we see manifest time and again at major historical crossroads, up until this day.

In May of 1834, Qasim Al-Ahmad, chief of a subdistrict in Nablus, held a meeting with the notable families of Nablus, Jerusalem, and Hebron, and informed "the Egyptian military governor that they could no longer supply their quotas of conscripts for military service" (Kimmerling 56). Qasim then mobilized the peasants 'revolt, which began in Hebron, where "about 25 Egyptian soldiers who arrived to impose the conscription order were killed" (Kimmerling 56). The center of resistance, however, according to both Kimmerling and Doumani, was Nablus, "from which hundreds of rebels marched to place Jerusalem, the symbol of the government, under siege" (Kimmerling 56). By the end of May, after recruiting the Abu Ghush clan (who controlled the main road running northward out of Jerusalem) to their cause, the rebels succeeded in opening the gates and conquering the city. In retaliation in June, "Ibrahim attempted a series of counter attacks, using heavy artillery, managing to regain control over Jerusalem, but with a cost of thousands of casualties and without managing to quell the spread of

the revolt" (Kimmerling 56). By mid-July, Mohammad Ali had conquered Nablus, reducing 16

villages on the road to ash. The short-lived, unsuccessful revolt ended with "the slaughter or

conscription of most of the men, the rape of women, and the abduction of about 120 adolescents

to serve at the disposal of Egyptian army officers" (Kimmerling 57). All of Jerusalem and

Bethlehem's notables were placed in captivity or killed, Qasim and his sons were executed

(Doumani 44) and ten thousand *fellahin* "were recruited and shipped to Egypt and the local

population was disarmed" (Kimmerling 57).

This rebellion, inspired by the Egyptian army's new conscription laws and increased

taxation on the local population, is arguably the first time, in Palestine, that "an almost country-

wide coalition of Bedouins, fellahin and notables was formed, incorporating a wide variety of

social and regional segments in a single cooperating movement" (Kimmerling 57). Kimmerling

describes the revolt as an impulse "of different segments of the territory's population facing a

common threat that stemmed from the changes that had taken place in the relations between

rulers and subjects, and concomitantly in the fabric of social stratification and order" (57). The

already existing geopolitical, economic, and cultural conditions "were complemented by a

distinct stratified system in its embryonic state that facilitated the coalitions" (Kimmerling 57)

among varying segments of the population. Thus, Egyptian rule drastically changed local and

regional configurations of political power. However, while these events are credited with having

created the preconditions for a new collective identity in Palestine, they did not ultimately uproot

old loyalties, local identifications to clans and families, or blood-ties, collectivities both

imagined and real, with ancient roots both in Palestine and the rest of the Middle East.

The adherence of loyalties to localities and families in the Arab world can be understood

through a concept developed by the fourteenth-century Arab philosopher, Abd al-Rahman Ibn

Khaldun, known as *asabiyya*, "a solidarity or identity group based on real or imagined blood or primordial ties, strengthened by actual or invented common ancestry" (Kimmerling 51). These affiliations were common to people of the Arab world since the *jahiliyya*, or the 'age of ignorance', the time before Islam. Since villages were "usually home for the same clans for generations, Palestinian peasants—like their counterparts in Syria, Lebanon, and communities all over the rim of the Mediterranean Basin—developed a strong sense of local identification, which still survives" (Doumani 32). In these nomadic settings, this was manifest as a loyalty "towards the tribe, while in settlements it is expressed through participation in the humane (extended family, or clan), a local rural or urban alliance (for mutual protection)" (Doumani 50). Thus, in 1841, when Ottoman rule was restored, while the roughly 10 years of Egyptian occupation, and the short-lived uprising of 1834, may have begun to create a shift in relations within the local collective, its effects were not so strong as to eliminate localized identification and replace them with a coherent collectivity. Interestingly, this period of Egyptian military conquest was concurrent with Egyptian musical innovation that spread throughout the Levant and the rest of the Arab world.

According to Ibn Khaldun, 'asabiyya is neither necessarily nomadic nor based on blood relations but instead resembles a philosophy of classical republicanism. He describes it as a bond that exists at any level of civilization, from nomadic society to states and empires, but that is purest in the nomadic phase, with its strength decreasing as civilization advances and groups expand. In purely Islamic tradition, *asabiyya* expands into the *umma*, a similar manifestation of real/imagined blood ties but particularly connected with the prophet, based on the claims of a true *imam* to be a descendant of Mohammad. In the later, secular tradition, however, the *umma* is also used to denote the nation. By the 19th century, amidst the rise of secular nationalism,

European influence, and the Ottoman Empire's international decline, *'asabiyya* became a crux of contention for the development of nations and national identities in the Arab world. The term "was expropriated for rival identities, such as the Islamic religious vs. pan-Arabist secular *umma*, the cultural and sociopolitical equivalent to the European term of 'nation'" (Kimmerling 50). From these affiliations would develop more politicized forms of the *umma*, according to Kimmerling, transforming into loyalties in the territorialized spaces of the Levant in particular, as well as in Iraq and Hijaz. These were the notions of *qawmiyya* (peoplehood) "mainly used as *al-qawmiyya al-'arabiyya* (or a kind of a general Arab peoplehood)" and the "complementary, but at the same time contrasting, term…*wataniyya*, which referred to loyalty towards a kind of local and particular region" (Kimmerling 51). The term *watan* is also used interchangeably in the Arab world with the word *balad* to mean "nation" or "country", and one's *wataniyya* is a loyalty to the nation, or more simply, patriotism. The term *balad*, is more intimately suggestive of land and locality, commonly used to denote something loosely synonymous with or similar to the inner city, while *watan* suggests the nation in a more national, patriotic sense. In the songs, we can see why Fairuz in the '60s, during the peak of Pan-Arab nationalism, would refer to the *watan* in "Bhebbak Ya Lebnan", singing, "I love you, O Lebanon / O my *watan*, I love you," while earlier Bedouin and *fellahi* folk tunes will refer to one's *balad*, such as in "Ya Zarif Al Toul", where the singer appeals to the young man about to travel to foreign lands saying, "O tall handsome one, stop and listen. / You're going to foreign lands when your *balad* is better for you". In contemporary Palestinian hip-hop, the word *balad* is invoked often, especially by '48 Palestinians, to denote their own city centres and meeting spaces in the Israeli state, harkening back to a more localized, traditional way of pre-colonial living.

Ottoman rule was restored in 1841, "following diplomatic bargaining and arrangements between Muhammad Ali, the Ottomans, and the European Powers" (Kimmerling 58), and the revolt of 1834 was "conveniently erased from the collective memory" (58) since, according to Kimmerling, none of these powers "had any interest in mythologizing a revolt mainly based on interior hill region peasants, and against taxes and conscription, which continued to be both in interest of the local notables and the Ottoman ruler" (Kimmerling 58-59). The Ottoman rulers were concerned with maintaining relations with the rising Egyptian power, which, with its broadening cultural development, was quickly becoming "one of the main commercial and cultural links to the outside world" (Kimmerling 59)—i.e. to European markets.

1.2 From *Tanzimat* (mid 19th century) to the *Nakba* (1948)

After the Ottomans 'recapture of Palestine from the Egyptians in 1841, the first major shift in Palestinian life came with the promulgation of the Ottoman Land Law of 1858, which required Arabs in Palestine and throughout the Ottoman Empire to register their lands for the first time. This process was implemented slowly, over a period of decades, in Syria and Palestine. However, the prevailing illiteracy among the fellahin, as well as "fear of taxation and other state executions, notably conscription" (Khalidi, *BTV* 211), kept many of them from registering. Thus, local *mukhtars* and urban nobles were able to collectively register large village lands under their own name, and the "biggest beneficiaries were the merchants of the coastal cities of Beirut, Jaffa and Haifa" (Khalidi, *BTV* 211). This contributed to deepening the divide between urban and rural society in Palestine, creating an intimacy that emphasized the disparity between the two classes, and fueling that "enmity-amity" tension between the *fellahin* and their landowners, the latter of whom would eventually pull the land out from under the former's feet and sell it to Zionist organizations.

Another law to be promulgated as part of the *Tanzimat*, or the Ottoman efforts to

modernize administration, was the Vilayet Law of 1864, which extended the Eyalat system over

the entire Empire and divided the provinces into a hierarchy of administrative units: *vilayet*,

subdivided into *sanjaqs*, or sub-provinces, further subdivided into *kada* (districts). By 1865,

Palestine came under the Syria Vilayet with its head *Sanjaq* in Damascus. In 1872, the *Sanjaq* of

Jerusalem was separated from the rest of the Syrian province and given independent

administrative status. The official separation of the Jerusalem *Sanjaq* from the rural *Sanjaqs* and

their administration in Syria and later Beirut, again reflects the splintered nature of rural and

urban societies throughout Palestine. The separation of the Jerusalem *Sanjaq* also emphasized

Jerusalem's politico-religious dominance in the region, since the source of authority was the

legal-religious authority of the Jerusalemite 'ulama (the religious learned class), the *Shari a*

courts, the heads of the *awqaf*, the Muslim religious endowment, and the specially positioned

mufti who, in the case of Jerusalem, tended to impose their authority over all the other local

religious authorities in the Holy Land. Another development implemented in 1869 was the

Nationality and Citizenship Law, which promised equality to all citizens under Ottoman rule,

regardless of race or religion. At the same time, it was of interest to European powers that the

Holy Land be reconstructed in Biblical terms. The European powers who had come to Ottoman

aid against Ibrahim Pasha in 1840 were especially interested in one place that had the power to

solidify their theo-cultural presence: Jerusalem. "Because of its religious and symbolic

significance, Jerusalem was the most suitable stepping-stone for increased European intervention

through a process of redefining Palestine in Biblical terms as the Holy (as opposed to Ottoman or

Arab) land" (Doumani 45). The allied powers thus established consulates in Jerusalem, and

during and after the *Tanzimat* period, Western influence began to become more palpable throughout Palestine and the entire Ottoman Empire.

By the late 19th and early 20th century, this emergence of a Palestinian national consciousness became manifest in cultural production, mainly through the Palestinian press responding to the increase of Zionist settlements. According to Mark Levine, during this time, newspapers acted as the locus of mobilization towards a national consciousness, bridging the gap between the two classes that were becoming more and more alienated from one another. The two main papers, produced in Jaffa, were *Filastin* and its competitor, *al-Difa* , founded in 1911. As the center of Palestine's public sphere, the Jaffan press performed "both the buffering function against the power of the British colonial (and Zionist para-) state that Palestinian civil society was too weak to perform, and the mediating function within Palestinian Arab society that was necessary for the construction of Palestinian national consciousness" (Levine 52-53). Perhaps most significantly, the press was able to give a "significant voice to all the main classes in society *together*," at a time when, in the sphere of civil society, "the interests of the bourgeoisie did not coincide with those of nonelites" (Levine 52). Furthermore, as Khalidi explains, the Palestinian absence of sovereignty throughout their history "denied the Palestinians full control over the state mechanisms—education, museums, archaeology, postage stamps and coins, and the media, especially radio and television" (Khalidi, *PI* 10), leaving a gap for the press to fill. Thus, unlike their Zionist counterparts, "Arabic newspapers…were hardly money-making ventures; they were often distributed for free by their publishers to fulfill a national(ist) obligation" (Levine 54).

The press's impact on civil society became most obvious during the *nahda* (renaissance) in late nineteenth century in Egypt and *bilad al-Sham* (Syria and its neighbors, namely Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine) where the daily press and periodicals flourished. By 1908, thirty-five new

newspapers had been founded in *bilad al-Sham*, eight of them in Palestine, followed by dozens thereafter. Furthermore, "one of the most forceful instances of the impact of the Palestinian and Arab press was the role newspapers played in the opposition to the Zionist movement" (Levine 57). As the Ottoman era came to an end, the terms 'Palestine 'and 'Palestinian 'came more and more into use, as is seen in the press. One obvious indicator of this was in the newspaper *Filastin*, which analyzed the different "trends at the 1913 Zionist congress, asserting that both of the main tendencies represented there intended to collect as many as possible of the Jews of the world in Palestine." (Khalidi, *PI* 58). The paper and those writing in it were concerned with raising awareness to the growing threat being posed by the Zionist power on the Palestinians ' presence, concluding the report on the congress "with a poem by al-Shaykh Sulayman al-Taji al-Faruqi entitled "The Zionist Peril," and the editorial comment: "Do you accept to see our country stolen?" (Khalidi, *PI* 58). According to Neville Mandel, in his book, *The Arabs and Zionism before WWI*, and as we have demonstrated, while political poetry was common to Arab culture as early as the 19th century, al-Faruqi's poem "was the first to be penned in Arabic against the Zionists" (175). The poem addresses both the people of the land and its rulers, and begins by alluding to the anti-semitic trope of Jews as "deceitful" and "weak":

> Jews, sons of clinking gold, stop your deceit;
>
> We shall not be cheated into bartering away our country!
>
> Shall we hand it over, meekly,
>
> while we still have some spirit left?
>
> Shall we cripple ourselves?
>
> The Jews, the weakest of all peoples and the least of them,

are haggling with us for our land;

how can we slumber on?

We know what they want

—and they have the money, all of it. (qtd. by Mandel 175)

While many of the lands were, in effect, sold to Zionist funds, and the great abolition of 1948 had not yet taken place, dispossession was already a key component of the Palestinian experience, brought on largely by the absentee land-owners 'ineffective communication of their transactions to the people living on the lands. Furthermore, there being no national government or political body to criticize or discuss the affairs of, Palestinian newspapers focused on criticizing the foreign power filling that gap and spreading information on the threat it was imposing. The poem continues, addressing the people and leaders of the land. While the name "Palestine" is not used in the poem, the familial "we" and "our country" are employed to create the awareness of threat on the collective identity of the poem's readers:

Master, rulers, what is wrong with you?

What ails you?

It is time to awake, to be aware!

Away with this heedlessness

—there is no more time for patience!

While you said nothing,

our enemies were encouraged.

Now you must speak

—to put them to flight and us at ease!

The danger is clear;

can no one resist it?

Is there not an eye left

to shed a tear for our country?

Send the rulers a message for me,

to alarm and dismay the bravest of hearts:

if they do not do their duty as leaders,

why do they hold power,

and why do they sit so high? (qtd. by Mandel 175-176)

As Levine puts it, "the Jaffan press became a site for "resistance vernaculars "that challenged the privileged and hegemonic political and economic discursive vernaculars shared by Zionist and British ideologies" (53). It is interesting to note, however, how the address to the "masters" and "rulers" who "sit so high" even though they, apparently, aren't doing "their duty as leaders", not only reveals the growing dissatisfaction of the people with the Zionist's purchases, but with the passivity and nonchalance of their own leaders who are "heedless" and have "said nothing". There is a clear comparison being drawn in the poem between the support offered to Jewish communities by their representatives as opposed to that offered to the Arabs by their own. Moving forward, we will see how this disparity between the Palestinians and their

representatives and appointed leaders continues to fester and grow, culminating in what many

considered a great betrayal by Yasser Arafat in his signing of the Oslo Accords 80 years later.

But as papers like *Filastin* were reporting, the political situation in the early 20th century within

Palestine and abroad was becoming increasingly volatile, and only a year after al-Faruqi's poem

was published, WW1 would begin, which the Ottomans would lose, changing the region's entire

administrative structure.

The Ottoman era ended in Palestine with General Allenby's capture of Jerusalem in

December 1917. After WWI, the Ottoman Empire had dissolved, and Britain had won the

Mandate over Palestine. New colonial borders were drawn by the secret Sykes-Picot agreement

in 1916, which was made public in November 1917. Between McMahon's broken promises to

the Arabs, Balfour's support for the Zionists 'national aspirations in Palestine, and the newly

imposed British Mandate, the Palestinian public sphere had to push harder and faster to promote

an already internally fractured national agenda, and it is here that the emerging cultural

resistance begins to solidify.

While the Mandate system was one that was similarly projected onto Palestine's

neighbors, such as Syria and Lebanon, the major difference between Palestine and the rest of its

neighbors, "all of whom developed a loyalty to some form of nation-state nationalism" (Khalidi,

PI 19) was that, after WWI, "Palestinians had not only to fashion and impose their identity and

independent political existence in opposition to a European colonial power, but also to match

themselves against the growing and powerful Zionist movement" (Khalidi, *PI* 20). Furthermore,

it was the Zionist intellectual "and political classes whose relationship to the British Mandate

state was most similar to the relationship between reformers and state elites in other Middle

Eastern societies of the colonial period" (Levine 53). This was because, in the eyes of British

colonialists, the Zionist movement had a more "highly developed, and focused sense of national identification…which challenged the national rights of the Palestinians in their own homeland, and indeed the very existence of the Palestinians as an entity" (Khalidi, *PI* 20), one that reproduced the colonial model almost exactly. Thus, despite the promise made by Britain to the Arabs, preserved in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, that they would receive independence in exchange for their support against the Ottomans, in 1916 the Allies signed an agreement that would neutralize the bulk of Palestine by turning it into an "International Zone". A year later, Arthur Balfour would write a letter to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild articulating his support for the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine, and in 1919, the British were granted the Mandate over Palestine, implementing new immigration laws for Jews, among other developments.

The British Mandate period is perhaps the most complicated and unique phase of Palestinian, if not all colonial, history. In colonial situations, there are traditionally two conflicting sides: an indigenous population being confronted by a foreign colonizing power. In Palestine, however, during the Mandate period, there were three bodies in confrontation: the British colonizing power embodied by its Mandate authorities; the Zionist movement, represented by its councils, settlements, and clear political goals; and the native Palestinians, among whom the nucleus of a nationalist political movement was beginning to form.

The mandate period was one of rapid growth for the Arab press and music scene, not only for the expanse of material in this politically heated time-period, but also for being facilitated by improved road and mass communication systems instituted by the British. There was increased interest in covering and promoting Palestinian resistance to Zionism, as well as setting up and advertising Jaffa as the anti-Tel Aviv, an effort mimicking the identity-building

practice of the "self" against a foreign "other". As Edward Said suggests, "the development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another, different and competing alter ego" (*Orientalism* 332). However, Khalidi warns against reducing Palestinian nationalism merely to resistance against Zionism. He argues that while "the Zionist challenge definitely helped to shape the specific form Palestinian national identification took, it is a serious mistake to suggest that Palestinian identity emerged mainly as a response to Zionism" (*PI* 20). Although Zionism was the main 'other 'that Palestinians set themselves up against, the situation of the whole Middle East in the period after WWI was in the process of restructuring and re-centering around nascent "nation-states"—Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan. New identities were emerging simultaneously, and Palestine and Palestinians were part of this "universal" unfolding in the Arab world. But "Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqis and Jordanians all managed to develop their respective nation-state nationalisms during the same period without the dubious benefit of a Zionist challenge" (Khalidi, *PI* 20).

During this time, journalists had become leaders of public opinion and defenders of the people's cause, propagating revolutionary attitudes towards British and Zionist imperialism. Even though a large portion of the population were illiterate, "in almost every village there is someone who reads from the papers to the gatherings of those villagers who are illiterate" (Levine 55). Furthermore, because the *fellahi* population was largely traditional, activists and writers laid particular emphasis on maintaining Palestine's "Eastness" and "pure Arab character" in the face of Zionist corruption, which was seen as contagious, appealing to the *fellahin* who had disdain for the lack of Islamism in urban culture. The fear of being culturally infiltrated is one that has carried on into contemporary discussions among youth about the nature of what a free Palestinian state would look like and what constitutes true Palestinian culture, a debate that

has fractured Palestinian efforts for liberation and self-determination for decades. From the beginning, the attempt to root in a sense of traditional Easterness was amplified by the fact that the Zionist "alter ego" being contended with was inherently ethno-religious, making the indigenous population more inclined to align themselves on similar lines. For example, since the "entrance of Arabs or Arab symbols into [Tel Aviv] was viewed negatively" (Levine 56), the press encouraged such practices as the wearing of fezzes as a statement of defiance. This defiance was expressed even more explicitly in the "ritual and performance involved in reading and buying the daily paper. Young boys who sold the paper would shout aloud the headlines in the streets and even embellish the stories of the exploits of Palestinian Arab heroes" (Levine 57) who were often both political activists, and performers.

It is during this time that music's significance in the resistance became increasingly important for the mobilization of Palestinian resistance. During the British mandate period, the most important sites for cultural resistance and political discussion were at weddings and other local events, as well as in prisons, where "folk songs and poetry were a powerful tool for mobilizing the masses in support of the labor boycotts and armed conflict against the British forces" (McDonald 41) during the Great Arab Revolt of 1936-39. While McDonald argues that traveling poet-singers played a major role in closing the gap between the rural and urban populations, helping foster a nationalist discourse by "carrying the idea of Palestinian nationalism from the cosmopolitan urban centers to the rural towns and villages" (McDonald 41), there appears to be heavier identification with the *fellahi* experience of land dispossession and emphasis on a return to a traditional, precolonial way of life. The traveling artists would often improvise on and modify classic folk-tunes for audiences based on their temporal, political, or geographical contexts while appealing to nostalgic memories of a life with the land. Given this

improvisational nature mixed with the familiarity of the time, variations of songs would then quickly spread among neighboring villages. The more prominent of these performers, such as Nuh Ibrahim, "became famous for their unique social and political commentary, raising many to the status of folk heroes in the nationalist movement" (McDonald 42). Ibrahim was arrested in 1937 for his involvement with the al-Qassem brigades, and in prison, he adjusted his poetry to suit "a thick rural accent, and indigenous poetic song-types and performance practices" (McDonald 44) and found the rural masses much more receptive than the cosmopolitan elites to protest poetry.

One of Ibrahim's most famous poems was a memorialization of 'Izz al-Din al Qassem, the Syrian Muslim preacher, *imam,* and leader of the resistance against the British after whom the brigades were named. The poem, entitled "O What A Loss, Izz Eddin", was written after the *imam*'s death in 1935, and helped draw popular support for al-Qassem's cause. The poem emphasizes the virtue of armed struggle, martyrdom, and the valour of Izz al-Din as a leader and liberator of Palestine. The first two stanzas of the poem open with the lament:

> Izz Eddin what a loss, a martyr for your people
>
> Who can deny your noble self, a martyr for all Palestine.
>
> Izz Eddin rest in peace, and may your death be a lesson to all
>
> Ah … we wish you'd remained, oh leader of the fighters. (translated by Shabeeb 66)

It is interesting to note here that the idea of martyrdom, which remains a central role in Palestinian resistance to this day, in addition to the fact of al-Qassem being a Muslim *imam*, has heavy religious undertones, with martyrdom being a central tenet to Islamic *jihad*. In epitomizing

al-Qassem as a martyr "for all Palestine", Ibrahim is imposing an Islamic character on all of

Palestine, when at this time, the population would have had Christian, Druze, and other

minorities living in urban cities. Similarly today, Palestinians young and old who are killed by

Israeli forces are deemed martyrs of the cause by the general population, regardless of faith or

religious affiliation.

After consecrating al-Qassem as "martyr for all Palestine", the poem then goes on to

memorialize the material sacrifices made by the *imam* in the name of Palestinian liberation. In

doing this, the following lines also highlight the nobility of continuing the struggle, espousing

the importance and necessity in the continuation of al-Qassem's work by glorifying the fighters

who have remained alive:

> You forsake self and wealth for the liberty of your land!
> When you faced an enemy, you fought with valor and pride.
>
> You formed a troop for the fight until the land is liberated.
> Its goal is victory or martyrdom, and enthusiastic men you have gathered.
>
> You gathered excellent men and with your wealth bought us arms.
> And you said onward to fight for victory to the homeland and religion. (translated
> by Shabeeb 66)

By aligning with the fighters who al-Qassem has left behind, Ibrahim both exalts and

empowers them, solidifying their allegiance not only to their former leader, but to the cause as a

whole, suggesting that they are "enthusiastic men" and "excellent men" who are ready to "fight

until the land is liberated". Al-Qassem is also noted for his material "sacrifice", the willed

surrender of his "wealth for the liberty of the land". The fact that al-Qassem was not only one

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with these men whom he supported, but rather was a wealthy philanthropist, sets him up as an exemplar of what the wealthier classes are believed to owe those who have been displaced and disenfranchised. It is also interesting to note also how the ideas of "victory" and "martyrdom" are paired here in a way that presents them as synonymous or equal in terms of the "goal". While this perspective is not intrinsic to all Palestinian resistance songs, it is a theme that comes and goes throughout the twentieth century, enjoying a special status particularly in the marshal anthems of resistance armies and PLO propaganda after 1967. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated shortly, martyrdom becomes a central motif in the hyper-masculinized strands of Palestinian resistance that appear in Ibrahim's later work.

In 1937, Ibrahim was arrested by the British troops and sent to 'Akka prison, where he wrote and performed more of what would become his most popular poems and songs. One of these songs, which became, according to Samih Shabeeb, "the anthem of political prisoners, both men and women, during the British Mandate" (66), was "Mr. Bailey". As is suggested by the name of the song, it addresses the British directly, in what seems to be a mix of irony and bitterness:

> Your Honour Mr. Bailey, Representative of the Northern District
> Your rule is too harsh, when it should have been just.
>
> You use a few reports, bizarre and fantastical,
> And you rule by deportations, exiling, and personal guarantees.
>
> You decide that this one is a terrorist and that one is a gang member
> When all of it, by God, is concocted without any basis.

You govern us according to new fads, passing harsh judgments

This one smuggling arms and that one multiple accusations!

You silence anyone from talking so that we can't disclose our certain innocence

All of us complain, oppressed by this deception. (translated by Shabeeb 66-67)

The opening lines of the song suggest a sense of betrayal and loss of hope in the British authorities, as if their bias against the Palestinians was unexpected. Shabeeb notes how the reaction of the British to the Palestinian revolt "both surprised the Palestinian population and also hardened its resolve to withstand and resist British rule" (67). The poem calls out the hypocrisy and harsh rule of the British authorities as experienced by the rural Palestinian population, who anticipated that the British would be "just". What this also suggests is that the Palestinian people were more preoccupied with the growing Zionist presence, and to some extent, perceived the British authority as a "just" overseer, a perception that, during Ibrahim's time in prison, began to fall apart.

It was during this period also that Khalidi reports Palestinian national consciousness undergoing a shift from an Arab/Ottoman to a more localized Palestinian/Arab identity. Khalidi describes the development of this consciousness as uneven, due to the tensions between ideas of "modernity" and "tradition". Even to this day, the concept of the modern nation state is met with contention by "strong divisive tendencies in Palestinian society—regional, familial, and social— which have lingered on since the 1920s" (Khalidi, *PI* 8). This is particularly true with regards to the role of women in the struggle. Nuh Ibrahim, for example, often echoes traditional Arab attitudes in his work towards women's role in society and the resistance, revealing early tendencies towards a hyper-masculinized vision for Palestinian resistance and liberation. He sings, for example, in "The Path of the Nation", about a mother in Jabal Nablus who sells

everything she owns to buy her son a gun so he can fight. The lyrics shift between perspectives, telling the story of a mother and son who live alone and are wholly consumed by the revolts taking place. In the song, after being sent away, the son flees the fight and returns home, only to see his mother in prayer saying:

> You must say God give us victory, and push away the West's treachery
>
> Don't let down the nation of Arabs, of Muslims and Christians
>
> My son is free, the son of glory, volunteered for the fight
>
> To save country, offering himself a martyr
>
> My son is Arab of honourable offspring, death he does not fear… (translated by Shabeeb 75)

Once again, we see the nobility of martyrdom, and its equation with triumph, being alluded to and embedded into the ethos of struggle. The mother's role here is of a passive catalyst, and espouser of the virtues of the struggle for Palestinian liberation which include martyrdom, courage, and Arab honor. Seeing her in prayer, the boy is inspired to return to the battle, as Ibrahim narrates:

> Her son is now embarrassed, of his escape regretful
>
> He has returned to the fight, O brothers, ready to go
>
> He takes the most dangerous positions, fearless of cannons
>
> He attacks and defends in the front lines of fire
>
> Attacked, unfazed and courageous, and defended like a hero
>
> Until he was martyred, O kin, in the shadow of the Arab flag

The battle ended, O free ones, and the revolutionaries have won

It is as destiny intended, this young man was sacrificed

They bring his corpse, and tell his mother

People have started consoling her, so terrible a tradition

His free daring mother, stood tall and content

She shouted "I am proud" to all of the women

For the liberty of my homeland, my son has died and was martyred

I wish I had another son, I'd offer him as a gift also. (Shabeeb 75)

Again, martyrdom is invoked as victory in and of itself, as even inevitable in its role as part of what "destiny intended". When she is consoled, the mother responds with pride, unwavering in her position to the degree that she wishes she "had another son" to offer "as a gift also". From this also, we recognize the relatively passive yet somewhat integral role of the woman as mother figure who not only creates the space and provides support for her son to join in the jihad against occupation but encourages all women to do so. It is "to all of the women" that she expresses her pride. She has devoted her intention and prayers to keeping him focused and dedicated to the fight, and finds exaltation in his martyrdom. This line alludes also to imaginings of the nation as mother, whose children are sacrificed for the land, a motif that we will see used repeatedly in work moving forward. These notions of nation as mother, the connection between religious *jihad* for one's country and the mother's offering of her son to *jihad*, all play into hyper-masculinized strands of resistance that become intrinsically connected to armed struggle in the second half of the 20th century. Ibrahim goes on to call on all the "people of mission, especially

the women of this nation" to "love this woman". He calls her the "mother of dignity and zeal" and an example for all Arab women:

> Listen, O people of mission, especially the women of this nation
>
> You all should love this woman, mother of dignity and zeal
>
> She who sacrificed her son, to save her nation
>
> Learn from her and adopt her higher principles
>
> Translate this tale into all living languages
>
> Write a story from it, for Western nations to read
>
> Recite "Al Fatiha" for the martyrs, they've sacrificed their souls
>
> And thus are the women as are all Arab women. (Shabeeb 76)

Interestingly, however, this idea of woman as supporting character to the man of resistance is not unilateral throughout the whole of the Palestinian population. The ambiguity of women's role in Palestinian Arab society, particularly how they are perceived in more traditional as opposed to more cosmopolitan groups, is apparent even in the press. For example, the "mother of dignity and zeal" who sends her son to be sacrificed and spends her time in prayer, is in direct contrast to the half-naked women featured on European razor blade and car ads in the Palestinian press (Levine 58), creating a kind of dissonance of character and the sense of fragmented vision around gender roles in a potential Palestinian state. Discussions of modernity in Palestine are inevitably underscored by discussions of cultural purity and authenticity, whose locus of scrutiny is more often than not found in relation to gender, more specifically to the policing of women and women's bodies. Maira notes how the purity of Palestinian culture "has an enduring association with sexual purity, so that behaviors associated with the 'foreign 'are viewed as

morally corrupting of women and youth through their tainting by the other/colonizer" (Maira 93). Furthermore, because women's bodies are the "primary locus of this scrutiny and surveillance in contexts where the defense or preservation of national culture is seen as of paramount importance" (Maira 93), addressing gender inequality, even in modernizing efforts, becomes difficult.

While in Nuh Ibrahim's time there is still a somewhat cohesive vision of woman as the passive, fertile, akin to the land that must be protected, the defeat of 1948 created a sense of urgency towards modernization, which brought with it questions about traditional gender roles. However, Frances Hasso points out how, though the work of Palestinian national intellectuals after 1948 "frequently contained criticism of their own societies" including what they perceived as the "economic, political, and social 'backwardness 'not only in Palestine, but in the Arab world generally" (493), they failed to properly address the question of gender inequality in the private sphere. The auto-critical accounts of this time do broadly acknowledge the presence of gender inequality, and offer a progressive vision for Palestine that includes women's involvement in the public and political spheres, but without any extensive consideration as to how this might be achieved in a society where patriarchal values are so deeply embedded. Their acknowledgement takes for granted the fact that women, in a modern state, would enjoy equal rights and opportunities as men, without providing a "fundamental critique of the patriarchal system that bolsters and legitimates gender inequality, indicating that this was not an important aspect of their modernizing projects" (493). As is evident from songs such as those by Nuh Ibrahim, however, before 1948, religiosity and hypermasculinity, which are often inextricable, were already deeply embedded in the character of resistance.

While "The Path of the Nation", for example, emphasizes the unity of Muslims and Christians, Ibrahim's other compositions, such as those written as appeals to the kings of the Arab world, place heavier significance on Palestine's Muslim character. In "O Kings of Muslims" for example, Ibrahim sings:

> We have none but God and you all, O Kings of Muslims,
>
> Pull up your sleeves to save Palestine
>
> Palestine is so tortured, so many martyrs and homes destroyed
>
> By God it makes one cry to see what has become and what danger looms above
>
> Palestine (translated by Shabeeb 76)

As aforementioned, the conceptualization of *jihad* and martyrdom as virtuous and necessary are Muslim in character rather than a-religiously Arab. The mother who prays that her son be strong and fearless in battle prays to Allah, and we are inclined to imagine her as a Muslim from Jabal Nablus. The Palestine "so tortured" is here implicitly presented as Muslim, putting the responsibility of its safety in the hands of Muslim leaders. In addition to this, the Sunni militia of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt had by the 1930s made its way to Palestine, on the premise that "every foot of ground supporting a brother who held the religion of the Noble Qur'an was a portion of the larger Islamic homeland" (al-Banna, qtd. by Gershoni 369) and was dispersed among the peasantry and grassroots groups in revolt.

As the Zionist presence inside Palestine grew stronger, independent nation-states emerged around the Levant: Lebanon acquired independence in 1943, followed by Syria and Jordan in '46. Simultaneously, the Muslim Brotherhood expanded to Syria and later into Lebanon and Jordan and reached Mandatory Palestine in the '30s and '40s, revitalizing an Islamic movement in the region, but especially in Palestine, creating further fractures in

Palestinian nationalist efforts. Arabism, still relatively new, also experienced a decline during

this period as the colonies moved into the Middle East. The expansion of the Muslim

Brotherhood and its dispersion among an already fragile and fractured resistance created more

complexity in the creation of a Palestinian national identity than that of the Lebanese or Syrian.

Massad recognizes that Palestinian nationalism, like other anti-colonial nationalisms, in trying to

mobilize people "against colonial hostility and onslaughts", is inherently contradictory. At once,

anti-colonial nationalists aspired to emulate "technological modernization in the Western sense"

alongside "the assertion of a traditional national culture" (Massad 41), a phenomenon observable

also among the Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian elites. In a still subjugated and fractured

Palestine, however, the "traditional" was (and still is) often co-opted by and conflated with the

"religious", and particularly, in Palestine, religious Islam, positioning all things "modern" within

the realm of *haram*, including the advertisements featuring half-naked women interspersed

throughout the papers amidst resistance articles and poetry.. The presence of Islamist groups like

the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine helped exacerbate an already dissonant vision for a

Palestinian state.

 The establishment of the Jewish state was met with what would be the first war between

the Arab states and the newly founded Israel from May 1948 onwards. But it was the sequence of

defeats preceding this historic moment that brought on the Palestinians 'biggest losses, including

the "loss of major cities like Jaffa and Haifa (which by then had become those with the largest

Arab population, and were the most dynamic centers of Arab economic and cultural life), and of

hundreds of Arab towns and villages and vast tracts of land" (Khalidi, *PI* 178). In Palestinian

memory and historiography, this period is known as *al-Nakba*, while simultaneously being

inscribed in Jewish memory as the War of Independence. Thus, May 15, 1948 marked both "the

decisive defeat of the Palestinians by their Zionist foes, and approximate midpoint in the expulsion and flight of roughly half of Palestine's Arab population of 1.4 million" (Khalidi, *PI* 179) as well as the birth of the Israeli state.

In the realm of song and poetry, 1948 is marked by a period of almost radio silence. Naturally, the attitudes of the Palestinian people had shifted away from the hopeful, revolutionary nature of the revolt years to a sense of defeat and helplessness. For a moment, it appeared as if the displacement of half of the indigenous population had left nothing of Palestine in its wake. This is partly because those who were now living inside Israel's new borders were put under military rule, forced into a cultural disconnect from those who had been displaced. McDonald suggests that "memories of exile and dispossession pervade collections of indigenous music and poetry in the years immediately following al-nakba" (57), and the oral traditions of *irtijal* (improv) and *al shi r al sha bi* (folk poetry), like that of Nuh Ibrahim, continued to spread among the Palestinian people, particularly among those now living under Israel's first military rule. However, instead of exclusively espousing a narrative of defeat, many continued to use their songs and social spaces to express defiance and resistance to the memories of exile rather than submission to it.

Two major poet-singers of this time were 'Awni Sbait and Badriyya Younis, the latter of whom is "the only Palestinian woman widely known to have been a poet-singer participating in wedding parties and public events during the military rule period" (Darweish and Robertson 28). 'Awni Sbait, born in 1929, was relocated from his birth town Iqrith, in the upper Galilee, with his family to the village of Fasouta. One of his most famous songs, entitled "Revenge" speaks to the defiance of the Palestinian minority now living under Israeli military rule. He recites:

I was born in Free Iqrith.

I suckled courage from her breast.

My pride will survive their poison.

I will not eat the honey of cowardliness.

Nor will I dress in the garb of collaboration.

Even if draped in pearls. (translated by Darweish and Robertson 33)

According to Darweish and Robertson, in their article "Palestinian Poet-Singers: Celebration Under Israel's Military Rule 1948-1966", Sbait's sense of proud defiance was one that he practiced both in his music and his everyday life. They recall how, in "an act of resistance, Sbait refused to learn and speak Hebrew, the language imposed by Israel on the Palestinians" (Darweish and Robertson 33). It is interesting to note here the echo of earlier motifs that treat the nation as the great mother, from whose "breast" Sbaiti says he "suckled courage". Pride and courage also continue to play a central role in the sentiment of resistance, as well as the denunciation of material wealth, possessions, or as seen here, temptation, reinvoking a sense of religiosity and sacrifice for the sake of the mother nation. Similarly, Badriyya Younis was known for being "fearless, witty and strong-minded" and "refused to sing at the weddings of families she suspected of collaboration with the Israeli military, rare for a woman in any traditional hierarchical society, and particularly one under occupation" (Darweish and Robertson 33).

Badriyya Younis is one of the first female poet singers on the Palestinian Arab scene, and one of her most famous songs which continues to be sung and remixed by Arab singers today is "Hayyed 'An al Jayshi ya Ghbayshi" (Stay Away from the Army, Ghbeishy). The song tells of the love between Hasna and Ghbeishy, two Palestinians from different tribes now living in

different parts of the occupied territories. Hasna is from a large, powerful tribe that has fled to Jordan, while Ghbeishy is from a small tribe living under Israeli occupation. When Hasna's father refuses to marry them, they elope and flee to an unnamed mountain to hide, until the army arrives. The song begins when Hasna hears the arrival of the soldiers, and the song is structured as a conversation between Hasna and Ghbeishy. The recordings left to us today of her voice have very little, and often no, musical accompaniment besides a soft background drum, and the lyrics are sung in a heavy Bedouin accent. Another thing to note is that "Ghbeishy" is also a play on "stupid" or "thoughtless", and the story of Hasna and Ghbeishy is part of common lore throughout the Arab world.

> Hasna: Stay away from the army, Ghbeishy (or stupid)
> Before their stage coaches arrive.

> Ghbeishy: What use is a man who runs from an army?
> It's who comes near Ghbeishy that needs to be worried.

> H: Then find a good spot to aim from,
> Cut them off at the spring's head
> Do you see them coming in teams with their weapons?

> G: I'm anchored in the earth and waiting,
> I'm taking my guns for protecting, and my daggers,
> Who would put himself in the danger of the square?
> The first to sing a bullet is in trouble.

> H: Lord help me with you,
> If you only had a tribe to reprimand you.

> If anything should happen to you, I swear,
>
> I'll cut these beautiful braids from my scalp.

"Stay Away from the Army, Ghbeishy" is a typical example of *shi r sha bi*, in that it mixes historical narrative with rhyme and meter, and brings together the national-political and the romantic. In these lyrics, we see once again the relationship that appears time and again between romantic love, familial/tribal connections, and patriotism. We can recognize also that hyper-masculine trend of romanticizing violence against the occupier, but what is different about this song is Hasna's input, this feminized perspective that expresses its distress with the ethos of violent resistance, however briefly. She does, however, ultimately go on to say, near the end, "I would not have loved you had you been a coward," reinscribing the honor attributed to armed struggle and masculinized resistance. Another interesting thing to note about this song is the continued influence of tribalism and class disparity within the Arab community. Hasna blames Ghbeishy's recklessness on the fact that he has no tribe, alluding to her own superiority having come from a powerful family. Even in the midst of displacement and dispossession, the distance and mutual rejection between the classes that we have observed to be embedded within the culture persists.

To add to an already fractured sense of collective identity, the land of Mandatory Palestine had by 1949 been broken "into three parts—Israel, the West-Bank annexed to Transjordan, and the Gaza Strip which was placed under Egyptian control" (Kimmerling 69). In both Israel and the West Bank, the occupying powers set about their attempts at de-Palestinizing the populations by reconstructing their collective identities. As mentioned earlier, due to Israel's strict military rule over the Palestinians still within Israel's borders, for the next 15 or so years, the very notion of "Palestine" or "Palestinianism" would fade away from the global eye, despite

the defiant presence of poets and singers like Sbait and Younis. At the same time, McDonald claims that those now scattered "into various camps across the region expressed a great sense of loss and defeat through performance" (57). We begin to see, during this period, a whole new take-off of various strands of Palestinian identification, one much different than the simple rural-urban split observed in the early 20th century.

1.3 From the *Nakba* ('48) to the *Naksa* ('67)

Khalidi refers to the time between '49 and '64 as the "lost years", a time where it became nearly impossible "to identify where the focus of Palestinian identity was, or whether in fact it had survived the debacles of 1947-49" (*PI* 179). It is hard to trace the indications of an independent Palestinian identity throughout the '50s and early '60s, because, as Khalidi puts it, "there *was* a hiatus in manifestations of Palestinian identity for a period after 1948" (*PI* 178). The largest group of pre-'48 Palestinians had been pushed into the West Bank, which was annexed in 1949 by Jordan. Those present in the West Bank at the time were given Jordanian nationality, and many emigrated further East into Jordan. Within the borders of the new state of Israel there were now less than 200,000 Palestinians who "obtained Israeli citizenship, but were to remain muzzled under military rule until 1966, and were barred for long after that from any expression of Palestinian identity" (Khalidi, *PI* 179). The rest, in the Gaza strip, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere, "obtained differing categories of refugee status, and faced different barriers to political organization, expression, and manifestations of their identity" (Khalidi, *PI* 179) including Israeli intervention in the host countries. What makes it increasingly harder to trace these expressions is the fact that Israel has gone and continues to go to great lengths to suppress narratives involving Palestinian history and identity, out of fear that their emergence might threaten its own legitimacy. Since the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, "much source

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material for writing the modern history of the Palestinian Arabs has been lost, destroyed, or incorporated into archives in Israel, where it was long inaccessible to many Palestinian and Arab historians" (Khalidi, *PI* 89).

Beneath the apparent silence following the '48 catastrophe however, Palestinian literature, poetry, art, and especially music took on a significant character of resistance between 1948 and 1966, amidst poet-singers like Sbait and Younis, and with the emergence of work by poets Mahmoud Darwish and Samih Al Qasim, Nazareth mayor and poet Tawfik Zayyad, and the writer Emile Habibi, who wrote both independently and in the communist paper he co-founded, *Al-Ittihad*. At the same time, McDonald notes how the "profound social and cultural transformation to life in the refugee camps was documented in the many proverbs, folk songs, poems, stories, and dances emanating from this newly formed community of exiles" (57). The Palestinian community, which had once been split between rural and urban classes, had been reconfigured into a new divide between occupation and exile, each of which was now developing a new relationship with the land, as well as varying political attitudes. Those within Israel's borders were now struggling for freedom of movement and speech, challenging the newly founded state with independent writing and performance, while those in refugee camps were lamenting humiliation and exile, singing their longing for return. This early, post-exilic period, and the varying responses of groups in disparate locales can be seen as the kernel of what would become the transnational mosaic of Palestinian political expression that we observe in Palestinian hip hop today. During this period, figures like Darwish and Habibi, as '48 Palestinians, gave birth to new forms of literary and poetic expression, while refugees now gathered in camps in nearby countries such as Lebanon and Jordan continued to engage with the traditional folk songs, drawing "from established repertoires of indigenous song and dance to

maintain and preserve cultural practices and to communicate widespread feelings of loss and dispossession" (McDonald 59). In similar fashion, contemporary Palestinian hip-hop artists, while all engaging with the musical repertoire that is hip-hop, vary in their approach, influences, and focus of themes based on their locale. Contemporary '48 Palestinians, for example, draw on a broad range of cultural influences from their own cultural predecessors like Darwish to classic African American rappers like Tupac, opting for more literary lyrical styles and transcultural soundscapes, focusing on their daily struggles with the Israeli police, and quoting or echoing lines directly from classical poetry, political speeches, and early African American rap. Rappers in the West Bank, however, will engage with a more hyper-masculinized narrative of resistance that draws on religious and military tropes, singing in a specifically *fellahi* Palestinian vernacular and dialect, incorporating structures of *ataba* and *mawwal* in their refrains. All, however, whether in Israel proper, occupied territories, refugee camps, or abroad, draw on Arabic melodies time and again to create various effects, especially *dabke* melodies overlaid with hip-hop beats, whether for ironic impact as in DAM's "Mama, I Fell in Love with a Jew," or for merely aesthetic purposes, as in many of Saint Levant's latest releases (which often have little or nothing to do with Palestinian identity per-se).

The *ataba* (meaning reproach, from the root *tb*, blame) is similar to the classic *mawwal* in its slow-paced beat, elongated and emotionalized vowels, its improvisational vocals, and its morose themes of longing and lament. What differs between the two is that the *ataba* is improvisational by nature, and thus different every time, depending on the time, place, and people present for the performance. It is thus difficult to dub one performance or lyrical set as the most popular. Among the *dabke* tunes however, there are two that stand out as the most famous, "*Ala Dal una*" ("Help us/Let's go help") and "*Ya Zarif al Toul*" (O Tall Handsome One). While

being prominent songs in Palestinian refugee culture especially, the songs are also an immensely famous song across the Levant, and are sung people almost ritualistically. "*Ala Dal una*" in particular is a song that is sung differently every time, hinging on the repeated chant '"Ala Dal'una" which is followed by different rhyming couplets. It's not clear where the song originated, and there are different legendary accounts that recount its beginnings, and two major stories that circulate in the Levant, both together and independently. The first is that the phrase itself originated among village builders who would hold hands and form a line to fix cracked mud roofs by stomping on them. The communal effort required to do this would be called *ta awon*, meaning cooperation, a word rooted in the same triconsonantal root as *dal ouna*, *ain-waw-noun (a-wa-na)*, which is its own variation of the Arabic *awneh*, meaning help. The story also connects the song to its *dabke* genre, *al-dabke* being the Levantine stomping line dance. The second story is that the song developed across the levant, from Antakia to the Red Sea, as a coded cry for help among *fellahin* during Ottoman times. The *d* in *dal ouna*, is allegedly a Syriac prefix denoting the directive "to" as in "to the help" or "let's go/come to the help", sending word to those who hear the call that the person singing is in need of help. A beat in its own right, "*Ala Dal una*" offers itself to a wide variety of expression, depending on the singers 'circumstances, be they happy, sad, in pain, celebrating, grieving, or even in danger, but always sung over the same twelve-beat rhythmic pattern. A popular version of the chorus, that has been incorporated by contemporary Palestinian hip-hop artists in their own songs, most recently in the song "God is Love" by Offendi, goes as follows:

> *Ala Dal una w ala dal una*,
>
> Our lovers left without saying goodbye.
>
> *Ala Dal una w ala dal una*,

God forgive them for how they hurt us.

Offendi mixes both "*Ala Dal una*" and *Ya Zarif al Toul*" over the same harmony, interplaced as stand-ins for a chorus between his rap verses, which are interestingly laced with religious ideas, suggesting that the "God" in "God is Love" is Allah, the Muslim God. Another version sung by Fairuz in the '70s engages even more ubiquitously with Islamic imagery. Its lyrics go as follows:

Ala Dal una w ala dal una,

pray to the prophet (*sallu al nabi*) against the evil eye.

Ala Dal una and why did you help me (*w leish dalla tini?*)?

you found me an old man, why did you take/marry me?

McDonald recounts a version that he says was collected from Palestine in the years after the *Nakba*. Its lyrics are archetypal in their expression of yearning for return to the homeland, with the chorus sung as follows:

It has been a long time since my exile and separation

I swear to you, oh nightingale, send my yearnings.

To the beloved land I miss.

And I have only just arrived.

Oh beaches of Yaffa, tell me your news.

I have opened your sands, and know your secrets.

I await your birds, and ask your visitors,

Are you still loyal to me, or have you forgotten?

We boarded the boat, we put ourselves in it.

Oh sun of my country, we are deprived of you now.

Please tell my mother to be content with me.

I pray to you, oh God.

I await your birds, and ask your visitors,

Are you still loyal to me, or have you forgotten? (translated by McDonald 62)

As is evidenced by the lyrics, the land plays an integral role in the collective

identification of those in exile. It is referred to both as land but more interestingly as "mother",

spoken of as a conscious being that might be "loyal" or may have "forgotten" its sons and

daughters. This is not surprising since, in the wake of the '48 war, the Palestine that was now

completely invisible to the world retreated into, and began to take hold of, the memory of the

Palestinian people. The *Nakba* itself came to be inscribed into the identity of those who were

now landless, or as Darwish laments, "it has since become difficult to disentangle the identity

from the defeat" (*Memory for Forgetfulness* 15). With limited access to land and opportunities

for institutionalization, Palestinian identity depended almost entirely on memory, and would only

become manifest in varying cultural practices as well as an attachment to the lost land itself. As

Hilal puts it:

> Land became a core actor in the Palestinian collective memory, being a
>
> geographic, cultural, and a historical reference as well as a unit of socioeconomic
>
> measurement that represented the foundation of the Palestinian society, whose
>
> structure was destroyed with the Nakba. (20)

Another popular folk-tune that demonstrates this in an interesting way is "Ya Zarif al-Toul" (O Tall Handsome One). The song plays with ideas of both romantic love and love for the homeland, with the lyrics addressing someone that the singer fancies, while also capturing the melancholy of seeing lovers and friends leave home for the *gherbi* (foreign lands). Between the high pitched buzzing of the *mezmar* horn, the upbeat *dabke* beat, and the lyrics charged with almost proverbial pleadings and confessions of anxieties, "Handsome One" leaves you with a deep feeling of eerie irony. The song starts with the chorus:

> O tall, handsome one, stop and heed my words,
>
> You're going to the foreign lands while your lands are better for you.
>
> I'm afraid, tall handsome one, that you're going to *tetmallak* (become a landlord),
>
> And you're going to get to know the others and forget me.

The word *tetmallak*, which I have translated here as "become a landlord", is difficult to translate. To "become a landlord" sounds very proper in English, and the line might be better translated as "you're going to buy land" or "own land", but that, I think, conveys even less of the meaning. I chose "landlord" because *tetmallak* comes from the triconsonantal root *m-l-k* meaning "king" or "lord", with the implied feudal sense of "king" or "lord of the land". This is a harkening to the nature of the very Levantine-Arabesque relationship with the land, suggesting the idea that in your homeland, you are king. To buy or own land somewhere else is more than a transaction, it's to abandon your homeland and make a home there, to lay roots in *gherbi*. Given that the singer laments that the handsome one is "going to forget" them, it is almost as if the land itself were singing the song. Consequently, the verses continue:

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O tall handsome one, you're a stranger to the folk,

Don't leave us and then blame us.

God willing you'll return to grape field,

To reap the wheats and collect our harvest.

O tall handsome one, you're away from the homelands,

The separation has filled the hearts with sorrow.

Return to your mother, return to the tenderness,

You won't get tenderness anywhere but in our country.

The connection to land is further emphasized here in its conflation with the "tender mother". This aligns well with the gendered narrative of nationalisms, and particularly Palestinian nationalism as we have observed thus far, as described by Massad, where the nation is conceived "as a mother- or father-land" (468)—in the case of Palestine, a motherland. Mossad tells us how, by 1964, in the Palestinian National Charter, "the Zionist conquest of Palestine is presented as a rape of the land. It views Palestinians as the children of Palestine, portrayed as the mother" (Massad 470). However, while this may have been the culminating sentiment of the peoples in exile, this vision didn't crystallize in any official sense until after the '67 war. The people singing "*Ala Dal una*" and "*Ya Zarif al-Tul*" were still without a national leadership and under threat of disappearance.

Another factor contributing to this perceived disappearance of Palestine and Palestinianism prior to the mid-1960s was, ironically, the rise of pan-Arabism, "which in some measure obscured the identities of the separate Arab nation-states it subsumed" (Khalidi, *PI* 181). The hegemonic ideology of Arabism began to rise around the Arab world in the early 20th

century, "reaching its apogee in terms of political power in the 1950s and 1960s with the rise of Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, who seemed to many to incarnate the Arab resurgence" (*PI* 181). 'Abd al-Nasir's Arabism resonated widely throughout the Arab world, whose peoples were "profoundly frustrated for generations by [their] inability to shake off foreign rule or to achieve true independence and real economic development" (Khalidi, *PI* 181). Its greatest appeal was the argument that, though all Arabs were a single people with a shared language, history, and culture, they had been divided "not by centuries of separate development of widely separated countries, but by the recent machinations of imperialism, and that all they had in common was more powerful than whatever separated them" (Khalidi, *PI* 181). This sentiment is especially interesting in the context of the time's most popular songs, which were often accompanied by elaborate Western orchestras. For example, one prominent figure of this period was Egyptian singer and composer 'Abd al-Wahhab, who famously sang the martial tune "Nasir" in the 1950s, as an ode to Gamal Abdel Nasir, seen "as the leader of the march on Palestine alongside the Palestinian people" (Massad 25). The lyrics of the chorus repeat the choir call, "Nasir!" between praise for his strength and steadfastness as a savior of the Arab people sung by 'Abd el Wahab, with the choir ending each chorus repetition with the chant "*habib el koll ya Nasir*", "dear to all, o Nasir". The verses are then dedicated to the different struggles of the Arab people, who were hopeless before the arrival of this victorious leader, with one verse, bridge, and chorus variation dedicated specifically to the plight of the people of Palestine. The verse, sung by 'Abd el Wahab alone, sings:

> Your people, your people, O Palestine,
>
> Will never let go of their revenge

For the liberation army is at the gates

Waiting to return home.

This is repeated four times before rising into the bridge, where 'Abd el Wahab is joined again by the choir chant (in [] brackets):

Your sun, O Palestine [shall rise],

And the rights of the refugees [shall be restored]

(repeated twice)

All the Arab people are your weapon,

And their weapons are unity and nationalism.

The chorus then returns to the choir chant of Nasir's name, but this time with a variation from the previously broad interspersions of praise to a more specific, anti-Zionist Arab declaration:

Nasir! Your banner is Arab.

Nasir! And the step forthcoming,

Nasir! Will be against Zionism

Nasir! Dear to all, o Nasir!

Arabism was at its most influential during the Egypt-Syria union between 1958 and 1961, and many Palestinians were deeply attracted to it. Songs like this, which were performed publicly in the mid to late 1950s, helped solidify that influence among different Arab communities, and especially the Palestinian peoples in refugee camps hungry for hope and representation. Arabism had already been an important element in the Palestinian self-view, and its new pan-Arab form promised "to multiply their limited forces and give them support from

67

outside Palestine against the Israeli foe they knew from bitter experience to be far stronger than they were" (Khalidi, *PI* 181). Its hegemonic influence appears to have had a brief, neutralizing effect on the Palestinian communities in different locales, creating the impression of a harmonious identification across the Palestinian, and even more-so, broader Arab population, and what was a budding Palestinian mosaic of disparate expressions seemed to be melting into a larger, unified Arabism that places the Palestinian predicament as its highest representative cause. In the lyrics above, for example, the plight of the Palestinian refugee is Nasir's plight, whose "banner is Arab", and thus is the Arab's plight. The struggle against Zionism is the Arab world's to carry, and Nasir's "next step" is "against Zionism". The public performance of "Nasir" that portrayed him as "the leader of the march on Palestine alongside the Palestinian people…exemplified the general mobilizational capabilities of the revolutionary regime…[which] produced a sense of unity among the masses" (Massad 25). For a moment, Nasir presented a beacon of hope for Arab people everywhere, and he himself fought "in the 1948 war and personally suffered the humiliating defeat to Israeli forces" (McDonald 70).

The fact that the Palestinians 'support for and belief in Nasir was reciprocated is evidenced not only in their music, but even in their more common, day-to-day lives. For example, in *Where is Palestine?*, Shannee Marks ventures through Palestine in the late '70s and early '80s, interacting with both Jewish and Muslim people living in and outside of the Israeli borders. Visiting the home of Abu Nidal, founder of the militant Palestinian splinter group known as the Abu Nidal Organization, in Umm Al-Fahm—a town northwest of Jenin, located inside Israel right on the West Bank border—she reports that in the salon, "A portrait of Gamal Abdul Nasser is on the wall, a very frequent wall ornament in the home of 'political 'Palestinians. The first present which the wife of C. the bookseller gave her husband was a portrait of Nasser"

(Marks 62). To Palestinians, particularly those in exile, Nasir and the Free Officers 'project "for social reform was largely seen…as an important step forward in the quest to reclaim their lost homes and livelihood" (McDonald 70). Having overthrown the monarchy of King Faruq, Nasir and the Free Officers promised a reform that espoused the progressive politics of freedom, socialism, and Arab unity, creating hope for Palestinians in exile that their refugeeship might come to an end. This attitude towards Nasir by Palestinians is also exemplified in a common *muraba* (quatrain) from the camps of Jordan:

> We want to tell you the news
>
> A story of our courageous people
>
> To inform you of what happened
>
> To our Arabic nation
>
> Fear drives America
>
> They are shaking with fear
>
> Scared of the Arab people's advance
>
> Toward freedom
>
> They said the high dam is not developing
>
> We said the fight is necessary
>
> ʿAbd al-Nasir, oh Jamal
>
> The hero of our Arab nation
>
> You are our hope

And the manifestation of our dreams. (translated by McDonald 70)

Not only were other singers chanting to Palestinians on behalf of Nasir, like the example of ʿAbd el Wahab, but Palestinian refugees were reciprocally singing to Nasir from their own communities. It is also interesting to note a theme coming through these lyrics that we see time and again in Arabic, and Palestinian Arabic, poetry and song: a strong identification of the people with a leader (one that is sometimes antithetical). In this *muraba* , the courage of the people is to be drawn from the courage of the leader, and it is when the "hero" advances that the "people advance". This carries with it the implication that leaders in the Arab world hold immense amounts of power as individuals, perhaps more than anywhere else in the world. Byman notes that the "politics of the Middle East may be more dependent on the ambitions and whims of individual leaders than in any other region of the world" (59) and this is something that is criticized by Palestinian hip-hop artists today. Shabjdeed, for example, a West Bank Palestinian rapper whose songs we'll examine in more depth in the third chapter, raps in one of his songs that his country's "libra" has been "stolen" by the "hypocrites" who hold the power. This is in perfect alignment with the general attitude of the Palestinian people towards Yasser Arafat after his signing the Oslo Accords, an attitude exemplified in a number of cultural responses which we'll explore in chapter two, as opposed to earlier, and even lingering, attitudes towards Nasir. Another quatrain from Nasir's time declares:

It is written on our foreheads ʿAbd al-Nasir is our beloved

It is written on our hearts ʿAbd al-Nasir is our beloved

Gamal served the Arab identity

And humiliation to Nuri al-Saʿid (translated by McDonald 70)

As we saw earlier in the example of ʿAbd el Wahab, across the Arab world, singers and composers were expressing solidarity with Palestine. According to Massad, Abd al-Wahhab was "the preeminent composer of the time, writing songs that became instant classics celebrating Arab unity, Egyptian socialism, and the short-lived political union with Syria (1958-1961) and calling for the liberation of Palestine" (Massad 23). His songs, performed alongside full Western orchestras, were sung by some of the most prominent artists of the Arab world, "including Fayza Ahmad (Syrian-Egyptian), ʿAbd al-Halim Hafiz (Egyptian), Warda al-Jazaʾiriyah (Algerian), Fayda Kamil (Egyptian), Sabah (Lebanese)" (Massad 23) among several others. Interestingly, while earlier songs, included "both Arab and Western instruments (oud, nay, qanun, riqq, violins) and featured quarter tones mixed up in segments with Western scales" (Massad 23), the nationalist songs of the post-1958 period had almost exclusively Western instrumentation, and were only sung in Arabic. This is because, by 1958, artists were experimenting with Western martial music rather than adhering to the slow-moving Arabic melodies used in the earlier wedding-meets-protest music. The irony is that in Abd al-Wahhab's nationalist song, "Watani Habibi", the lyrics assert that "The voice is your voice, Arab and free, and not an echo of West or East" while the orchestra is entirely Western. Massad deduces that this reveals the importance lyrics play as opposed to musical style in the Arab, and Palestinian, nationalist imagination. He asserts that "Nationalist music, then, is seen more through lyrics that express the sentiments of the nation, while the musical genre is appropriated as global culture that has been Arabized" (Massad 23). This observation also sheds light on young Palestinians ʾaffiliation with the lyric-centric Western styles of rap and hip-hop today. The modality of rap and hip-hop gives precedence to lyrical talent rather than melody, as those who engage in rap battles, for example,

will set one beat that artists must lyrically improvise over, sometimes for hours on end, and skill is determined based on who drops the most chilling, note-worthy, or poetic bars.

What of course further encouraged the production of Arabist music was the fact that Nasir and the newly crowned King Hussein of Jordan had monopolized the airwaves and turned them into an arena for "political commentary, slander campaigns, and state propaganda…to maintain power and secure hegemony among their respective constituencies" (McDonald 71). At the same time, while Palestinians in exile were reciting Nasirist tunes, displaced refugee communities were producing and performing their own indigenous sociomusical rituals and practices like the *ataba* and dabke folk songs like '"Ala Dal'una" and "Ya Zareef al Toul"— practices that were vital for preserving a distinct Palestinian identity in diaspora. These simultaneous practices—the state-sponsored nationalist melodies of the likes of 'Abd al-Wahab, the anti-Zionist wedding songs being defiantly performed within Israel proper, and the indigenous folklore being performed by rural and displaced peoples—represent the fragmented nature of Palestinian politics and attitudes, and the new heterogeneity created by the occupation's establishment.

In his poetry, Darwish, a contemporary of these times, often invokes the notion that Arabism is an essential part of Palestinian identity, arguing for the fact that Palestine is not merely a floating, independent signifier, but a piece, an integral piece even, in a whole. For Darwish, Palestinian national identity extends beyond the borders of Palestine and Israel to the entire Arab world, or the "Arab nation", claiming that Palestinian culture is:

> part of the culture of the Arab nation and not an island within it. Therefore, we've
> never accepted our voice as the voice of a narrow identity, but see it instead as the
> meeting point for a deeper relation between the Arab writer and his time, in which

the Palestinian revolution will become the open password, until the general

explosion (*Memory for Forgetfulness* 137-138).

Darwish explains that this is not an attempt to create a new literary movement, so much

as it is an attempt to situate Palestine within "a wider context" and to make the liberation of

Palestine part of a larger strategy, in order to "endow the idea of Arab cultural unity with one of

its possible forms (and Arab culture is open to its diverse and multifaceted history) at a time

when it is being exposed to more than one effort to fragment it or strangle it at birth" (Darwish

138). Unfortunately, no such Arab unity has materialized, and it is easy to see that the efforts of

"fragmentation" both within and without have been more than successful in the decades that have

passed since then. Almost in parallel, in Beirut, Cairo, and Gaza, three young men began to spark

the first stirrings of what would, by the mid-1950s, develop "into a network of Palestinian

nationalist organizations" (Khalidi, *PI* 180) and become the heart of the now well-known

Palestinian Liberation Organization. The student union, *Ittihad Talabat Filastin* (The Union of

Palestinian Students), at Cairo University, "was founded in 1950 by a young, cleanshaven

engineering student who had fought in the Palestine war of 1947-49" (Khalidi, *PI* 180)—a

student who would later be known as Yaser 'Arafat. Simultaneously, a medical student at the

American University of Beirut named George Habash founded a student union with a few

colleagues, while "grassroots militant organizations…emerged in the Gaza Strip, such as that

established by Khalil al-Wazir (a founder of Fateh later known as Abu Jihad)" (Khalidi, *PI* 180).

Being a kind of continuation of the national movement and consciousness that had

developed in the pre-Mandate era, and that suffered a collapse in '48, these new movements

incorporated the "same use of the theme of historic Palestinian rootedness in the land, the same

symbols signifying Palestinian identity, and the same obsession with Zionism, further

accentuated by the traumatic impact of the events of 1947-49 on the Palestinians" (Khalidi, *PI* 180). One major difference between the pre-'48 and post-'48 movements, however, was that the new movements were being initiated by new people who completely excluded members of the leadership from the old Palestinian elite, leaders that they "considered in some measure as being responsible for having 'lost 'Palestine" (Khalidi, *PI* 180). At the same time, however, many other young Palestinians were joining pan-Arab organizations like the Movement of Arab Nationalists (*Harakat al-Qawmiyya al- Arab*) with the goal of benefiting from Nasir's pan-Arab mobilization. But while the MAN took an "Arab nationalist form, and included numerous members from several Arab countries, [it] was almost exclusively Palestinian in its leadership and its basic objectives" (Khalidi, *PI* 182). Unsurprisingly then, after the Arab loss to Israel in the 1967 war, the MAN was transformed "almost instantaneously from an ostensibly pan-Arab organization…into one of the main Palestinian political/military formations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)" (Khalidi, *PI* 182) and the main rival to Yasser Arafat's Fateh for loyalty among the Palestinians.

While the early '60s promised a slow mobilization, the 1967 Arab defeat took a decisive blow against Nasir's dream of a Pan-Arab nation. The people's hope turned towards the newly spawning guerilla fighters, known as *fida iyyin* (or "the faithful ones") and the songs of the period to follow the war reflected "a mélange of sadness and despair combined with hope vested in the fida'iyyin" (Massad 25). Within six days, Israel had driven out the Jordanian army in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, destroyed Nasir's entire air force, seized the Sinai, and taken control of the Golan Heights from the Syrian army. However, McDonald notes how the real damage wasn't simply territorial, but psychological. "In defeating the combined Arab armies Israel had humiliated Nasser and put a final end to the dream of Arabism and the collective

liberation of Palestine" (79). Not only did the Six-Day war displace hundreds of thousands more people, and doubly displace thousands more, but it signified the pronounced defeat of the dream in a strong, independent Arab world that may one day restore their livelihood and their homeland. The defeat also created new difficulties for the almost one million Palestinians, most of them refugees from 1948, living in the West Bank who, with "the retreat of the Jordanian army…found themselves under Israeli military occupation" (McDonald 79).

The '67 defeat came to be known as *Al-Naksa*, or the setback, because it created "a new wave of dispossessed and a new sphere of exile in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan" (McDonald 79). According to Said in *The Question of Palestine*, it was this loss in '67 that encouraged Palestinians all over the diaspora to become involved in the resistance and identify with the "more open Palestinian assertion eventually embodied in the Palestine Liberation Organization and its program" (Said 147). Many Palestinians found hope in groups like Fateh (later the PLO), who had been gaining traction by the '60s. Arafat had espoused a Palestinian particularism early on and had focused on resolving the grievances of those directly under Israeli occupation and in exile.

The Palestine Liberation Organization was then founded in Jerusalem only a few years before the Six Day War, in May 1964, with the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle as its main objective. The PLO's true dominance of the Palestinian political field, however, didn't truly begin until the post-67 period, specifically after the battle of Al-Karameh in 1968. The PLO's victory at Karameh enabled it to establish a centralized relationship with the Palestinian communities in historic Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the Gulf, Europe and the Americas. Said describes Karameh as "the beginning of the phase of the quickest Palestinian growth; volunteers poured in from all parts of the Arab world, and within a year Palestinian fedayeen

were the force to be reckoned with in Jordan" (157). After Karameh, most Palestinians both within and without historic Palestine accepted the PLO as their sole legitimate representative, which contributed to its budding hegemonic power. That power, however, was largely rooted in and fueled by external influences, including foreign aid (particularly Soviet aid, which became a staple of its economy after Karameh, and which, by 1971, began providing the PLO with outright military assistance) and the nature of its relationships with the country of residence, which was often volatile.

Culturally, the PLO's growing power was reflected in the "new genre of songs for Palestine produced by Palestinian diaspora singers linked to the newly autonomous PLO" (Massad 31). This included both Palestinian and other Arab singers, such as Egyptian Sheikh Imam and Ahmad Fuad Nagam. The pair gained popularity in prison after being arrested by Egyptian authorities in 1969 and were released in 1971. While they were periodically imprisoned, often without trial, with every "month spent in prison, Sheikh Imam's fame and following grew until he was widely recognized as one of Egypt's national folk heroes despite the fact that his music was banned from Egyptian media" (McDonald 82). Thus, rather than being popular in nature, Imam's music was more underground and focused primarily on armed struggle, and many of his songs were popular among Palestinians. This was not, however, because his songs were an overt call to arms, but because "his music resonated with the people in its capacity to give new subaltern meanings to state propaganda" (McDonald 82). One such songs was "Ya Filastiniyyeh" (O Palestinians), composed by Sheikh Imam with lyrics by Fu'ad Najm. The lyrics read as follows:

> O Palestinians, the fusilier has shot you
>
> With Zionism which kills the doves that live under your protection

O Palestinians, I want to come and be with you, weapons in hand

And I want my hands to go down with yours to smash the snake's head

And then Hulagu's law will die

O Palestinians, exile has lasted so long

That the desert is moaning from the refugees and the victims

And the land remains nostalgic for its peasants who watered it

Revolution is the goal, and victory shall be your first step. (translated by Massad 30)

Rather than being a call to arms, the song's lyrics subvert and make a mockery of the different systems of power in place, be they British, Israeli, or Arab. It releases the Palestinian narrative from association with any leader, state, or system and instead places the refugee and peasant as the highest symbol of morality and purity, as being the favorite of the land itself. This chorus quickly sums up the different associations between armies and peoples made during the times: the "fusilier" is the British militant for whom Zionism is a weapon that he wields against the Palestinians, killing the "doves", or innocence that the Palestinian people here represent. The "snake" metaphor is obvious in its role as signifying treachery and betrayal, the snakes "head", or the source of the problem, who perpetuates "Hulagu's law", or what would be interpreted in an Arabic context as barbarianism. Hulagu Khan, being the grandson of Genghis Khan, and ruler of Mongol Iran, is here equated not only with the British and Zionist armies, but with the Arab leaders who the singer is suggesting are philistine and barbarous in their cruelty. The last line returns to that archetypal theme of romanticization of the land and the return to the land, elevating the refugee and "peasants who watered it" to the highest status. In a time where their leaders had failed them, Sheikh Imam was able to give a voice to the "marginalized, angry

masses with [his] great sense of irony and satiric commentary about the misdeeds of the Arab

leadership, in effect transforming state media into a tool of political protest" (McDonald 82).

Sheikh Imam's "Ya Filastiniyyeh" became so popular that Arafat requested to meet the Sheikh

and have it performed for him upon arriving in Cairo.

1.4 From the *Naksa* ('67) to the *Intifada* ('87)

The political landscape within Egypt and the Levant changed drastically throughout the

late '60s and early '70s, with the '67 war, rise of the PLO, Nasir's death in 1970, and Hafez al-

Asad's overthrow of the Syrian regime in the same year. After the collective defeat of the Arab

armies, there was now a gap of superpowers where Nasir had once provided a possible model for

a dominant Arab hegemony, with himself as the leader of Palestinian liberation. Instead, "a new

generation of refugees took it on themselves to fight for their repatriation. The national construct

of the fallah al-sumud (steadfast peasant) was being replaced by the uniformed fida'i (freedom

fighter)" (McDonald 80). This created a dramatic sociocultural shift in Palestinian communities,

especially the refugee communities, most of whom until now were waiting somewhat passively

for return. Another essential contributing factor to the rise of the *fida iyin* out of refugee camps

was the infrastructural transformation they underwent after '67:

> This new generation of revolutionaries (jīl al-thāwra) was born of the
>
> transformation of refugee camps from transitory holding sites made of corrugated
>
> tin to poverty-stricken urban ghettos constructed of stone and concrete. As
>
> refugee homes became more and more permanent, as the possibility of return
>
> became more and more remote, and as the first generation of refugees raised in
>
> exile came of age, camps across the region developed into sites of militancy and
>
> collective empowerment. (McDonald 88)

Led by Yasser Arafat, the *fida iyin* were the paramilitary wing of Fateh that quickly developed into a Palestinian resistance militia. According to McDonald, "Fatah was able to successfully harness the waves of youth culture, anger, frustration, and Palestinian nationalism flowing across the region" (McDonald 88). This emphasis on militancy in the camps, however, created a rupture of identification in the refugee communities, forcing them to reconfigure the ways in which they identified as Palestinians. McDonald notes how "camp dwellers began to identify themselves not by indigenous identity formations such as family, hamula (larger kinship groups), or ancestral village but rather by political ideology and party affiliation" (McDonald 89). Once again, we can observe how larger geopolitical shifts are contributing to the not only growing rifts between different Palestinian communities, but also redistributing these differences and forcing them to be drawn on new lines of loyalty. It is interesting to note that during this *fida i* era, the lines being drawn are amidst those outside Palestine and Israel proper, while Palestinians within Israeli borders appear to be largely uninvolved, contending with martial law and either resisting or embracing Israelification.

The fida'iyin embodied an entire political and cultural restructuring, with the image of the armed fida'i, klashin (Kalashnikov rifle) slung over one shoulder, becoming the primary archetype of the nation, signifying "the end of waiting (passivity and humiliation) and the beginning of an inherently Palestinian liberation movement" (McDonald 89) independent of the larger Arab world and imbued with and indigenous Palestinian cultural and national identity. Refugees began to wear the kufiya (the black-and-white checkered scarf that rapper Shadia Mansour famously sings about) and engage in traditional folk practices. The sentiments of "blame levied at the Arab world for failing to live up to their promises and the calls for local empowerment" (McDonald 91) are echoed in folk-verse cited by McDonald from the hills outside Amman:

Oūf . . . Oūf . . . Oh my father!

Enough wiping away tears, oh my people

And we journey difficult paths to freedom

I screamed, "O sons of the Arab nation," and found it cold as a

crocodile

Oūf . . . Oūf . . . Oh my father! (translated by McDonald 91)

The time for passivity, for "wiping away tears", relying on the "cold" Arab nations or anyone outside themselves, was over, and the song calls on each Palestinian to accept that the path to freedom will be difficult, but it must be taken. The metaphor of the "crocodile" is a popular expression in Arabic culture that is used as a verb rather than a noun to say that someone has "gone cold" or is insensitive, without conscience. Popular support for the *fida iyin* thus began to grow with every "highly publicized guerrilla attack against Israeli targets…to the extent that Arafat was soon able to construct a mini-state within pockets of Palestinian-dominated communities in Jordan" (McDonald 92) and later, Lebanon. Their popularity was catalyzed by Fatah's nationalizing campaign which utilized "a widespread project of popular media (journalism, propaganda, poetry, music, and other media) to elicit public support for the fida'iyin and legitimize its leadership in the fight for national liberation" (McDonald 92). In effect, the PLO began using a portion of its resources to fund artists espousing cultural material that aligned with its vision for the Palestinian nation.

One prominent group in the production of these songs during the '70s was Firqat al-Markaziya. McDonald describes how the group "attempted to perform the 'center mainstream 'of the political spectrum, bringing together secular-nationalist and socialist elements and themes"

(92). Their most influential songs were released in 1974 in their album *Palestine Lives! Songs from the Struggle of the People of Palestine*. The centricity described by McDonald is demonstrated by the album's songs, which "reflect an interweaving of socialist martial hymns interspersed with indigenous Palestinian sha'bi (indigenous) instrumentation, poetry, and rhythms" (McDonald 92). However, the album largely contains militaristic songs with marshal music that have an anthem-like feel, and what is interwoven through the lyrics are several themes we've seen before, most notably the expression of affinity with the land, the trope of homeland as mother, and the focus on the "lost dignity" of a destitute Palestinian people in reference to the wars, with the added celebration of the group that will make that dream of return a reality: Fateh. A song that demonstrates this well is "Biladi" (my country) which opens as follows:

> Motherland, motherland
>
> Fateh is a revolution against the enemy *(repeated twice)*
>
> Palestine, the land of our ancestors
>
> To you we will return
>
> Fateh is a revolution that will win
>
> Asifa is the hope of my motherland

Al 'Asifa (meaning "the storm") was the main armed military wing of Fateh formed in 1965. Most of its forces were later merged with the Palestinian Liberation Army before what was left of it was redelegated as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs 'Brigade during the second *intifada*. As is evidenced from these opening lines, the song is mostly an anthem to Fateh and its armed forces. Its propagandistic, nationalizing aspirations are enacted through the narrative interweaving of the collective Palestinian trauma of displacement, the spiritual-religious connection between the

people and their land, and praise for the martyrs and soldiers who are righteous in their fight to restore these connections. The next few verses demonstrate this interweaving quite well:

> Palestine, birthplace of Christ,
>
> Destination of Muhammad's journey,
>
> Liberate my wounded land,
>
> Cleanse it of usurpers.

> Palestine, my only hope,
>
> To you we will restore
>
> The dignity of our destitute people,
>
> Under the banner of long drawn-out struggle.

> Palestine, your people will not die
>
> They will defy silence, and Asifa
>
> Will keep its finger on the trigger.

> Asifa walks there,
>
> Planting the land with mines
>
> Loaded with destruction and doom
>
> For all the motherland's exploiters.

We can see how many of the themes and sentiments of the earlier folk music are carried into the song, fused with militaristic views and praise for armed struggle and violence against "the usurpers". While earlier folk music focused on various narratives of loss and espousals of lament, the songs of this era, and this album specifically, are more about fighting back, "defying silence", appreciating the soldiers of Al 'Asifa who "keep their finger on the trigger". What is

also shown in these verses is that, while McDonald speaks of Fatah's "secular-nationalist" nature, there is here an observably religious affiliation being drawn on Christo-Islamic lines in direct opposition to the Judaism of the Israeli state, addressing the fact that those who were exiled from Palestine were removed on the basis of not being Jewish. Rather than espousing a purely secular-nationalist vision as McDonald claims, Fateh perpetuates earlier traditions of Nuh Ibrahim and Sheikh Imam by engaging with the ethnoreligious paradigm of the Israeli state. In this song, for example, it places itself, its vision for Palestine, and the Palestinian people as its diametric opposite, leaning into its "non-Jewish" character. By doing so, Fatah's representation of the Palestinian nation takes on its own exclusivist religious nature in a way that echoes the ethno-religiosity of the Israeli state, as opposed to a nationalism that transcends religious narratives, suggesting that Palestine belongs to the Christians and Muslims *instead of* to the Jews.

Songs like this, alongside the PLO's recruitment efforts, helped enlarge the PLO's military wings and solidify its status as the representative of the Palestinian people even amidst military defeat. After their eventual loss in Jordan against King Hussein's army and their expulsion from Jordan in September 1970, the PLO moved its power base to the camps in southern Lebanon. Despite suffering a fast and tremendous defeat that ended in the death of over three thousand Palestinian civilians and soldiers, within only a few years, "the PLO had replenished its ranks of fida'i fighters and taken administrative control of the Lebanese refugee camps" (McDonald 95). While the already splintered Lebanese government proved easy to operate independently of, the PLO's stronghold was short-lived when in 1982 the Israeli army invaded the south of Lebanon and within days had: destroyed the PLO's autonomy, expelled the Syrian forces that had settled near the Israeli border, and established an alliance with Bashir Gemayel and the then dominant Lebanese Christian Phalangist faction. This was then followed

by a deadly two-month long siege of Beirut, ordered by Ariel Sharon, that subjected West Beirut, "the area with the highest PLO concentration…to a massive campaign of air, land, and sea bombardment" (McDonald 96), ending with the evacuation of the PLO and its leadership to Tunis on September 1, 1982.

An international agreement was reached after the siege "allowing for the peaceful evacuation of all PLO forces out of Lebanon and the guaranteed safety of all Palestinian civilians left behind in the camps" (McDonald 96). However, when Bashir Gemayel was assassinated only weeks after his election, despite having pledged to protect the Palestinian civilians that were still in the south of Lebanon, Israel instead helped the Lebanese Christian Phalangist soldiers enter the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila and commit one of the most tragic massacres in Palestinian memory. Guided by the lights of flares shot by Israeli soldiers watching over them, the Phalangist forces proceeded to kill an estimated two thousand unarmed, unprotected men, women, and children over the course of three days. The massacre created impactful reverberations in Israel, the Arab world, and internationally, creating a decisive shift in both international and internal opinions of Israel. McDonald notes how "Israeli public opinion, which never conclusively supported the invasion to begin with, publicly questioned the invasion and the death of so many civilians at a time when Israel's survival was not immediately at risk" (McDonald 96). The public outcry in Israel led to the forced resignation of Ariel Sharon from his position as minister of defense, and Menachem Begin left office soon after in 1983. In the Palestinian community, Sabra and Shatila became "powerful markers of Palestinian suffering, dispossession, and dislocation" (McDonald 97). They represented a new kind of vulnerability and revealed deeper layers disenfranchisement and helplessness. Sabra and Shatila proved that Palestinians did not just happen to be exiles but were destined to be dispossessed; that they

would be hunted down wherever they went; that when they had nothing left, their lives would be taken from them. The ultimate symbol of loss of agency, Sabra and Shatila marked "the beginning of a new poetics of Palestinian nationalism based in a new performative articulation of martyrdom, sacrifice, and suffering" (McDonald 97). To be Palestinian officially meant to suffer, wherever you were.

The PLO's expulsion from Lebanon, the conclusive loss of an autonomous base, the massacres in Sabra and Shatila, and the exile of Arafat and his officials, ended the popular support people had for the *fida iyin*, the PLO, and the entire notion of an independent Palestinian military capable of taking decisive action against Israel. This thus, once again, led to the transformation of the resistance movement, "refashioned in the image of the people and in their indigenous lifeways and folk practices" (McDonald 97). The musical reactions to these events took two major aesthetic trajectories. On the one hand, revolutionary musicians from all over the Arab world continued producing and performing martial hymns and military songs that espoused feelings of empowerment and militancy, while lamenting the failure of the Arab world to successfully fight for Palestine, such as in the famous "Wayn al-Malayin?" (Where are the Millions?); on the other hand, grass-roots protest singers and artists in exile were influenced by the revival of folk song and indigenous Palestinian music in the West Bank and refugee camps. The music and lyrics of "Wayn al-Malayin?", released in the 1980s, were written by Ali al-Kilani, a Libyan composer and formerly a member of Mu'ammar Gaddafi's inner circle who is often described as the "poet of the Green Revolution". His song, however, was most famously sung by the Lebanese-Palestinian singer Julia Butrous. In it, she sings:

> Where, where, where . . .
>
> Where are the millions?

Where are the Arab people?

Where is the Arab anger?

Where is the Arab blood?

Where are the Eastern Arabs?

Where are the millions?

Where, where, where . . . ? (translated by McDonald 98)

By insistently repeating the question of "where", the song invokes and subverts the notion

of displacement, in that here, what is displaced, is not only the people, but the promised support

and anticipated solidarity of the Arab people. As the song continues, we see in the lyrics the

dispelling of "the myth of Arab solidarity and instead [the glorification of] the independent

Palestinian resistance movement" (McDonald 98). The song continues:

We are the rights and we are the revolution

And they are elephant owners

The generation of rights and the generation of revolution

Ababil birds

We must throw rocks at them

Rocks of hell?

The song naturally echoes the popular sentiment of the era, acknowledging the new

"generation of revolution" (*jil al-thawra)* and empowering them to seize back their agency. The

song highlights the binary between "us" and "them" as that between the people and leaders

respectively. By repeatedly singing "we", Boutrous and al-Kilani align themselves with the

Palestinian people, suggesting that Palestine's protest is the people's protest, the Arab people, as

a whole. Furthermore, the song invokes the idea of "rights" alongside revolution, a relatively new

idea globally but even more-so within Palestinian cultural discourse. Funny enough, the UN

General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the very year of

the *Nakba*. And while the Palestinian right of return was also adopted by UN General Assembly

in Resolution 194, that right has yet to be accessed by Palestinian refugees today. The song thus

not only shuns the Arab leaders, but the world leaders, the General Assembly, whose

administrative resolutions have proven entirely ineffective. In effect the song is rhetorically

returning to power to the common person, to the disenfranchised, empowering them to "be" the

"rights" and the "revolution" that was promised but never delivered.

Interestingly, however, the song also once again utilizes Quranic imagery to inspire a

sense of responsibility and heroism in its audiences. The seemingly obscure allusion to elephant

owners refers to the Aksumite elephant army of Abraha which, in Sura 105 of the Quran,

advances on the *Kaaba* of Mecca. The *ababil* (literally meaning "flock of birds") were the

miraculous birds that protected the *Kaaba* by dropping small clay stones on the approaching

army. The insinuation here is that the new generation of revolutionaries are the magical birds

who, with stones, can protect the sacred from the advancing enemy. At the same time, the

utilization of Quranic imagery and verse reinscribes Islamic ideals into nationalist and

revolutionary imagining, something that becomes more problematic for Palestinian liberation

later on.

McDonald notes how "Wayn al-Malayin?" ("Where Are the Millions?") is an archetypal

example of the revolutionary music prevalent during the post-'67 period: militaristic, with a

87

"quick martial duple meter…common to both Arab and Western nationalist music, particularly military marches and quick-time professionals" (McDonald 99). However, songs such as these are not engaged with any "particular Palestinian folk-ethos in melody, rhythm and instrumentation" (McDonald 99) because the composer, Ali al-Kilani, and singer, Julia Boutros, are Libyan and Lebanese respectively, rather than Palestinian, and because the song is a product of a time when a "larger aesthetic transformation [was] taking place across the Palestinian diaspora" (McDonald 100). On the other hand, giving a new twist to folk songs and dances also became more popular among Palestinians after '82, and one of the most famous compositions in this genre was Abu Arab's "Sabra wa Shatila".

Known as Abu Arab, Ibrahim Mohammad Saleh, born in the now depopulated village of al-Shajara in the Galilea, was a Palestinian poet and singer for the Palestinian resistance, and this lament represented, not only the feelings of devastation and tragedy experienced by all Palestinians after Sabra and Shatila, but also the profound shift in Palestinian poetics in the mid-1980s. Abu Arab's singing style is "derived from the traditions of the sha'r al-murtajal, [which] utilizes folk-poetic structures, vocal timbre, and dialect" (McDonald 101) to communicate a profundity of morose feeling which McDonald describes as akin to a funeral procession. Moreover, the song represents the shift in popular national sentiment from "empowered and militarized resistance to mournful lament of suffering and martyrdom" (McDonald 101), emphasizing the feelings of vulnerability and helplessness born in the aftermath of the massacre:

> Pools of blood collected on the land, and Palestine has been drawn
>
> in it.
>
> Pieces of the explosions will be planted in the land.

Ḥanīn [yearning/blossoming] as revolutionary flowers, they will

grow and bloom.

I have heard the voice of Mary wailing.

Calling out to Jesus, "Oh beloved people of Jerusalem."

"What good was it for you to spill your blood on the cross,

When there are monsters out there committing these crimes?" (translated by

McDonald 101)

The lyrics present the image of a land covered in pools of blood, watering the "pieces of the explosions" that have been "planted in the land", only to grow into revolutionary flowers, creating a momentary vision of hope for the listener. In the next line, the tone takes a sharp dip into futility, when the narrator recalls having heard Mary question Jesus 'sacrifice, given that "there are monsters out there committing these crimes". The reference to Christianity "points to the Lebanese Christian 'monsters 'responsible for committing [the Sabra and Shatila massacres]" (McDonald 102). Furthermore, this use of a shared Christian-Muslim character subverts the perception of the massacres as a product of religious tension between Muslims and Christians and repositions them within a larger, more insidious political scheme that suggests a malice beyond religious disagreement. Much like Nuh Ibrahim, Abu Arab "calls forth national subjectivity based on collective suffering and resistance of all Palestinians (and by extension all Arabs) regardless of religious orientation" (McDonald 102), challenging the Islamo-dominant narrative put forth by songs like "Wayn al-Malayin".

The 1980s revealed new, decisive changes in the peoples 'attitudes towards the liberation

movement that were once again reflected in the emergence of new musical styles that

"reconfigured many of the indigenous participatory song types into nationalist songs for mass

production and distribution" (McDonald 8). The availability of cheap mass production in the '80s

also brought on a wave of nationalist culture whose themes stretched beyond the armed struggle

and praise for the PLO or the *fida iyin*, and gravitated towards feelings of "loss, defeat, shame,

and prolonged dislocation" (McDonald 103). As we have seen, during the high time of the PLO,

the influence of indigenous Palestinian folk song and dance had faded out and been replaced by

the more heavily propagandized militant identity being promoted by them to the public. This

militarized identity period was also predicated on the notion that the true Palestinian hero was

the one working "to reclaim the homeland from 'outside', ultimately locating Palestinian

nationalism and national identity in refugee camps and cities such as Amman and Beirut"

(McDonald 104) rather than in Palestine itself. However, with the PLO's expulsion from Jordan,

and then Lebanon, there ceased to be a centralized militancy "outside" from which to operate and

mobilize, and "nationalist energies were refocused back 'inside', where a new cadre of highly

educated folklorists were working diligently to preserve and promote indigenous Palestinian

folklore as a form of collective resistance to the occupation" (McDonald 104). Several

indigenous Palestinian scholars of folklore and anthropology had already begun conducting

fieldwork and working on preservation projects in the West Bank and Gaza in the mid-1960s.

But by the '80s, their extensive work on folklore and folk practices replaced the aesthetics of

exilic militancy with that of indigeneity, setting "into motion a widespread revival of indigenous

Palestinian song and dance" (McDonald 104). Cultural organizations for the preservation of

Palestinian folklore, such as *Jam iya An ash al-Usra* in the West Bank, also played a significant

part in reviving indigenous cultural practices by hosting cultural festivals and sponsoring book and journal publications. The group perhaps most influential in this revival movement of indigenous music was *Firqat Aghani al- Ashiqin*. The group was founded by two young men, poets Ahmad Dahbour and composer Hussein Nazak, who were working as artists for the PLO-funded Department of Culture and Media. Their first collaboration, an adaptation of a "well-known Jerusalem area folk song…became the centerpiece of a theatrical production based on Palestinian exile" (McDonald 105). Like their predecessors, they modified the melody, poetic structure, and lyrics to simultaneously appeal to larger audiences and to respond to the contemporary political landscape. The song, "*Walla Lazra ak bel Dar*" ("I swear to plant you at home") maintains that folkloric style of singing to the land, here singing to the "green almond stick", but takes it further by personifying those parts of the homeland that have now been lost and giving them voices that "sing" and "call out". The chorus and two verses go as follows:

> I swear to plant you at home,
>
> Oh green almond stick.
>
> And I will quench this earth with my blood,
>
> So you will be enlightened and enlarged.
>
> Oh green almond, call out to green Palestine, my country,
>
> Lend all your hands to me until my country is free.
>
> Mount Carmel, existing always in the free sun,
>
> the soil of the holy land,
>
> is mixed with the sweat of my ancestors

At Jarmaq, Safadi, Gaza and Al-Bireh, they sing our folkore,

And Jerusalem is calling, "my children, don't you dare be late on me".

Once again, the role of the land, and the central place of the exiled farmer-peasant as the rightful inheritor of Palestine is returned to in this song. More interestingly, places are explicitly identified and brought together to, in a sense, bear witness to the scattering of the Palestinian people. Jarmaq is a town in southern Lebanon that became populated by Palestinian refugees until being captured by the Israelis in their invasion of Lebanon in 1982, becoming part of the Israeli Security Zone. The last two lines bring the refugees (Jarmaq), the occupied territories (Gaza and Al-Bireh), and the Palestinian towns now inside Israel proper (Safadi, renamed Sefed in Hebrew) together under the self-referential banner of folklore. By saying that the folklore is sung all over these separated communities is to suggest that these traditional practices are what unite the people in disparity while simultaneously celebrating their own work of reviving the folklore by emphasizing its importance in the project of the nation's restoration. McDonald makes note of this in other songs as well, asserting that the "continuous use of signs localized in place and space speaks to common tropes of sha'bi nationalist song, rooting and singing the people directly into the land" (113). Ultimately, wherever they are, there is one mother figure who awaits them: Jerusalem, here personified as the mother urging her children to hurry and "not be late on her" or "not keep her waiting".

While there is this dominating peasant-farmer spirit, this is mixed with militant, specifically *fida i* undertones. Just as the *fida i* is "they who gives their blood" or gives their life for the homeland, similarly the song says they will water the soil of the green almond or "quench" it with their blood. In line with their forerunners, such as Nuh Ibrahim and Mahmoud Darwish, most of the group's members were both artists and politicians or political activists,

many of them having at one time or another served as officials in the PLO. McDonald notes how

this duality manifested on several levels for the group, ultimately setting them apart from their

contemporaries. He explains that what "initially distinguished al-'Ashiqin from their

contemporaries was their performative juxtaposition of two dominant ideational archetypes,

fluctuating seamlessly between thawri and sha'bi repertories" (McDonald 106). This was evident

in their performances as well, where they dressed up as both militarized *fida i* and rural *fallah*,

combining both the spirit of militancy and the traditions of indigeneity in their representation of

the national. This is evidenced in another song, called "O Children of Palestine", another popular

folk song reconfigured by Dahbour, sung by a number of singers both in the Occupied Territories

and in the camps. Its lyrics are as follows:

> O children of Palestine
>
> The homeless and the ones still at home
>
> We're done with the tears of nostalgia
>
> And we've come to die for our land *(nefdi baladi)*
>
> The children grew in foreign lands
>
> But did not forget the smell of the motherland
>
> Despite the exile and being driven away
>
> Palestine is for its natives.

The fourth line explicitly uses the verb form of the noun *fida i* to emphasize the role of

the martyr-soldier in the struggle for liberation alongside the exile. Furthermore, the group

pushes this sense of juxtaposition further in that they sing songs from indigenous sources in a

thick dialect over "modernized" melodies that incorporate Western militaristic elements. In its

early years, the group, under Nazak's direction, produced "some of its most famous songs. The

majority of this repertory consisted of slightly modified sha'bi nationalist song-types…set with

the contemporary poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Qassam, Ahmar Qabour, Tawfiq al-

Ziyad…and Nuh Ibrahim" (McDonald 107). Interestingly, we will see in the following chapters

how the overlay of modern music with early resistance poetry is a technique that contemporary

hip hop artists, especially DAM and sometimes Saint Levant, use often to amplify their own

message, and solidify their connection to a historic tradition of resistance.

To take a step back, however, and see where the fragmentation of this national vision was

taking place, alongside these new conceptions of the popular imaginary of Palestine, there

simultaneously continued to grow independent factions of Palestinian society that was more

heavily rooted in Islam. In 1972, the PLO published "The Educational Philosophy of the Arab

Palestinian People", a three-page document calling for the use of education in the cultivation of a

distinct Palestinian identity. It outlined Palestinian identity as secular, nationalist, and ultimately

Arab, embodied in the repeated phrase 'Arab Palestinian people'. Its plan was to establish a

democratic Arab state of Palestine in which all citizens would be granted equal rights regardless

of race or religion. The document itself did not mention Islam among the list of subjects to be

taught to children, suggesting that religious instruction was not considered essential in the

objective of liberation. However, while Fateh and the PLO promulgated the idea of a secular,

democratic Palestinian nation, its manifesto inevitably contained Islamic elements, but these

elements were latent and subtle rather than obtrusive or central to the character of the Palestinian

nation at this stage. As Mueller puts it, "Fatah (whose name is the reverse acronym of *Harakat*

al-Tahrir al-Watan al-Filastini, the Palestinian National Liberation Movement) conceived of the

Palestinian identity in nationalist terms: Palestine was 'the homeland of the Arab Palestinian

people'" (346). According to the PLO charter, "all Arabs who lived in Palestine prior to 1947,

including Muslims, Christians and Druze, were considered 'Palestinian' regardless of creed. Even Jews who lived in Palestine prior to the Zionist immigration were to be considered 'Palestinians'' (Mueller 346). However, while the surface-level rhetoric is generally secular, the nationalist discourse, like the many songs we have looked at so far, has been imbued with Islamic symbolism, with Islam being used as a "means of mobilizing the Muslim majority to take up arms" (Mueller 346). For example, Yasir Arafat has utilized Muslim themes in his speeches, quoting passages from the Qur'an, referring to the national struggle as *jihad* (holy war), and giving martyr status to anyone who died for the nationalist cause, without giving explicitly special status to Islam as a central element of Palestinian identity. Mueller claims that "he repeatedly affirmed that Christians were full members of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, Arafat did not adopt Islam as the normative basis for law or governance in a future Palestinian state" (Mueller 346). Thus, while the end goal of Fatah's nationalism was "secular in nature—to liberate Palestine—to destroy Israel and to erect a Palestinian nation-state in its place" (Mueller 346), given the fact that most of the Palestinian population was Muslim, mobilization and sentiment inevitably contained Islamic undercurrents. This "secular" vision was also consistently challenged by Palestinian, and larger, Islamist movements, whose approach still deeply resonated with the more religious portion of society, who believed Islam should (and would) be the basis for their political identity.

Thus, by the late '80s, the loyalties of the dispersed Palestinian population were divided between the secular, Fatah-led PLO and the Palestinian Islamist movements, and there began to grow two dissenting perspectives to the Israeli occupation. To the PLO and Palestinian nationalists, the conflict was between Arab Palestinians and Zionist colonizers, but to the Palestinian Islamist movement, the conflict was between Islam and Judaism: "The Muslim

Brothers viewed Israel as land usurped from *dar al-lslam* (the abode of Islam). In their thinking, the Muslims had lost Palestine to the Jews in 1948 because the Muslim world had strayed from the fundamentals" (Mueller 347). The first major invasion of political Islam into the Palestinian political field came in '88 during the First Intifada with the rise of Hamas, a party that the PLO chose not to integrate into its national political body, and who were democratically voted into power by the people in the Gaza strip.

The Palestinian Islamist movements incorporated elements of Palestinian nationalism into their ideology, and the variously growing powers eventually culminated in the establishment of Hamas in Gaza in 1987 at the onset of the First Intifada. The objectives of the Islamist groups harkened back to a pre-Tanzimat era, one that reasserted religion and the Arabic language in its rightful position at the apex of legal and civil society. Hamas 'founding charter of 1988 declared *jihad* for the liberation of Palestine as an individual duty of all Palestinians, and an obligation on every Muslim. It called for the education of Muslims of the Qur'an, Islamic texts, and history under the guidance of Islamic clerics. And it called for the cultivation of a "Muslim awareness" and propagation of the spirit of *jihad* throughout the *umma* (community of believers). Besides the PLO's already growing internal fragmentation, Hamas became the most serious challenge to the hegemony of their national movement before the establishment of the PA in 1994. The Palestinian political movement, which had previously been defined as a national movement or as a revolution began to be referred to as the national *and* Islamic movement, a tension that would inevitably underlie the First Intifada.

The First Intifada is remembered to have begun with the death (or alleged murder) of four Gazan laborers. Their deaths were reported by Israeli news in passing, as "another regrettable yet unavoidable traffic accident endemic to life in the territories" (McDonald 116). What had

happened was an Israeli transporter had swerved off the road and crashed into a line of cars waiting at the Erez military checkpoint, crushing four people to death, and injuring several others. While the incident was reported as an accident in Israel, in the Palestinian, and especially Gazan, community, the crash quickly "came to be seen not as an unfortunate occurrence but as a malicious attack" (McDonald 116), a retaliation to the stabbing of an Israeli civilian days earlier. Residents of the Jabaliya area organized funeral processions that night at the cemetery and assembled "in front of the adjoining Israeli military base, with mourners throwing stones into the compound" (McDonald 116), bringing the Israeli government to issue sweeping curfew orders on all Gazans. The demonstrations continued and escalated the next day, with protesters lighting tires and constructing barricades to block streets in defiance of the curfew orders. When tear gas didn't deter demonstrators, Israeli patrols, sent to quell the protestors, ended up firing live ammunition directly at protestors and killing fifteen-year-old Hatem al-Sissi, now a known martyr of the resistance.

The first spontaneous, grassroots uprising to happen in Palestine since the Nakba, the First Intifada replaced the image of the refugee as symbol of resistance with the indigenous resistor living in the historic homeland. Palestinians living at home under occupation were now at the vanguard of the revolution, and the stone-throwing, *kufiya*-wearing protestor became the new icon of the Palestinian struggle, embodied in Naji Al-Ali's Handhala cartoon. Despite the "shocking numbers of mass arrests, curfews, injuries, and house demolitions, this incredible outpouring of public outrage against the occupation solidified a new direction in Palestinian history, politics, and culture" (McDonald 117). Furthermore, the intifada created a space for a national imagining that began with and extended from the people themselves. While igniting and coinciding with a resurgence in Islamism, the uprising brought with it a new wave of resistance

culture. Massad explains how by "the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s, and in the shadow of

the first intifada, a number of Palestinian groups emerged in the diaspora as well as in Israel

proper" (34) with new musical styles reflecting the peoples" 'new direction". Sabreen, for

example, a '48 Palestinian music group and the most famous musical group to appear around this

time, veered away from the ideological songs of lachrymose and the militant mood of their

predecessors. Their songs are often dreamy, compositional pieces that are sometimes purely

instrumental while at other times incorporate variations of folk tales and poems. Most of the

songs have soft rhythms and engage with anti-war themes, focusing on the results of war, and the

consequences of those subjected to its oppression, often within a broader, humanist, poetic

narrative, without explicit mention of Palestine. The song "On Man", for example, demonstrates

this well, with its chorus addressing the plight of a silenced people:

> They chained his mouth shut,
>
> Bound him to the boulder to die,
>
> And called him a murderer.

> They took his food, his clothes, his nation,
>
> They threw him to deadly volcanoes,
>
> And called him a thief.

> They denied him at every port,
>
> They took his young love away,
>
> Then called him a refugee.

It is interesting to note here that Sabreen has moved away from engaging in war and

military rhetoric and is more concerned with representation, with what the people are being

"called"—they called him a murderer, called him a thief, called him a refugee. This places what Szasz called the "struggle for the Word" at the forefront of the situation, and is an important lead-in for engagements of this kind in the Palestinian cultural sphere, with DAM's "Who's a Terrorist?", which deals with the issue of language and propaganda, being released during the second *intifada*. This chorus emphasizes language's power by highlighting the fact that, despite the numerous injustices being inflicted on a people, it is what they are called and how they are represented by the hegemonic power that decides their fate. The anti-war sentiments come through more heavily in the next verse. Instead of calling for revolution or glorifying armed struggle like in the PLO songs of the previous decade, the song instead addresses the fighter and attempts to put them at ease:

> You with bloodshot eyes and bloodstained hands,
>
> The night is short,
>
> No holding cell holds forever,
>
> Chains do not long remain.

The lyrics here very well embody the overall attitude of the band's music, an attitude reflected in their name "*sabreen*", meaning "the patient ones", from the triliteral root "*sbr*", patience. The stanza asks the imprisoned fighter with "bloodstained hands" to be patient, since the "chains do not long remain".

Sabreen's forming and rise to popularity, for example, coincides with the beginnings of peaceful protest across Palestine, paving the way and creating a space for young people to enact nonviolent resistance during the *intifadas*. The United National Leadership of the Uprising, an underground grassroots conglomerate composed of the major political factions that emerged to orchestrate the demonstration, "proved instrumental in maintaining the collective spirit of the

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protests, facilitating the means by which the intifada was to be enacted and determining the appropriate methods of popular resistance" (McDonald 118). The UNLU's success in directing the intifada could be attributed to the efficiency with which they were able to facilitate widespread cultural transformation in Palestinian society. By moving away from divisive political notables and their systems and harnessing and focusing instead on the frustration of the masses under occupation, the UNLU made possible the imaginary of an end to occupation, not by military engagement with Israeli forces, but via grassroots efforts of civil disobedience. The people, exhausted with material and cultural anxieties, were already vulnerable to and ready for radical social change. "In addition to resisting their deplorable living conditions and social, economic, and political oppression, Palestinians were expressing widespread fears of losing their 'indigenous selves, 'their 'Palestinian roots, 'to foreign occupation and encroachment" (McDonald 119). Thus, naturally, the cultural resistance took a turn towards emphasized indigeneity and rootedness.

With the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 came the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the entity allegedly meant to be the nucleus of a Palestinian state. However, the PA did little more than deepen the divides in an already fragmented community and undermine the presence and power of what was left of the PLO. The PA was excluded from dealing with Palestinians in Israel, and had little vested interest in the Palestinians in the diaspora from its very beginnings. Thus, when the PA as a limited self-governing authority on parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip failed to lead to a Palestinian state, the political elites were deprived of a potential sovereign state-based center, accelerating the disintegration of the already fractured national movement, and pushing more people, especially those in Gaza, towards alignment with Hamas. Thus, Hamas 'democratic victory was not reflective of "support of its platform per se"

but was, in reality, "an expression of resentment towards the "Oslo Process", which…achieved very little, and virtually converted Palestinians into helpless actors in the political process" (Knudsen 2). In the following chapter, we will look more closely into the implications that Oslo had, and continues to have, on Palestinian national and cultural identity, the new lines of division it imposed on the Palestinian population, and the moment of peace that it inspired which gave way for the emergence in Palestinian music of hip-hop.

Chapter 2
Oslo, the Intifadas, and Hip Hop

In the two decades between the late '80s and early 2000s, a series of world events and technological advancements—from 9/11 to the rise of the internet—significantly changed the geopolitical landscape of the entire globe, and especially that of Palestine and the Middle East. Many, if not all, of these major events, together with internal conflicts and uprisings in Palestine, and the signing of the Oslo Accords, would have major negative implications for Palestinians. These drastically new conditions and implications would in turn inspire a similarly drastic shift in Palestinian cultural expression, in particular in music, with the introduction of rap and hip-hop. In this chapter, which is something of a transitional chapter, we will explore these large and numerous cultural and political shifts that took place in the brief period between the late '80s and early 2000s that had an impact on Palestinian political life. We will briefly go over the events of the First Intifada, the Oslo Accords (which prematurely ended the First Intifada), and the Second Intifada, and see how figures like Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said responded to the Oslo signing, characterizing it as the event to have the most decisively negative impact on the Palestinian project of national liberation. It is during the interim period also, between the signing of the Accords and the beginning of the Second Intifada, that the first stirrings of Palestinian hip-hop began (somewhat) apolitically by '48 Palestinians in collaboration with Israeli Jewish artists, and we will see how the Second Intifada, which cut short this moment of peace, and which is still considered ongoing online under the title 'electronic intifada', created the first opportunity for Palestinian hip-hop to reach the international stage. I will also briefly look at the development of Palestinian and African American relations throughout the twentieth century, culminating in the awareness of a shared experience of being viewed by their relative empires as potential threats that need to be controlled by technologically advancing counter insurgency measures being

carried out across Israel and the United States. We will see how the Black liberation movement, in its efforts to connect Black Americans to their African roots, also paved the way for Black culture to influence and be influenced by transnational anticolonial and liberation projects like that of this emerging Palestine youth subculture.

2.1 Oslo, a folded scene, a Palestinian Versailles

In November 1988, the UN General Assembly press conference in Geneva concluded with Yasser Arafat's and the PLO's acceptance of UNSC resolution 242, the explicit recognition of "Israel's right to exist in peace and security, and [denunciation] of all forms of terrorism" (Hassan 66). This took place amid the First Intifada, launched by parties in the Occupied Territories (rather than by the PLO, based in Tunis), which was creating pressure for Israel and the US, demonstrating the unsustainability of the occupation's excessively harsh conditions on the Palestinian people. These events, together with the end of the Cold War and fall of the Soviet Union, which left the PLO without their primary source of international support, put the PLO in an already weakened position by 1993, giving them "a clear interest in entering into negotiations" (Hassan 66) with Israel. The Israelis, on the other hand, were more hesitant. They "took a bit longer to reach the point of readiness in recognizing the PLO and a compromise solution" (Hassan 66) and were divided amongst themselves as to how to deal with the Occupied Territories. Right wing parties led by Likud planned to plant settlers in the OT, while Leftists, whose views were gaining more traction among the public by the early '90s, argued that "one could not maintain an occupation and deny rights to over three-and-a-half million Palestinians, and expect them to accept the situation quietly and indefinitely" (Hassan 67). At the same time, because of Arab participation in the anti-Iraq coalition, and the Soviet collapse, the United

States, now emerging as the sole super-power of the new world, sought to create its own alliances with the Arabs, pressuring then Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir into conducting negotiations with the Palestinians.

The Oslo Accords, rather than providing any clear-cut solutions for the situation, were a series of agreements classified as "Interim Arrangements" meant to help keep the peace in the Occupied Territories. The consensus was that "the two sides were not yet ready for a full peace agreement and, therefore, an interim period was needed during which to build mutual trust" (Hassan 68). However, Shamir Hassan, Mahmoud Darwish, and Edward Said all agree that the process was doomed from the beginning, because "the very interim nature of these agreements…led to their undoing" (Hassan 68). Most important of these agreements were the Letters of Mutual Recognition, which "constituted the most irreversible move in the whole process" (Hassan 68), and in which Rabin made "no commitment beyond recognition" (Hassan 68), reflecting the asymmetrical power relations that were now being more deeply solidified between the Israeli state and the Palestinian liberation movement. The agreements were full of intentional ambiguity regarding Palestinian national rights, self-determination, and the withdrawal of Israeli settlement and military from the territories. These details, however, did not go unnoticed, and were immediately addressed by Darwish and Said, whose works reflected the population's general sentiment towards Arafat's decision. The Accords in themselves functioned much like Hall's "affluence myth" which "aimed to give the working-classes a stake in a future which had not yet arrived, and thus to bind and cement the class to the hegemonic order" (28). Similarly, the myth of the peace process gave Palestinians a stake in a two-state future which had not and would not arrive, and bound and cemented them to the hegemonic order, the normalization of an illegally spreading settler colony and its ongoing apartheid occupation. Like

affluence, peace and collaboration were the social myths "of the dominant culture *about* and *for* the working-class, directed *at* them," (28), the working-class here being the Palestinian population.

As we have seen, poetry and music have always played an integral role in Arab life and culture. As Sinan Antoon puts it, "poetry is the archive (*diwan*) of the Arabs" (66), and Mahmoud Darwish's place in that archive is paramount, not only for Palestinians and Arabs, but even for Israelis. In addition to being highly revered across the Arab world, Darwish is not only a prominent cultural figure, but "a single Darwish poem is…a political event, not just in the Arab world, but in Israel as well" (Antoon 66). It is thus not surprising that he would have a poetic retort to the lopsided paper tower that was the Oslo Accords. Given that Darwish resigned from the PLO almost immediately after the signing, Antoon argues that the poem can "be read as an enactment of Darwish's resignation from the PLO" (Antoon 68). In the poem, entitled "A Non-Linguistic Dispute with Imru 'al-Qays" ("*Khilaf Ghayr Lughawi ma Imru al-Qays*"), which appeared in his 1995 collection, *Why Have You Left the Horse Alone?*, Darwish poignantly criticizes the Accords and Arafat's role in facilitating them by comparing this moment to an earlier, Arabo-Islamic past, reviving the memory of the poet-king Imru 'al-Qays who, like Arafat, sold his people to a Western Empire.

A monumental poet of sixth century Arabia, whose poems continue to be recited by Arabs today, Imru 'al-Qays was the son of the last king of the Kinda tribe, his father killed by the tribe of Banu Asad. He is known to have vowed to avenge his father, regain his kingdom, and is "said to have roamed the Arabian peninsula seeking refuge and assistance from various tribal lords and brigands" (Antoon 68) to no avail, gaining him the sobriquet "The Wandering King". Finally, seeing no other solution, al-Qays was "compelled to seek the aid of the Byzantine

emperor Justinian (called Qaysar [Caesar] in the Arabic sources) in Constantinople" (Antoon 69). When al-Qays arrived at Caesar's court, he was received cordially, adorned as a royal, sent home with gifts, and offered a position of rank among the Byzantines. It was on his way home, however, that he received a letter "from Caesar along with an embroidered robe permeated with gold and poison. After donning the robe, the poison sloughed off his skin…and he died" (Antoon 69). This trip to Constantinople is referred to in another one of his *ra'ayya*, where al-Qays explicitly "boasts that he could have defeated his enemies but that he intentionally sought the Byzantines 'help in order to slander the Arabs who did not come to his aid" (Antoon 69)—not unlike the Palestinian leaders 'disdain for the Arab armies that did nothing to help the First Intifada.

Reflective of the futile sentiment that emanates from the names of historic events like the *Nakba* (catastrophe) and *Naksa* (setback), Darwish's poem embodies the feeling of absolute defeat and total lack of agency at the heart of the Palestinian experience. The fate of the poem's subject is entirely in the hands of the other, a reality that deepens as the poem moves along, developing from the restriction of their bodies to their words, to even their thoughts. This lack of agency over the body and self is echoed later on in Palestinian hip-hop after the Second Intifada, in songs like "Awal Bawal" and "Jasadikhom". "Jasadikhom", however, as we will see, speaks, not only of the body, but of the female body, and attempts to reclaim the agency that Darwish here appears to grieve the loss of.

Darwish's poem begins with the line, "They folded the scene". By starting with, and repeating, this statement, beginning with the poignantly ambiguous "they", Darwish establishes the asymmetrical nature of the power relation between himself and the other, the former being at the mercy of the latter from the outset. It is "they" who set the scene, who "fold" the scene, who

"[allow] us space to go back to the others/Diminished". Antoon explains that "The scene is being shut and folded by the unnamed triumphant others…who seem to be in control of how the past, as well as the present, are to be represented" (Antoon 72). It is they who create both the physical and temporal space for movement, and they who possess the means of representation. Again, this is a theme that is later challenged by hip-hop artists, who rhetorically recreate "the scene" in music videos like *Mama, I Fell in Love with a Jew*, where the action happens inside closed or suspended spaces that neutralize the power of both parties (which, in the case of this song, is a broken elevator). As we'll see in the next chapter, the video's setting highlights the inequality inherent in Israel's social and legal structure, but ridicules rather than succumbs to its influence.

Darwish continues by highlighting the naiveté with which he and his people succumb to the space that the other has created from them, calling it a "movie screen": "Smiling, we entered the movie screen/As we are supposed to be on a movie screen". Again, the idea of himself as puppet in the hands of the other is reinforced by the performativity insinuated by the presence of the screen, by the dream-like consent of playing the role created for them. The "space" mentioned earlier is essentially a space of performance, a space where they are erected as a spectacle to be seen in a particular light, to provide entertainment predicated on the other's tastes. Furthermore, the idea of "entering" as they are "supposed to", in addition to highlighting the predicated terms that they are to appear in, alludes to the restriction of movement inflicted constantly upon the Palestinian people, who have learned to move "as [they] are supposed to", have learned to be where they are "supposed to" be.

Moving forward, he says "We improvised a speech prepared for us beforehand". There is an interesting contradiction here between "improvisation" and "preparation" creating a sort of collision that had been building up in the previous stanza. Before this moment, the lines between

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self and other, between subjugated and subjugator, and between authority and submission were clear. The paradox, however, between the acts of improvisation and preparation, the former suggesting spontaneous creativity and the latter implying strategic planning and organization, indicate an almost consensual enactment of absolute irony, where the oppressed conspires with the oppressor to emanate a collaborative spectacle of their own humiliation. So deeply rooted is the oppressor's power, presence, and gaze, so intrinsic at this point to the identity of the oppressed, that not only do they recite the prepared speech, they go so far as to "improvise", to feign authenticity, at once reinforcing the image that the oppressor desires to emanate while deepening the psychological trauma experienced by those being representing, making the gap between self and represented self now infinitely wider than that between self and other. Going further, Darwish repeats,

> They folded the scene
>
> They triumphed.
>
> They summed up our yesterday from beginning to end.
>
> They forgave the victim her mistakes
>
> When she apologized
>
> For words that were about to cross her mind.
>
> They changed time's bell
>
> And triumphed.

Bodies, words, time itself, and the mere potentiality of dissident thoughts are controlled, monitored, and penalized accordingly. The victim is forgiven for a thought that she may have had, suggesting the repercussion that awaits her should the thought indeed manifest. Once again, the gap between self and self, and the psychologically invasive nature of the oppressor, are

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emphasized. As with the contradiction between improvisation and preparation, there exists here an inconsistency, in that the punishment, implicated through the idea of forgiveness, precedes the actual crime. Moreover, the victim is not only forgiven, but forgiven after repenting, underlining once again the seemingly automatic compliance of the oppressed. The other is so intrusively present, even omnipresent within the self that thought itself, or the thinking of thought, crumbles under their gaze. The oppressed have been subjugated to the degree that they in effect play the part of the oppressor within themselves, resisting resistance, playing the role of authority's watchdog inside their own minds. Interestingly, Palestinian identity in Darwish's poem echoes Butler's theories on gender identity, wherein they claim that "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts" (Butler 521). In Darwish's poem, in a similar fashion to Butler's notions of gender identity, national identity is presented in the "theatrical context" and is constructed through and "instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous" (Butler 520). Much like gender, under occupation, Palestinian identity becomes "an act which has been rehearsed" (Butler 526), one that "has been going on before one arrived on the scene" (Butler 526).

As with the blurring of identity lines in the poem, and the dissociation of the self with the self in favor of the other's approval, effectively collapsing the capacity for resistance, the Oslo Accords dissolved the means for practical resistance, internally rupturing the liberation movement both on the political and ideological level, as well as on the literal level, fracturing Palestinian communities in the OT even further with more checkpoints and new living zones accommodating Jewish settlements. What emphasizes this correlation further is the fact that Darwish's dispute with al-Qays is "nonlinguistic", meaning his accusation is not directed at al-Qays the poet, but the political figure, "who chooses a tragic path that spells his own death and

that of his people" (Antoon 72). This is a direct attack to Arafat the political figure, whose

decision to sign the peace accords was seen by many, Edward Said included, as a death to the

Palestinian cause. But to Darwish, not only al-Qays, or Arafat, is at fault, but even those around

him, who witnessed the deal happen, saying, "No one said to Imru 'al-Qays:/'What have you

done to us and to yourself?'" He goes as far as to reject Imru 'al-Qays from Arab heritage, saying

"It was not our blood that spoke on the microphone/That day" then later, as if pushing him out,

saying "Take Caesar's path/Alone, alone, alone/And leave your language here for us". In these

last few lines, Darwish voices what he wishes someone had said to Arafat, and at the same time

is enacting that rejection through the poem, though perhaps a little too late. But Darwish, being

both a cultural and political figure, not unlike Imru 'al-Qays, also performs his rejection in a

practical sense, refusing "to join Arafat on his path to the White House and [resigning] from the

PLO's Executive Committee in protest" (Antoon 72). Furthermore, his allusion to language, and

the demand that he leave his language behind, is symbolic of Darwish's demand that Arafat "end

the claim of legitimate political representation and for speaking in the name of the people"

(Antoon 73). In a later poem, Darwish demonstrates the ambiguity of his stance towards the PA

and the conflict in general, saying "I am not one of Rome's partisans/Who guard the salt

routes/But I grudgingly pay a percentage/Of my bread's salt"—he does not defend Rome and its

routes, but he also "is neither outside its scope nor in explicit opposition to it. He grudgingly pays

a price in order to survive within it. While he does not hop on history's trucks like the slaves and

servile kings, he does not have the power to stand in its way or to change it course" (Antoon 75).

Ultimately, the entire scene is being, not only staged and performed on "the movie

screen" as a "technicolor movie", but recorded by the victors, according to their whim, while the

victims are "forced to surrender and assume a role written for them by their enemies, who are

dictating the terms of the future as well as the past" (Antoon 73). The movie, the scene described in the poem is essentially history, and Darwish's poem itself is an attempt to alter it or to problematize "the way dominant history will narrate this chapter of the conflict" (Antoon 74). Similar to Sabreen's preoccupation with what the victim is called, Darwish is engaging with Szasz's struggle for the word, and in that quintessential Palestinian way, using poetry and the poem-song to challenge dominant narratives. Further than that, Darwish is directly addressing the fallacies that lie inherent in narratives that rise out of conflict, highlighting and criticizing the fact that when the victors write history, it is inevitably flawed, silencing the subaltern. Self-representation for the oppressed is crucified, culminating throughout the poem, from the moment "they" decide to close the scene, to the moment Darwish calls upon al-Qays to leave language behind. By the end of the poem, "the confiscation and/or loss of the ability to self-represent is complete" (Antoon 73), as is Arafat's role, not only as Palestinian representative, but as Palestinian altogether. In the last stanza, Darwish asserts, "We couldn't recognize our voice at all. / It was not our blood that spoke on the microphone that day". The evocation of "blood" harkens to the folklore that constantly reinforces the connection between blood and the land, from the blood spilt for the land to the blood used to water the land. In essence, Darwish is saying that Arafat, who "spoke on the microphone that day" does not belong to that bloodline, does not represent Palestine or Palestinian blood.

Another prominent cultural figure who almost instantly reacted adversely to the Oslo Accords, and attempted to challenge the dominant narrative, was Edward Said with his essay entitled "The Morning After". Said's ideas often echo those of Darwish's, alluding to similar observations, and are occupied with the primary concern of how history is being written. Said too notes the performative, spectacle-like nature of the entire act, scrutinizing in his introduction

the "fashion-show vulgarities of the White House ceremony" (Said 1); he also questions "how so many Palestinian leaders and their intellectuals can persist in speaking of the agreement as a 'victory'" (Said 1); he even likens Bill Clinton to a "Roman emperor shepherding two vassal kings through rituals of reconciliation and obeisance" (Said 1). Said also mentions how the Palestinian leadership had let slip many opportunities and "set aside numerous other UN resolutions…that, since 1948, have given Palestinians refugee rights, including either compensation or repatriation" (Said 2). Thus, to Said, the fault is the PLO's, who not only settled for the worst among a series of resolutions, but effectually reversed whatever progress was being reached by the intifada, and claims that "the PLO has ended the intifada, which embodied not terrorism or violence but the Palestinian right to resist" (Said 2).

Said's essay also makes it a point to highlight the obvious imbalances in the agreement, which concedes everything to the Israelis and almost nothing to the Palestinians. He claims that "The primary consideration in the document is for Israel's security, with none for the Palestinians 'security from Israel's incursions…There is little in the document to suggest that Israel will give up its violence against Palestinians" (Said 2). He calls the Accords "an instrument of Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles", a humiliation comparable to that of the Germans after the first world war. He also explicitly calls out Oslo's white-washing the past: "the domination (if not the outright theft) of land and water resources is either overlooked, in the case of water, or, in the case of land, postponed by the Oslo accord." Echoing Darwish's sentiment of the scene being "folded" shut, Said asks whether the document's "purposeful silence" around the issue of Palestinian rights, resources, and the matter "of how, by what specific mechanism" the situation will move "from an interim status to a later one" means "ominously, that the interim stage may be the final one" (Said 3).

After six years of ongoing protest and civil disobedience, "Arafat's signing of the Oslo accords divided the Palestinian people and almost destroyed their national movement. Followed by the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, Oslo turned the Arab dream of unity into a nightmare of disunity and division" (Said 35). Whatever grassroots efforts were beginning to take hold across the Palestinian diaspora were crushed by the actualization of the interim agreements. The first intifada had brought the Palestinians to international attention. In the years following the Oslo Accords, however, leading up to what would become the second intifada, the nature of Palestinian musical and cultural production took a noticeable shift from being resistance-oriented to promoting peace and reconciliation, a rhetoric more agreeable with international sentiment, making the Palestinian people more relatable to the international community. The Palestine National Orchestra (PNO), initiated by The Edward Said National Conservatory for Music, and established in 1993, was an important step in solidifying the Palestinian national presence internationally. McDonald calls the PNO an "interesting model of resistance":

> First, in seeking out and contacting Palestinian artists from all over the world, the ESNMC is creating a network of musicians rooted in a shared Palestinian national identity…Second, the PNO represents the first large-scale attempt to engage the international arts community as a purely Palestinian ensemble… Third, if the PNO is able to tour throughout Europe as planned, it will provide a platform for discussion of the Palestinian cause and the Israeli occupation. (10)

Furthermore, the PNO presented a new face of Palestine to the international community by producing and performing something that a western audience can identify with. By performing classic Western masterpieces, the group is "in essence demonstrating that this

Palestinian ensemble shares in the so-called 'civilized 'aesthetics of the cosmopolitan world"
(McDonald 11).

As we have seen, and as Massad asserts, "The history of songs dealing with the
Palestinian struggle parallels in many ways the history of the Palestinian struggle itself" (21).
With the geopolitical landscape changing over time, so the music has changed, and as people are
divided and displaced, so their relation to the nation becomes more particular and unique to their
circumstances. At the same time, the relation to the nation, in the case of Palestinians to
Palestine, and especially for young Palestinians today, is really the relation to a memory of an
otherwise negated, preindustrial collectivity. Songs that overlay or rewrite folk music, for
example, demonstrate this relationship, drawing on a collective memory that was once a
collective experience of rejection, dispossession, humiliation, and loss to articulate their own
entanglement in this rejected collectivity. Artists in youth subcultures speak on their personal
experiences against the backdrop of decades of art, poetry, and music dedicated to the collective,
the land, and national resistance. But as new lines of global and local power were drawn in what
Lubin calls the "unipolar American era" (145) of the 1990s, new layers of oppression and
misrepresentation emerged to be contended with.

We have seen how Palestinian poetry and song was used to inspire collective
imaginations and resistance against invading forces, from Napoleon to the British to Zionist
organizations and militias, and we've seen how, throughout the 20th century, the character of
national identity expressed through song became more and more musically bound up with
resistance. Furthermore, we've seen how those expressions of resistance and national imaginings
through the poem-song have varied between communities confined to different locales and
contending with different forms of oppression, othering, and disenfranchisement. Palestinian

resistance has morphed over time based on the political moment and in the post-Oslo, globalized, neoliberal world, it begins to spread out in almost rhizomic fashion amidst physically disparate communities . This has created what I call an ethos of resistance that can manifest in any myriad of ways given the individual or collective's sociopolitical reality.

The Oslo Accords all but killed any hope for the national liberation of Palestine, and allowed what was a fragmented vision to be split entirely. Palestinians in the West Bank were now even further separated from one another with Oslo's new zoning laws, and with the intermediary PA receiving all its global funding through Israel, youths in particular rejected it as their legitimate representatives. The Oslo restructuring of the West Bank, in a manner echoing the post-war redevelopment described by Hall, fragmented many Palestinians from their extended family and isolated them not only from outside "but undermined them from within. He describes how, in additin to this, the rise of living standards in post-war Britain "critically *obscured* the fact that the *relative* positions of the classes had remained virtually unchanged" (*Resistance* 15). Similarly, the rise of global markets and neoliberalism following the end of the cold war period created bubbles of pacification in places like Ramallah, where consumption markets are just enough to satisfy one out of resistance, to make one forget the situation they're in. The ability to access a global market and participate in a global culture of consumption, even when under military occupation, promotes pacification and contentment with one's circumstances out of gratitude for the perceived blessing of the occupied class's new-found affluence, what Hall describes as the "insistent 'never had it so good 'ideology" (15). That said, this new geopolitical paradigm did create new opportunities for collaboration between Palestinians and the international world.

One unlikely avenue of collaboration, for example, that emerged from this split, was that between '48 Palestinians and Israeli Jews, a collaboration that earned '48 Palestinians the label of "traitors" among many in the Palestinian and broader Arab community. As Maira puts it, "They are simultaneously viewed as Arab yet not Palestinian, Israeli yet not Jewish, loyal yet disloyal, indigenous yet not authentic" (103). Oslo was also followed by the increased decided emigration and relocation of many Palestinians to Western countries, where they continue to face intersectional layers of oppression both new and resonant of that sustained by Palestinians in the homeland. This has inevitably resulted in an ever-expanding mosaic of transnational Palestinian resistance whose unity now rests on memory and inheritance. The Palestinian in Israel contending with racism and second-class citizenship is thus part of the Palestinian struggle, as is the Palestinian contending with being seen as a traitor by the rest of the Arab world, or the Palestinian in France contending with Arab racism, or the queer Palestinian in the West Bank living in military occupation with no freedom of movement, at any time vulnerable to violence of Jewish settlers or the army, or even the parent culture itself on account of their sexuality. In post-Oslo Palestine, with a zoned West Bank, segregated East Jerusalem, besieged Gaza, and more people in *shattat*, infinite variations of intersectional oppression can (and do) emerge, all emerging from and returning to the memory of a pre-Nakba Palestine.

McDonald asserts too that resistance music in Palestine is not defined by "stylistic attributes, but in terms of musico-political processes: its articulation within larger projects of social change" (McDonald 5). According to this definition, all music produced by the ESNCM, for example, could be considered "resistance music" in that it plays an integral role in the larger project that is the ESNCM and its objectives. However, McDonald also argues that Palestinian resistance music can be defined as "the conscious use of any music in the service of the larger

project of Palestinian self-determination" (McDonald 6) which is precisely what the ESNCM was designed to do, from creating a space for Palestinian youth to express themselves through music to placing Palestine on the international stage as an autonomous cultural actor. This definition broadens the possibilities of resistance culture and keeps it from being reduced to a particular style or genre, so that "rural folk song, militarized marches, classical art music, and urban hip-hop may all be equally defined as resistance music" (McDonald 6). I argue however that Palestinian resistance music is no longer nor is always "in the service of the larger project of Palestinian self-determination" but rather is any music, today, produced by artists of Palestinian heritage using their art to contend with whatever intersectional systems of oppression they are faced with based on locale. Artists like DAM and Saint Levant, who often write and perform songs that solely address their personal experiences and limitations, are thus implicated in my definition of Palestinian resistance by virtue of their Palestinian heritage and the vocality of their discontent with their sociopolitical reality, rather than by virtue of their dedication to a larger project of Palestinian self-determination. This distances them from their counterparts in the West Bank who face occupational forces daily, and who continue to engage with hypermasculine narratives of violent resistance. Even more so, it puts them at odds with many of these actors, particularly in their queer activism and inclusion of queer Palestinians in their imagining of the Palestinian nation. It distances them and the West Bankers from those in Gaza, who live under the religious rule of Hamas and are consistently under threat of being bombed by the Israeli government. And all three of these groups, each of whose message is wholly unique, are all distanced from those who are still in refugee camps across the Arab world and wider *shattat* and whose work is mostly characterized by an overall sense of defeat.

While the breadth of what I call Palestinian resistance music that we see today owes most of its expansion to the decisive blow of the Oslo Accords, the build-up to this final moment of scattering can be observed in the First Intifada. Throughout the history of this ever-expanding mosaic of musical articulations of Palestine and Palestinian resistance, we have seen how the resistance has inspired non-Palestinian artists to sing about Palestine, how Western orchestral elements made their way into these songs, and how the technological developments of colonialism have allowed these networks to flourish across the Arab world and beyond. The First Intifada similarly brought in its own wave of cultural changes and new resistance songs alongside a renewed surge of Islamism. The Oslo Accords were then signed against the backdrop of the fall of the Soviet Union, the emergence of the United States as the dominant global superpower, and neoliberal globalization, fragmenting the community in new, more decisive ways than ever. And this major shift was once again echoed in the culture, giving birth to an entirely new kind of Palestinian youth subculture.

In the few years following Oslo, '48 Palestinians and Palestinians in the West Bank were exposed to peace-promoting initiatives, a major one being the P2PP, and the nature of Palestinian musical and cultural production took a noticeable shift from being resistance oriented to promoting peace and reconciliation. It is during this time that Tamer Nafar, a '48 Palestinian rapper from Lyd and lead of the hip hop group DAM, began collaborating with Israeli Jewish rapper Subliminal, at first rapping about local crime, drug abuse, and other social issues. McDonald refers to this time as the "collaborative" years that allowed for "a radical reconceptualization of national subjectivity away from the intractable past towards an imagined future… It was within this prolonged moment of possibility that hip hop first developed in Israel" (71). However, in the documentary, *Channels of Rage*, directed by Udi Aloni, we see the

tensions underlying this period of collaboration. While there are no recorded performances or songs available online written in collaboration between Nafar and Subliminal, in the documentary we are given glimpses into live events where the two shared the stage in front of a majority Jewish Israeli audience. The documentary reveals how Subliminal's music became more and more right-wing and nationalistic over time, while Nafar's became increasingly critical of Zionism. The film shows them performing together on stages in Tel Aviv, taking turns rapping over improvised beats, and it's easy to see the crowd's distaste of Nafar's verses.

Meanwhile, however, according to Nadia Naser-Najjab, after "the Agreement came into effect, construction of Israeli settlements increased by 53 percent" (425) and the international community reinforced this expansion with "arrangements such as the 1994 Paris Protocols, under which Israel collects tax revenues on behalf of the PA" (Naser-Najjab 426). Israeli military presence and policing increased throughout the occupied territories, and "Israel's creation of by-pass roads that connected these settlements…brought about further fragmentation" (Naser-Najjab 425). As Israel's economic, military, and demographic influence grew stronger, tensions between the two communities, and especially among Palestinians, rose, eventually leading to the Second Intifada.

Naser-Najjab outlines how peace initiatives like the P2PP failed to prevent this outbreak, and even contributed to the tension leading up to it, because "the 'peace 'discourse was deployed in a manner that silenced Palestinian narratives" (Naser-Najjab 436). The P2PP also "failed to acknowledge, much less engage with, a pre-existent tradition of contact" (Naser-Najjab 429) such as the unity of Israeli peace activists and Palestinians during the first Intifada. Furthermore, because these projects were "accompanied by a sustained reluctance to engage with the root causes of the conflict or its colonial dimensions…the framework of engagement delegitimized

Palestinian narratives of resistance and struggle and lent a spurious legitimacy to practices of occupation" (Naser-Najjab 432). Like the Accords themselves, the P2PP's "neutrality" gave more power to the oppressor and upheld the colonized/colonizer framework. After the eruption of the Second Intifada in September of 2000, the General Assembly of the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO) called "on Palestinian and Arab NGOs to conclude all joint projects (particularly P2P projects), and asserted that any future cooperation should be made conditional upon the recognition of full Palestinian rights including the right of return" (Naser-Najjab 438). This move was followed by the civil society's mobilization "under the banner of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which gained particular impetus" (Naser-Najjab 439) after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) declared the West Bank Wall to be illegal in 2004. With the election of Ariel Sharon's Likud government that same year however, Israel withdrew from the P2PP and its projects were stopped altogether.

Instigated by "Ariel Sharon's heavily militarized encroachment on two of Islam's holiest sites, the Haram al-Sharif and the al-Aqsa Mosque" (McDonald 1), the second intifada in the fall of 2000 put an end to the illusion of the peace process, and "Palestinian society quickly reverted to uprising mode" (McDonald 9). Virtually all cultural spaces were closed down, military pressures on the OT were intensified, and once again, the sphere of cultural resistance was transformed. By 2003, "the development of a new (and revival of an old) repertory of Palestinian protest song created an environment of profound fracture" (McDonald 5). Firqat Aghani al-ʿAshiqin (The Songs of the Lovers Ensemble) began collaborating with new, young musicians on a come-back tour to revive past resistance songs that were made famous in the late 70s and early 80s, like "Yama Mawil al-Hawa" (Turner of the Wind), one of the most widely known Palestinian folk songs. According to the group's *udist* and conductor, Adnan Odeh, it's a song

every Palestinian knows, "no matter where they were scattered…Everyone knew it because everyone could identify with it…the winter's walk of 1948…the summer heat moving [from Palestine] to the [Jordanian or Syrian] desert, the loss of our land, the sacrifice of the martyrs" (37-38). According to McDonald, that song in particular "played an important role in narrating a collective national history and identity in exile" (39). This was also the time that DAM's first hit song, "Who's the Terrorist?" came out online, and was downloaded over a million times, putting DAM on the international map for the first time. The song, which we will look at in more detail in the next chapter, was Nafar's response to the propaganda circulating in Israeli news and right-wing rallies classifying Palestinians as terrorists, justifying the use of violence against them. The rhyming chorus sings:

> Who's a terrorist?
>
> I'm a terrorist?
>
> How could I be a terrorist in my own country?
>
> Who's a terrorist?
>
> You're a terrorist.
>
> You're killing me while I try to live in my country.

In a clear address to the right-wing Israeli government, Nafar succinctly scrutinizes the absurdity of characterizing Palestinians as terrorists for fighting back against Israeli military aggression and occupation. However, in *Channels of Rage*, we see that Nafar does not try to justify the acts of suicide bombers, but rather argues that they are no different in their "terrorism" from Israeli soldiers who often kill people in cold blood. In a scene where Nafar is having an interview with Israeli Entertainment News, he says:

"What's the difference between an Arab terrorist who stands amidst a group of 13 year old girls and blows himself up, and the soldier who goes in and shoots them all to death? There's no difference to me, they're both terrorists. It's like if you dressed a cannibal in a tuxedo and gave him a spoon and fork, he's still a cannibal. Just because a soldier wears a uniform, that doesn't mean he's not a terrorist. I think they're both terrorists" (33:31-34:00)

Afterwards, in the documentary, we see Subliminal criticizing Nafar for calling Israeli soldiers terrorists, taking offense as someone with family in the army. Subliminal then makes repeated remarks against Nafar's style and the political angle he's chosen to take, saying that "[Nafar] says he wants peace but then he says things like this," as in, things against the Israeli people. Interestingly, however, the documentary shows us Subliminal's own conflict, both within himself and his audience. His own music starts out critical of the government, and over time becomes increasingly right wing until he begins referring to himself as a right-wing rapper. In one of his concerts, however, after he finishes one of his more nationalistic songs, he tells his audience, now hyped up, to "make some noise". They respond by chanting "death to Arabs", a chant common to right-wing Israeli rallies, to which Subliminal replies, "Not death to Arabs, life for Jews! Whoever says 'death to Arabs 'can fuck off".

By the time of the second *intifada*, things had already become heated between the two rappers, and the outbreak of the protests eventually drove the two apart, in large part due to the rejection Nafar had already been receiving when performing on Israeli stages, compounded by Subliminal's disapproval of the political direction Nafar was taking in his music. On the political level, the effects of the Second Intifada were compounded by U.S. involvement in the region

among other geopolitical developments around the Arab world, adding to an already outraged Palestinian population. According to McDonald:

> The American invasion of Iraq, the accelerated construction of the Israeli 'security/apartheid 'wall, the assassinations of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and his successor (Abdel Aziz Rantisi), the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal, the signing of the 'Road Map, 'and the death of Yasser Arafat all had significant effects on Palestinian society and were manifest in music and cultural production. (11)

Popular media commemorating the dead and expressing outrage was available within days of each event. At the same time, '48 Palestinian youths were using a transnational form of hip-hop to express feelings of ethnic and national sentiment in both the Palestinian and Israeli cultural sphere. McDonald recognizes this new musical engagement as reflective of a turn in an entirely new political direction, and claims that this youth subculture of hip-hop offers "a truly remarkable opportunity to document a new direction in Palestinian resistance song, one that [is] perhaps more aligned with new transnational social realities" (McDonald 11). He recounts a conversation with DAM leader, Tamer Nafar, about Tupac, revealing the integral influence the deceased artist has played in Nafar's journey as a rapper:

> You see . . . people don't understand that Tupac should be considered [a] shahīd [a martyr for Palestinian liberation]," Tamer Nafar explains to me backstage before a rap concert in Ramallah in the summer of 2005. "His experiences are our experiences. His struggles with the police are our struggles with the police. His ghetto is my ghetto. If you listen all he talks about is the ghetto, revolution, politics. And he died because he was willing to speak out for his beliefs. . . That makes him [a] shahīd, and that makes him Palestinian." (McDonald 20).

Nafar's sentiments reveal an identification and alignment with a broader, transnational struggle against state oppression and state-sanctioned violence against minorities and people of color, drawing parallels between African American and Palestinian experiences with the police, life in the ghetto, and the struggle for one's basic civil rights. As Lubin articulates, the solidarity movements that continue to grow between African Americans and Palestinians today hinge on a shared "structure of feeling" in relation to the state, within which "the everyday realities of police brutality, drug wars, racialization, and state violence in urban Black communities in the United States and in Arab cities in Israel/Palestine are compared" (Lubin 162). What's more is that Nafar calls Tupac a *shahid*, or martyr.

Despite the brief moment of peace between Israeli Jews and Palestinians that made for this cultural revolution, by 2002, each community's anxieties about the other were re-instilled, "the 'awakening 'or 'honeymoon, 'of the 1990s was replaced by an even more powerful malaise of xenophobia, fundamentalism, and intolerance" (McDonald 73) and for young Israelis both Palestinian and Jewish, hip hop provided "a neutral space within which Israeli identity might be radically reimagined" (McDonald 72). These efforts of reimagination that McDonald argues for are easily observable in Aloni's documentary, from both the Palestinian Israeli and Jewish Israeli sides. However, what is also observable is the way these intentions morphed over time as political realities and sensitivities created barriers for true collaboration.

In the beginning of the documentary, we see Nafar, Shimoni, and their friends in a van making jokes, saying to the camera, "film the coexistence". After the numerous developments we witness throughout the film, from the reactions of the Jewish audience to Nafar's songs, and Nafar himself observably holding back anger while listening to Shimoni's patriotic performances, to the remarks by Shimoni saying that "Tamer says one thing in Hebrew and

another in Arabic while pretending to want peace", the documentary ends with that same initial scene, overlayed with an eerie sepia filter, creating a sense that coexistence is a long gone dream.

2.2 The Birth of Hip Hop in Palestine

According to Nouri Gana in their essay, "Rap and revolt in the Arab world", rap and hip-hop first emerged in the Arab world "in relation to the most vexing and defining question of Arab contemporaneity: Palestine. It owes much of its current prominence to the unprecedented success and fame of DAM's explosive 2001 single "Meen Irhabi?" ("Who Is the Terrorist?")" (31). Today, beyond just Palestine, rap has become "an indispensable feature of Arab culture itself" (25). Furthermore, Gana argues that Palestinian rap "has not yet received the global attention it deserves despite — or, perhaps, because — of its combustible lyrics and uncompromising critique of Israel's splintering occupation of historical Palestine" (31). What Gana fails to acknowledge, however, is the fact that most Palestinian rap is written and performed in Arabic rather than English, with the exception of a handful of songs and phrases within songs, as well the Hebrew pieces that '48 Palestinians write for an Israeli audience specifically. Not only has Palestinian not received global acknowledgement, it has not sought it, as it is largely written for Arabs by Arabs in Arabic, besides a few outliers like MC Abdul's "Shouting at the Wall", which has received massive social media attention since October 7th.

Ever since its inception in the Bronx of New York in the 1970s, hip hop has become a global phenomenon, a form susceptible to local formulations, or as Morgan and Warren define it, a "quintessentially 'glocal 'subculture, one which demonstrates the ways global concerns are grounded in local contexts and cultures," (927), making it ideal for people in exile and dispersed communities like Palestinians to address the realities and limitations of their locale. Afrika Bambaataa is credited with outlining the four pillars of hip hop: rapping, DJing, b-boying and

graffiti. Like other musical genres, the subculture surrounding the music involves other elements like style, hip hop language, and historical knowledge of the movement (Morgan and Warren 926). As Maira also points out, beyond the Arab world, rap and hip-hop have become "the basis for a global youth subculture" as a "musical form that crosses national, racial, and religious boundaries" (72). Furthermore, these subcultures have used the modality of hip-hop to create new, hybridized musical forms appropriate to their specific circumstances. rather than being simply adopted of reproduced, hip-hop has been "recreated and indigenized by young people around the world, who have used it as a medium for commentary on a range of political and social issues" (Maira 72).

Beyond hip-hop's particularly fitting predisposition for expressing discontent, youth cultures all over the world have been influenced by Black culture in general, especially over the last century, each in their own way. For example, Hebdige describes how both hipster and beat subcultures in the West have drawn on Black culture for inspiration but "in different ways" because they "were positioned differently in relation to that culture" (48). Via the internet, Palestinian youth inside Israel were introduced to early rappers like Tupac and the NWA, changing the way they perceived themselves and their struggle. Nafar comments on this in an interview with BUILD, saying, "I would've known nothing about African Americans, which is the culture that changed my life, without Tupac. I would've known nothing if it wasn't for Biggie, Common Sense, nothing without these guys." The interview with BUILD involved Tamer Nafar, Samar Qupty (actress) and Udi Aloni (director), who were invited to discuss their new award-winning film *Junction 48*, a movie about a young '48 Palestinian hip-hop artist and his girlfriend living in a small, destitute town outside Tel Aviv, dealing with the day-to-day struggles of racism, drug trading, and religious repression. In the interview, Aloni also alludes to

the intersectionality of struggles experienced by people of color, women, and all victims of oppression, saying that

> it's not by coincidence that Black Lives Matter are supporting in solidarity with the Palestinian people. There is a praise of what it is to be oppressed and to speak it through hip-hop, youth that try to fight for freedom, realizing that women's rights are a part of civil rights, a part of race rights, that you can't speak of the one without the other…[2]

Aloni's perception of this phenomenon, to be "oppressed and to speak it through hip-hop", is akin to that of Morgan and Warren's assertion that hip-hop, rather than just being "a subcultural outlet for expressing a pre-constituted or essential Aboriginality…is associated with identity work, with encouragement towards particular identifications," (926). The notion of "praise" that he uses is also reminiscent of "pride", an essential marker of the identity-based politics practiced by LGBTQ+ communities, charged by a similar inclination to not only accept oneself as a rejected other, but to embrace oneself within an empowered collective among whom you are no longer "othered". As Crenshaw put it in her 1991 essay, "Mapping the Margins", for all marginalized groups, "identity-based politics has been a source of strength, community, and intellectual development" (1242), and in a similar fashion, Palestinian hip-hop artists and bands, like DAM, have become "(sub)cultural and community leaders" (Morgan and Warren 926) who not only inspire the production and reproduction of Palestinian "Indigenous communal bonds" (926), but who practice identity-based politics in their music, with messages that extend to, embrace, and resonate with other oppressed and colonized peoples around the world, from

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[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqdjbSdY7Qo&ab_channel=BUILDSeries

African Americans to queer youths. As Aloni puts it, "Tamer is the leader of a whole movement of new Palestinians who fight for freedom, fight for women's right, fight for equality".

Another Palestinian artist whose music resonates outside the Palestinian community while reinforcing indigenous communal bonds is Jowan Safadi, whose songs, like "El Police mish Policna" (The Police aren't our Police), have been sung at protests all around the Arab world. That particular song laments life under an unnamed system that works against the people rather than for them. Being in Arabic, it would naturally have difficulty extending to people outside the Arab world, while another one his songs, "Oh Super White Man", centralizes the Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation, while extending its address to the reality of colonialism, headed by the "super white man", worldwide, addressing the oppression experienced by all marginalized peoples, from Black and brown folk to women and queer peoples. Its intention is obviously more global, as it is written and sung in English, and is addressed to "white people", beginning with the conversational line, "Hello white people, I hope you're doing fine. I've got a message for you from Palestine". The song begins by focusing on the Palestinian plight, explaining to the listener that from his perspective, Palestine is paying the price for someone else's crimes:

> They told me everything about the holocaust
>
> But no one told me why I should pay the cost
>
> They played wars and told me that I lost
>
> And all the losers were forced to flee, you see?

Reminiscent of Darwish's "They closed the scene", this first verse establishes the lack of agency that Palestinians experience, and the artist's awareness of how little a role they played in

the creation of their own fate. In a similar fashion to Darwish's poem, Safadi recounts an

unidentified, depersonalized "they" in whose hands rests the fate of the collective. The song then

moves from addressing "white people" to specifically addressing the "super white man",

characterizing Palestine and the Palestinian within the myriad of people who have suffered at the

"super white man's" hands, singing:

> So super white man
>
> What about the Black man?
>
> What about the brown man?
>
> What about the red man?
>
> What about the yellow man?
>
> What about the woman?
>
> What about me?

Not only does the bridge connect the Palestinian plight to that experienced by minorities

around the world othered by the "super white man", but the othered gender, the woman.

Interestingly, however, while Safadi is an open advocate for queer rights in Palestine, mention of

them is omitted from this song, and may perhaps be considered subsumed into the signifier of

"woman". The role of women in the Palestinian struggle, and more broadly the perception of

women in Palestinian society, is heavily debated and constitutes perhaps one of the core

challenges that Palestinian collectivity faces. Given the growing religiosity of the core

Palestinian population (i.e. those in the Occupied Territories and '48), the discussion of women

and women's rights remains somewhat of a taboo, and is in many ways the gateway to the

discussion of queerdom and queer rights as feminism has been historically around the world. But the question of women, women's role in revolution, and the policing of women's bodies in discussions of tradition remain unsolved.

In the earlier poem-songs by the likes of Nuh Ibrahim, woman's role was often confined to the archetypal mother who spares no expense to send her sons to battle, despite their being women like Badriyya Younis on the frontlines of cultural resistance in the post-48 years. As the armed struggle became the glorified mode of resistance through the 1950s and 60s, and armed struggle became more conflated with religious war, islamic resistance, and *jihad*, women became more socially confined to roles of passive mother and humble sister/daughter. Between the hypermasculinization of armed resistance, and the patriarchal values of Islam, it becomes difficult to disentangle the preservation of tradition from that of women's "honor". While the latter may appear at first glance to be a dedication to women's protection, in reality it manifests as the policing of women's bodies, and the conflation of cultural purity and with sexual purity, specifically women's sexual purity. Maira notes how "female bodies and female behavior is a primary locus of scrutiny and surveillance in contexts where the defense or preservation of national culture is seen as of paramount importance" (92). This resulting misogyny, which has since become intrinsic to Palestinian society, is often challenged and addressed by both female and non-female artists alike who are more often than not also public advocates for queer rights.

The Aswat Palestinian Feminist Centre for Gender and Sexual Freedoms, established in 2002 in Haifa was foundational for the emergence of a new anticolonial, antihomophobic Palestinian discourse, and today there are over fifteen active Palestinian civil society organizations promoting LGBTQ+ rights and awareness in '48 and the Occupied Territories, as well as Palestinian artists, musicians, and activists on the ground who engage in individual as

well as NDO-led initiatives to help raise awareness[3]. In 2013, Al Qaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, launched its project "Ghanni A`an Taa`rif" (Singing Sexuality). On the 25th of May, the album's featured artists performed live in Haifa, exposing young Palestinians to conversations about sexuality and gender divsersity in Palestinian society through their music.

While initiatives and performances like this help reinforce communal, indigenous bonds (Morgan and Warren 926) that demarcate Palestinian identity and reinscribe it within a broader framework of transnational struggle for civil rights and national independence, in the absence of official, administrative representation, artists face the challenge of having "no consensus around the nature of those bonds and the political dispositions that flow from them" (Morgan and Warren 926). Compounded on their physical separation, with different Palestinian groups living in separate places, under different systems, and in sometimes totally unalike realities, are also the disparate visions of what a liberated Palestinian nation would look like and what constitutes "proper" Palestinian culture, causing an underlying and often ignored fracture in the framework of imagined unity. As we'll see in the next chapter, different Palestinian hip-hop artists around the world have sometimes completely disparate and sometimes contradictory visions of Palestine, with their focus and expression reflecting their lived reality, varying based on their proximity to the struggle in the homeland, as well as their adherence to religious loyalties. As mentioned earlier, '48 Palestinians are mostly concerned with their rights as citizens within Israel proper, and are the most vocal advocates for women and queer rights, while West Bankers are more preoccupied with their struggle against military occupation , so their music and performances will involve hypermasculinized ideals and macho posturing, and rappers in the

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[3] https://arablit.org/2023/11/27/on-queer-positive-sonic-expression-and-activism-in-palestine-10-songs/

U.S. and abroad are more likely to romanticize the memory of the land and engage in the exaltation of a lost *fellahin* era, and will often be more plainly critical in their lyrics.

However, the role of women is particularly challenged in this lack of consensus, as those on the forefront of the physical struggle, such as those mentioned in the West Bank, often employ lyrics and music that idealize hyper-masculinized images of national identity, reducing women to passive roles akin to the mother in Nuh Ibrahim, or ignoring the role of women entirely. Rappers from the Occupied Territories for example, like Shabjdeed or Dabour, situated in the West Bank, are face to face and in constant tension with the occupation, and their songs frequently involve a lot of hypermasculine visions of violent resistance and liberation that glorify such things as war, courage, honor, etc., harkening back to the era of PLO and *fida iyin*. On the other hand, in DAM's "Who You Are", this war-hero archetype is briefly characterized, near the end of the song, through a satirical, futile lens, as one of Palestinian society's biggest problems. The whole song, which we analyze in more depth, in the third chapter, speaks to the misogynistic tendencies within Palestinian society, highlighting the various ways in which women are often silenced, oppressed, and disregarded.

If "the body is always an embodying of possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention" (Butler 521) then the Palestinian body embodies the lack of possibility conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention, and therein lies the appeal of hip-hop. As Maira puts it, "the allure of underground rap for Palestinian youth [is] that it can move freely across borders when bodies cannot" (12). In this instance, the feminine '48 Palestinian body becomes the site of intersectional marginalization akin to the bodies of women of color in the U.S. who, "because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other…are marginalized within both" (Crenshaw 1244).

Hip-hop has thus provided Palestinians, here especially '48 Palestinian women, with a space to articulate and rhetorically rebel against intersectional mechanisms of oppression. Furthermore, Palestine, and by extension the Palestinian, "is conceived as one of the most visible, present-day materialisations of the "coloniality of power" – a spatial articulation of power" (Salih et al. 1136). The identity, the land, and the body itself, have become sites for a myriad of forms of oppression and articulations of power—among them dispossession, occupation, and apartheid—while Palestinian hip-hop acts as the "space of appearance" that brings together a "plurality of individuals coming together appealing to one another through speech and action, engendering the collective power to potentially unsettle existing inequalities" (Salih et al. 1138-1139).

More than just a musical framework, hip hop has become "a discursive space in which participants [are] compelled to make behavioral choices that determined and defined communal relationships" (McDonald 72). This alludes to Anderson and Jackson's distinction between hip-hop music as opposed to culture, in that behavioral rather than just artistic choices are being consciously made. In *Channels of Rage*, and in McDonald's reports, we see that since the late nineties, '48 Palestinian hip hop artists were engaging with the entire cultural framework, using the "fashion, language, body comportment, posture, and gestures [as] a tool for identification that allowed for, and perhaps demanded, more collaborative representations of self to emerge" (McDonald 72). This is evidenced in Nafar's expressed opinions in the interviews mentioned earlier, in the bands 'music videos, and in Nafar's repeated sentiments about his self-identification with Tupac and African American culture in general. We see it also in the way they dress, with Nafar dressing in classic hip-hop style clothing such as baggy pants or adorning a chain necklace in Aloni's documentary. However, while the overlap of these struggles may seem self-evident to us today, the wide-spread, public solidarity between African American and

Palestinian activists is a relatively new development, emerging from a somewhat complex

network of relationships that come together against the backdrop of a significantly changed

global economy and geopolitical landscape.

2.3 African American-Palestinian Solidarity throughout the 20th Century

Aloni is right to call this movement "new", because while there have been African

American-Palestinian relations throughout the twentieth century that have become better rooted

and more widespread today, there are and have been many barriers preventing solidarity between

the two communities. Bailey notes that in the U.S., "the liberal Black political class has largely

supported or remained ambivalent about Zionist policies and has hesitantly expressed solidarity

with Palestinians (if at all)" (1018). Many early Black activists, like Marcus Garvey, viewed

Zionism "as a quest for self-determination on the part of an oppressed minority group whose

members had been scattered across Europe…[they] saw the founding of Israel in 1948 as a blow

against global white supremacy" (AAIHS 2018). On the other hand, while many Black

nationalists supported Zionism in 1948, there was a notable shift in attitudes after the 1967 war,

"when radical Black groups and individuals began to locate solidarity with Palestine in an anti-

imperialist, antiracist lens" (Bailey 1017). A number of factors led to these new connections,

including Black nationalists 'renunciation of "Israel's invasion of Egypt in collusion with Britain

and France in the 1956 Suez war" (Fischbach 1), and the severing of connections between Black

and Jewish communities in America, brought on in part by the Jewish community's appointment

of "conservative California governor Ronald Raegan—no friend to the black community of Los

Angeles—to speak" (Fischbach 1) at the Rally for Israel's Survival in Hollywood on June 11 that

same year, among other things.

Martin Luther King Jr., a monumental figure in the civil rights and Black liberation

movement, had spent a year planning a public pilgrimage to Jerusalem before the war broke out

in '67. While King never publicly renounced Israel and its policy, nor aligned himself with the

Palestinian cause, he did cancel the pilgrimage, evidently to avoid alignment with Israel.

Fischbach quotes him telling his aides:

> I'd run into the situation where I'm damned if I say this and I'm damned if I say
>
> that no matter what I'd say, and I've already faced enough criticism including pro-
>
> Arab. . . . I just think that if I go, the Arab world, and of course Africa and Asia
>
> for that matter, would interpret this as endorsing everything that Israel has done,
>
> and I do have questions of doubt . . . I don't think I could come out unscathed.
>
> (72)

An interesting thing to note here, however, is the subtext that comes through from King's

comment when he aligns the Arab world with "of course Africa and Asia for that matter". The

association suggests an already fermented awareness of the intersectionality of these struggles,

even though the actualization of this political solidarity wouldn't become publicly manifest until

years later. And another major African American political figure, however, would play a major

role in making that happen.

Malcolm X was "one of the most prominent early voices in the 1960s to connect the black

struggle in America with a wider global revolution being waged by peoples of color, a revolution

seeking freedom, justice, and independence" (Fischbach 10), but it was his conversion to the

Nation of Islam that informed his global vision. Malcom X converted to the Nation of Islam

while he was imprisoned in the late 1940s, and at a press conference at the Roosevelt Hotel in

1958, he spoke out about the Arab-Israeli conflict publicly for one of the first times and

explicitly expressed his hostility towards Zionism (Fischbach 11). During first trip to the Arab world a year later, he traveled to Palestine for the first time, and the trip allegedly "deepened his belief that a white imperialist world was locked in a struggle with a larger black world combating racism and foreign domination" (Fischbach 11). This "larger black world" involved Arabs, Africans, Latin American, all colonized peoples, but Malcom X's alignment with the Palestinian cause was ultimately "the culmination both of his Islamic beliefs and of his keen sense of global black solidarity with liberation struggles being waged by kindred peoples of color" (Fischbach 10). The Nation of Islam connected Black Americans with their African roots by maintaining connections with Muslims "of various nationalities, including Palestinians" (Fischbach 11). It played an integral role in broadening the global awareness of Black activists like Malcolm X, initiating their involvement in and association with the Palestinian cause. It is interesting to note that this is due to Islam's transcendence of typical nationalism in its envisioning as a global movement, and while X and others employ Islam as secondary to Blackness, as serving the African cause, Islam as religion demands loyalties above nationalisms or race. However, Malcom X, and Black nationalists who followed in his thinking, saw that the solution for racism against Black Americans in the U.S. "lay not in trying to desegregate the United States but in waging a nationalist struggle for independence much like Third World peoples were doing" (Fischbach 12).

Assassinated in 1965, Malcolm X did not live to see the flourishing of these new international connections, but his pro-Palestinian stance would inform activists who began to appear more prominently after the 1967 war. Fischbach argues that Black Americans were "keen observers of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 1960s and 1970s and interpreted it in ways that related to their own lives and priorities at home" (2). Ethel Minor was one of said activists, who

published an article in the SNCC newsletter a month after the war, criticizing Israel and championing the Palestinians. The Jewish community, especially Jewish organizations "who had supported the SNCC financially and morally in the past" (Fischbach 31), was outraged by the article and by the SNCC's stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict. This added to the deterioration of Black and Jewish relations in the U.S even further, a deterioration that had already become "the subject of much public discussion by the early and mid-1960s" (Fischbach 32).

Works by Black scholars like Du Bois and Fanon which propagated ideas of "Negritude" and collective transnational identities, from Algeria to the Afro-Caribbean, also helped connect Black Americans to other racially and religiously motivated anti-colonial and liberation movements. According to Fischbach, Fanon's discussions "of 'Negroes and Arabs 'together as one when discussing the colonized peoples of Africa…and the fact that Algeria was both African and Arab helped solidify the bond between blacks and Arabs in their minds" (19). The Palestinian struggle in particular however, was given more attention by the SNCC than any other international issue for a number of reasons, not least because of Israel's ties with apartheid South Africa, and the fact that the U.S. itself is Israel's biggest financial supporter. Supporting the Palestinian struggle against Israel became more than "an abstract issue of revolutionary solidarity with another oppressed people of color but part and parcel of SNCC's deeply held belief that America was the enemy both of its black citizens and of the Palestinians" (Fischbach 36-37). There remained, however, activists who opposed the SNCC's public statements against Israel, and the views within the Black community on the Arab-Israeli conflict "competed with one another throughout the rest of the 1960s and 1970s" (Fischbach 29).

Black artists quickly began to engage with the Palestinian, and international, struggle for independence in their work, and support for the Arab struggle became especially popular among

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Black poets like Askia Muhammad Toure. It wasn't only poetry that was at the center of forging a new, political image for Black Americans, however, but all Black writing. And via these writings, "[from] the Black Arts Movement to articles in publications like *Negro Digest/Black World* and to manifestos in underground newspapers, black cultural expression reinforced the shared sense of struggle between black Americans and the Palestinian people" (Fischbach 92). By the mid-1970s, influential writers from the Black Arts Movement like Hoyt Fuller were publishing public statements questioning Zionism and criticizing the Israeli state, some at the risk of their jobs, until John H. Johnson, "the famous black publishing magnate decided to stop publishing *Negro Digest/Black World*, thereby depriving Fuller of his pulpit" (Fischbach 97) in 1976.

At the same time, throughout the 70s, more and more notable Black American writers and journalists began to publicly criticize Israel, like Shirley Graham Du Bois, wife of W. E. B. Du Bois, John Watson, and James Baldwin. Baldwin visited Israel in 1961, traveling through Israel and into East Jerusalem, then controlled by Jordan, to the Christian holy sites. In an interview in 1970, Baldwin bluntly lays out his perception of the situation:

> When I was in Israel I thought I liked Israel. I liked the people. But to me it was obvious why the Western world created the state of Israel, which is not really a Jewish state. The West needed a handle in the Middle East. And they created the state as a European pawn. It is tragic that the Jews should allow themselves to be used in this fashion, because no one cares what happens to the Jews. No one cares what is happening to the Arabs. But they do care about the oil. That part of the world is a crucial matter if you intend to rule the world. (quoted by Fischbach 99)

Knowledge of African American liberation groups and movements like the Black Panthers also spread across the Middle East, and even infiltrated Israeli Jewish society in the '70s, inspiring a group of young Mizrahi and Sephardi Israelis to start protesting under the name *Black Panthers*, a name which garnered them a lot of attention. The American Black Panthers were known of in Israeli society and were reported on regularly in the Israeli press which described them as "an extreme organization, with an anti-Semitic character, that has strong ties with Arab terror organizations and preaches armed revolution in the U.S. to undermine the current regime which it deems rotten" (quoted by Fischbach 135). The Israeli Panthers not only worked on drawing attention to the grievances of Mizrahim in Israel, that echoed those of Blacks in America, but they explicitly aligned themselves with the Palestinians, and "believed that Mizrahi/Sephardic Jews and Palestinians were culturally part of the same people. All that separated them was religion" (Fischbach 136).

Throughout the '70s and '80s, more and more writers, scholars, and activists both Arab and African American, reinforced the connection between Black American and Palestinian communities, aligning more and more in the public and political field with one another. The PLO often cultivated Black support through the media, Arafat himself "personally extended solidarity messages to black Americans on occasion" (Fischbach 138), and American and Arab scholars, including Richard Stevens and Edward Said, increasingly compared the situation in Israel to apartheid South Africa. The rise of the internet in the '90s, and social media in the 2000s made news and information easily accessible to people around the world and created new spaces and possibilities for transnational exchange and solidarity. Furthermore, Lubin notes how, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Palestinians and African Americans were both, in their relative locales, "rendered as surplus populations beyond economic inclusion and therefore were viewed as

potential threats— insurgencies—that had to be contained via counterinsurgency measures characterized by heightened security and military techniques as well as mass incarceration" (Lubin 153) creating what he calls a shared "structure of feeling", the "unconscious political sentiment that is not yet publicly articulated but that can be sensed or "felt" among a certain culture." (162). The early newspapers, poems and songs being produced in pre-48 Palestine, for example, might be understood as articulations of this "structure of feeling", signifying "an emergent cultural formation, a structure of feeling, not yet articulated as a social movement but as an important component of political consciousness nevertheless" (Lubin 163). Today, for Palestinians under occupation, whose physical bodies are restricted and who are faced with constant limitations in movement, social media provided them an opportunity to both send their voices and stories out where their bodies could not go, and to receive news from, be inspired by, and connect with others in similar situations. For Black Americans, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 exposed their exclusion from U.S. policy and the inadequacy of public care for their towns and districts while simultaneously strengthening their transnational solidarity with Palestinians. "Among the first donations to the city of New Orleans came from Palestinian refugees from the Amari refugee camp near Ramallah, who raised $10,000 for Katrina's victims" (161). Furthermore, Black Americans engage in cultural politics that articulate this shared structure of feeling "in which the everyday realities of police brutality, drug wars, racialization, and state violence in urban black communities in the United States and in Arab cities in Israel/Palestine are compared" (162).

Another pivotal moment in Black American and Palestinian relations was during the 2014 Ferguson uprisings in response to the death of Michael Brown. After Brown's death, Kristian Bailey notes how social media became flooded with content depicting the U.S. as a

police state, and the "images of people facing guns and tear gas while protecting their communities were not lost on Palestinians thousands of miles away" (Bailey 1018). Palestinian activists in the occupied territories started sharing their support and "practical advice on how to deal with tear gas inhalation" with protestors in Ferguson. In response, Black protestors in Ferguson, who "were surprised to receive support from a people undergoing a fifty-day Israeli assault in Gaza…began sending images and messages back, and waving Palestinian flags at demonstrations" (Bailey 1018).

These initial interactions sparked further, broader connections among the communities online that have helped reveal shared systems of oppression between Israel and the U.S. One such case was when it was revealed online that "the former chief of the St. Louis County Police Department was one of many US police officials to travel to Israel for joint "security" training" (Bailey 1019). Another was when "Photos shared on social media revealed that Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, and the United States used the same two companies' tear-gas canisters against civilian protesters" (Bailey 1019). In a way, social media acted as the essential catalyst behind the development of what is now considered by young people like Nafar, Aloni, and even Martin Luther King Jr., a self-evident alignment. As Nafar points out when he says that Tupac is Palestinian, Palestinian identity has come to pivot "on an axis of shared experiences of racism and political dispossession. To be Palestinian, in this sense, means to be engaged in the struggle for racial and ethnic equality" (McDonald 22). Hip-hop offers young people a new way of conceptualizing their struggles against racism, colonialism, dispossession, and all the various forms of imperial aggression. It is interesting to note here, as well, that hip-hop has had "particular appeal to Arab youth not only in pre-1948 and occupied Palestinian territories but also elsewhere in the Arab world where conniving forms of foreign and indigenous colonialisms

prevail" (Gana 27) becoming a pan-Arab phenomenon. For example, Gana describes Tunisian rap as "an unlikely democratizing force not only in the field of music and arts in general …but also in the public sphere where rappers have adopted an activist agenda…conveying their political and socioeconomic malaises to the powers that be" (26). Just as with queer communities in Palestine, the marginalization of many youths often comes, not from an occupying power, but from an oppressed parent culture concerned with the preservation of tradition and a purity of culture. Dina Georgis explains how, under the consistent exposure to occupational or state violence, the continual affects of fear and anxiety will push people to embrace "what guarantees safety such as tradition and community, even if it means forfeiting other desires" (3). Thus, Palestinian hip-hop today has become part "of a global Arab hip hop movement that is diverse and has evolved differently in various geographic and cultural sites" (Maira 74).

In contrast to their musical predecessors, Tamer Nafar and his contemporaries do not conceptualize Palestine "based solely on shared indigenous practices or exilic nationalism. Rather [they define] Palestine by the terrain of subaltern resistance to racialized oppression and state injustice" (McDonald 22). Much like the Black liberationists of the second half of the twentieth century, to Nafar, the Palestinian struggle transcends nationality and national liberation. Rather, Palestine encompasses the various battles being fought on the global "terrain of subaltern resistance to racialized oppression and state injustice". In the question of Palestine, this includes the struggle for the right of return of Palestinian refugees, the liberation from military forces in the occupied territories, and the recognition of the civil rights of '48 Palestinians living within the Israeli state. Furthermore, with the same global attitude that Malcolm X used to refer to all colonized people as "Black", anyone subject to the oppression of a discriminatory system, as well as anyone struggling for self-determination, and more importantly

perhaps, anyone willing to speak up and die for their cause (like Tupac) is Palestinian to Nafar, regardless of race, culture, or geography.

McDonald notes how, "Palestine exists, comes to exist, and continues to exist performatively: a reiterative citation of power that produces the very phenomena it is intended to regulate" (24). Each era, however, defines the nation in radically different terms, and as we have seen, the reality of being geographically fragmented has produced different imaginings of Palestine, as well as different ideas of what it means to be brought justice. While groups like DAM do give a voice to and engage in "a subaltern nationalist ideology and have promoted powerful sentiments of national identity both within and between communities in '48 (Israel), in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip (al-bilād), and in exile (al-ghūrba) (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon)" (39), DAM in particular also engage in a subaltern resistance exclusive to their situation as '48 Palestinians that is independent of notions of national liberation. As we will see in the following chapter, outside the *intifada* moments, DAM is often most preoccupied with addressing Israeli state-sanctioned racism and discrimination directed at non-Jews living within the state. However, what remains common among all the different iterations of Palestinian political identity, regardless of where they are, is the desire for belonging and recognition. As McDonald puts it, "belonging remains a foundational concern to ethnomusicology given its centrality to issues of social differentiation and reproduction" (23). In other words, because of its essential role in matters related to social distinction and perpetuation, the significance of belonging persists as a fundamental preoccupation to communities who face threats of erasure and suppression. Thus, outside of Israel proper, music and musical performances have been especially important for Palestinians in the diaspora in their struggle for cultural and national identification, "first, by providing a forum for the expression of subaltern/nationalist ideologies

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from within dominant host nations, and second, by facilitating performative interaction and belonging between diaspora communities" (McDonald 39). In the following chapter, we will perform an interpretive, textual analysis of a number of songs produced by Palestinian hip hop artists across the *shattat*, beginning with DAM's work and moving outward to the Occupied Territories, refugee communities, Arab world, and wider *shattat*, in order to examine these new formulations of Palestinian identity, and formulate an idea of how they function independently and as part of a larger, transnational subculture of Palestinian hip hop.

Chapter 3
Reclaiming Representation

We are the new Palestine…Palestine and Palestinians have always been something close to

every Arab s heart and I am proud to bear the responsibility of representing it." – Shabjdeed [4]

Music, having always been a large part of, not only Palestinian, but Arab culture, has

now become a prominent mode of identity expression and resistance all over the Arab world,

particularly among young Palestinians, in the form of hip-hop. As we saw in the previous

chapter, Palestinian hip-hop first emerged inside Israel amidst the collapse of the peace process,

which took a decisive turn towards failure after the Second Intifada. Since then, hip hop has

spread to Palestinian youth in the occupied territories and wider *shattat*, and is being used to not

only address the ongoing occupation, but to shed light on the social issues that Palestinian youth

struggle with in their own communities, express their rebellion against their parent culture, and

carve out new identities for themselves that are connected, in degrees of variation, to that parent

culture and to Palestine. According to Sunaina Maira:

> Palestinian hip hop, like all genres of hip hop, and indeed like most forms of
>
> youth culture, is a contested artistic form that represents the intersection of
>
> debates about tradition/modernity and nationalism/globalization, and is often a
>
> charged site of anxieties about authenticity and national identity in the face of
>
> colonialism and apartheid. (2)

The subjects of their songs include classic hip-hop material like cussing, drug and crime

references, etc., extend towards larger political issues like homonationalism, apartheid, and the

hypocrisy of surrounding Arab governments, and go as far as to meta-narrate the commercial

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[4] In interview with VICE: https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/ywaadj/bltnm-palestinian-record-label-interview

corruption of music, and the identity crisis involved in being caught between cultures, narratives, and lands. This liminality, this "inbetweenness", is one of the core elements besides their heritage that connects them to the parent Palestinian culture. As Khalidi points out, the "quintessential Palestinian experience, which illustrates some of the most basic issues raised by Palestinian identity, takes place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint", in the space in-between, a space "where identities are checked and verified" (1) and, in a way, negotiated. In this chapter, we will do a close reading of some of the most popular and controversial songs in the transnational Palestinian hip-hop and rap scene, taking the '48 Palestinian group DAM as our central locus, and moving outward throughout the Occupied Territories, refugee camps, and wider *shattat*. I've chosen DAM as the center to begin from for three reasons: first, because their status as '48 Palestinians puts them in a unique political position wherein they are formally recognized by the state as both part of it (holding Israeli passports) and as others (non-Jews), thereby giving them more freedom than Palestinians under occupation, but not as much freedom as a citizen in a democratic state. As Maira puts it, '48 Palestinians embody "the central paradox of the 'present absent 'which evokes the ambivalent existence of a colonized 'minority 'present yet absent within Palestinian national politics, threateningly visible yet politically invisible within the (Israeli) state and (Palestinian) nation" (103). This unique political positioning makes their work simultaneously subcultural and countercultural in both the Israeli and Palestinian cultural spheres.

Second, because their status as Palestinians with Israeli passports puts them in a neat temporal alignment with earlier prominent voices of Palestinian resistance like Darwish and Habibi, placating them as their natural successors; and third, because their founder and lead rapper, Tamer Nafar, is known as the godfather of the Palestinian hip-hop scene, beginning his

career in the late '90s, and inspiring later artists to follow suit. Since their release of "Who's a Terrorist" in 2001, which is cited as the launching point of not only Palestinian, but Arab hip-hop worldwide, a larger, alternative, multi-genre music scene has grown across the various fragmented parts of Palestine, attracting the political and musical engagement of many young people who are both seen and see themselves as "deviants" of "pure" Palestinian culture. Using DAM and the '48 Palestinian experience as the launching point, we will see how members of this transnational youth subculture relate to and recreate Palestine through their music, how their music and sites of performances become spaces for political engagement, and how their various articulations, based on locale, converge with, deviate from, and often contradict, one another. We will also see how these groups both conform to and deviate from articulations of Palestinian identity and resistance before Oslo. I am not a musicologist, so the focus will mainly be on the lyrical and visual elements of these songs and their rhetorical functionings.

As we observed in the previous chapters, Palestinian national identity has undergone a number of shifts and transformations throughout the past two centuries, with the traces of a budding collective and larger territorial consciousness reaching back to the late 18th century. We have also seen a pattern, or wave, characterized by moments of a rising unity that then falls back into fragmentation. In this way, Palestinian nationalism both defies traditional understandings of nationalism as well as conforms to them in the most technical sense. The Palestinian nation is an "imagined community" like any other, but with extremely nonconventional borders, rooted today in memory, tradition, and cultural expression. The landlessness and dispossession associated with it strengthen rather than weaken the impact of its legitimacy in the minds of its members, not unlike the Jewish cultural identity that, up until 1948, existed in diaspora and via the cultural connections of its peoples. Elias Khoury describes the Palestinian national identity as "the

landscape of our spirit where place and non-place are intertwined" (86). The non-place becomes as important as the place itself because it is "the polarity of home and exile that is at the heart of the Palestinian experience. Exile shapes the notion of the absent place—Palestine" (Khoury 86). It is thus the memory of expulsion, the shared trauma of exile from a place that has now become unattainable, that unites those forced into separation. And in the case of Palestine, the "place" must be insisted upon and re-iterated, or else it disappears, becomes consumed by the "non-place". Where would Palestine exist if Palestinians didn't sing about it? Write about it? Call themselves Palestinians?

As DAM puts it in "Milliardat El Dollarat" ("Billions of Dollars"), despite the billions of dollars spent every year to scatter and erase them, to force them into *shattat*, they sing each other's homemade songs in Israel, the Arab world, and beyond. In the "place and non-place" or "present-absent" nation, discussions of national or political identity must turn to examinations of cultural expression as the nation's most visible representative. What we find when we go looking for Palestine is a collection of cultural productions from all over the world that at times overlap while at other times diverge entirely or even contradict one another. As Elias Khoury put it in the '80s, "the Palestinian story would have dozens of different narratives all written in different places and from diverse perspectives: it would not be hostage to a single, closed narrative" (89). As is evident in the transnational Palestinian hip-hop scene, Khoury wasn't wrong.

Regardless of where they are, most Palestinian hip-hop artists are offering alternative images of Palestinian identity, as well as amplifying the untold stories of Palestine that transcend narratives of war and resistance. Most prominently, this includes the work of '48 artists who use their music to address the particular anxieties of their local social existence in Israel as second-class citizens fighting for civil rights, as well as the often overlapping queer activism that is

politically silenced in dominant discussions of national liberation. This dissociation from traditional resistance is however, a resistance in and of itself, both to the media and power regimes that purport false narratives about Palestine, as well as to the parent Palestinian culture that perceives '48 Palestinians as "traitors", queerdom as a national dishonor, and the entire alternative music scene as a corruptive influence on Palestinian youth, threatening Palestinian cultural purity. It is this new resistance, what Shabjdeed calls the "new Palestine", that aligns them with Hall's definition of subculture, where they "exhibit a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their 'parent 'culture" (*Resistance* 13). At the same time, however, Hall asserts that, as sub-sets of a wider culture, "there must also be significant things which bind and articulate them with the 'parent 'culture" (13). In the case of Palestinian hip-hop subculture, among a number of themes and motifs, what most binds and articulates them with the parent culture is their hyperpoliticized awareness and their rhetorical engagement with the land itself, so that "the land itself becomes an agent in the conflict" (Schept 106). The extent and form of this identification, however, varies between artists based on locale. As Schept points out, Palestinian artists often invoke natural imagery to signify the contrast between the resistance and the occupation, the latter of which, in contrast, is depicted through militaristic metaphors. The images of destruction and demolished homes "underline the persecution and victimization of the nation" while also fortifying "the semiotic language of a shared national identity" (Khalili, qtd in Schept 104). It is important to note, however, that this "'hyperemphasis of the pastoral connections of Palestinians to the land" does not always come from a place "of genuine rootedness but of an intellectualized, stylized assertion of place under conditions of rupture and threat'" (Bisharat 109). Thus, the land itself becomes a stylization, a marker of style, or signifier of this subcultural resistance.

Another thing that markedly identifies Palestinian hip hop artists is their use of language. Some write and sing in English, others in Arabic, the '48 artists incorporate Hebrew while others use French, and the majority code switch between some or all of these languages. The West Bankers, for example, use local and Bedouin dialects to emphasize their connection to the land and its history. For West Bankers, namely Al Nather and the musicians at BLTNM, the West is not on their radar, and in fact, is better ignored. For the BLTNM crew, the goal is to reach Palestinians everywhere and reconnect them with the Arab world and vice versa, to prove that they don't need a Western audience to establish themselves. As Shabjdeed puts it in an interview with Vice: "I believe in my people and in our capabilities…By continuing BLTNM as it is -- a high-quality local music source -- we prove to our fellow Palestinians that you can do whatever you want, right here in this 'semi-country'." The team's audio engineer and visual artist, Shabmouri, explains "Our Palestinian identity is ours to preserve and understand…It is not for westerners to consume and analyse in order to fill a fetishising void of theirs." In contrast, MC Abdul in Gaza uses English to push his message to listeners outside of the blockaded region's barriers, as does Jowan Safadi in songs like "Super White Man"; and Saint Levant, a newer Palestinian/Algerian/Siberian rapper, is characteristic in his code switching between English, Arabic, and French to emphasize his transcultural, translinguistic vision of what Palestine and Palestinianism truly means.

In 1993, the Oslo accords ushered in a new political era, embodied in Palestine in the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA). In an America-dominated, neoliberal world, the new interim body represented a new kind of contradiction: it sponsored "resistance culture" while "normalizing" the occupying power being resisted. With the rise of the PA in 1994, Palestinian artists had to now "engage with a matrix of intersecting forms of control, as exercised

by, first and foremost, Israeli occupation forces, but also the PA, the refugees 'host states, humanitarianism, and neoliberal economic forces" (Salih and Devroe 9-10). This led artists to start experimenting with new languages, symbols, and aesthetics, especially in music. Katiba 5, a rap band located in south Lebanon, have said in interviews that "rap music has allowed the nationalist song to evolve; it is a new modified form of nationalist music, but it's the same themes of suffering…it relies on words [haki], we talk about socio-political issues, about youth [Shabab] like us" (qtd. by Salih and Devroe 10). However, the most interesting of these ventures didn't begin outside, in places like Lebanon, but have come from within '48 and the Occupied Territories, where young artists have been engaging in a resistance that revolves around rap/hip-hop, and has extended to techno, trap, and other contemporary hybrid forms of electronic dance music, seeking to connect with an Israeli, Arab and international audience, and most importantly, each other. "All of us feel boxed in by borders and die to meet each other" says Al Nather, "But through music, Arabs across the region can share an identity. One of the biggest reasons things have changed collectively, is that now we can make music together without even meeting." (*Vice*). What's more is that, through music, with the help of independent initiatives like BLTNM and Jazar Crew, Palestinians are able to reclaim their narrative and disentangle themselves, if only for a moment and in, as Hall calls it, an "imaginary" way, from the occupation.

While Khalidi's conception of pre-48 Palestinians is of people harmoniously moving through the various, nonconflicting loyalties that defined them, based on their music it appears that those of the Oslo Generation living inside Israel, and out, do experience a conflict between varying loyalties, and the identity struggle endured by '48 Palestinians is arguably the most intense. While recognizing themselves as Palestinians, they are identified by the Israeli state and a large part of the Arab world as Israeli Arabs, a term that has derogatory connotations in the

Middle East. They are considered both traitors in the eyes of fellow Arabs, and outsiders to Israeli Jews. As Maira points out, for '48 Palestinians, there occurs "an internal or 'inside war ' that is less tangible and more difficult to confront than military occupation in the West Bank" (103). They are, what she calls, present absentees, exclusionarily included in the Israeli state as non-Jewish actors in an otherwise aspirationally Jewish democracy. The title of DAM's latest album, "Bein Haana W Maana"—which loosely translates to "between bad and worse" or "between a rock and a hard place" or, more literally, between one nonsensical situation and the other—demonstrates this essence of an identity stuck between two conflicted entities. One of their most popular songs, written in collaboration with Jowan Safadi, entitled "Awal Bawal", released a year before their latest album, talks about this in-betweenness in temporal terms, singing about the prolonged moment in-between, the period of transition, the time-space where internal, traditional identity negotiates itself with imposed external condition. As the song goes, "One by one, little by little, we're transforming into Israelis. They stripped us of our land, and our identity, and dressed us in boots and military suits". This is far from the confident Darwishian, "I am an Arab" cry, but not so far as to be totally disconnected from it. Rather, it is the very identification with Arabism that creates the conflict, otherwise assimilation would be easy, smooth as the transition between an Ottoman to a non-Ottoman nationality.

Palestinian national consciousness may have been initially born independently of occupation and resistance, but it is evident that as the occupation has solidified its presence, for those still within the borders of historic Palestine, be they in Israel or the Occupied Territories, identity has undoubtedly become entangled with resistance and with Zionism itself. While their major issue is with the occupation and its systemic racism, oppression, dispossession, etc. another integral issue many young Palestinians face today is the religious, and oftentimes

repressive, nature of their parent culture. Given the increasing religiosity of fundamentalist

nationalist parties like Hamas, Islam itself has become a point of contention for young

Palestinians, who complain of being "stuck" between "a settler stomping on my head, and a beast

ISISing on my head" as rapped by Tamer Nafar. Whether they be in *shattat*, between the reality

of a host country and the memory of Palestine, between the representation of terrorist and

manifestation of musician, between "othering" as traitor or as outsider, as dishonorable queer or

freedom fighter, Palestinians all over the world are wedged *bein haana w maana*.

3.1 '48 Palestinians – DAM

Mahmoud Darwish, from whom rappers, writers, and artists all over the Palestinian and

Arab diaspora draw much of their inspiration, insists that it is up to the poets, artists, and

creatives to speak on the people's behalf and in their language, and this is something he practices

in his poetry. Darwish is known for his use of simple, straightforward language that often reflects

an attitude of sad irony. He advises that:

> if we complain of the general inability to perfect a language of the people in
>
> creative expression, that should not prevent us from insisting on speaking for
>
> them until the moment arrives when literature can celebrate its great wedding,
>
> when the private voice and the public voice become one. (139)

Following in this advice, DAM often embody the people and speak "for them". They also

often invoke the spirit of Darwish and his poetry, recognizing themselves as part of a poetic

tradition, a subculture emerging from a cultural continuum. Their connection to Darwish as well,

as '48 Palestinians, is stronger than that of other artists in the genre because of their shared

experience of being "Israelified" Palestinians. In their song "I'm Not a Traitor", they echo

Darwish's ironic mixture of pride and anger in being Arab, alluding to Darwish's monumental

"Identity Card" poem by placing themselves in dialogue with an officer interrogating their identity, but this time "holding up a blue card" (compulsory Israeli ID). They begin the song with the declaration of being everyman, from everywhere, from "the Negev. I'm from Jaffa. I'm from Ein Hod. I'm from Acre. I'm from Jawareesh. I'm from Nazareth. I'm from Ramla". Next, they engage with that space particular to them, that strange, derogatory identifier of not "Arab", but "Israeli Arab". Mahmoud Jreiri sings: "Brother, what are we without this identity? Record it. Record it":

> Record that I'm among the Arabs who have questions.
>
> I'm among the Arabs who face dilemmas.
>
> At the beginning of the first page, a sentence:
>
> Arabism isn't a license and you aren't the retailers.
>
> The Arabs of Israel? How did you arrive at that analysis?
>
> Israel promotes a phrase and you work for normalization.
>
> To clarify the irony, would this be appropriate for Syrians or Egyptians,
>
> As the Arabs of France or the Arabs of Britain?
>
> Would you take it as flattery or as an insult?

Echoing and further building on Darwish's "irony", DAM's artists demonstrate their historic and transnational awareness, but also raise new questions about what it means to be an "Arab". They compare themselves to Syrians and Egyptians, whose national liberation projects were successful, and wonder if, had they not been, would they then be the "Arabs of X Occupier"? Furthermore, not only does the line equate Israel with colonialism, but it lends a

nature of transience to the idea of Arabism or Arab identity. Is "Arab" a transitory term? Given

that the MENA region has now been compartmentalized into traditional nation-states—

Jordanian, Syrian, Egyptian, Algerian, etc.—what other peoples are explicitly referred to as

Arabs besides Israeli Arabs? As the song points out, no one is an Arab by formal identification

anymore, except the Palestinians. After the 1967 defeat of the Arab armies, and as the final

nation-states were solidified in their independence—Yemen, Oman, etc.—emerging out of the

backdrop of a fallen, centuries long, Arabo-Ottoman landscape, Arabism took a decisive decline.

To be identified as the Arabs of Israel, by Israel itself, is an insult, a reminder that they belong to

a lost cause. It is as if they, Palestinians in Israel, were left the burden of Arabism to carry while

others moved on to more modern political arrangements. As Khoury puts it, Palestinian identity

was "lost in the process that transformed a once unbroken Arab geographical continuum into

discrete nation-states" (86). What's more is that, while the rest of the Arab world solidified

nationalisms for themselves, '48 Palestinians are still reprimanded and ostracized in Arab

political discussions for their Israeliness. In a performance of rhetorical rebellion, DAM

addresses this phenomenon, repeating the song's title: I'm not a traitor.

> There's no water in my neighborhood. (I'm not a traitor.)

> There's more students than there are chairs. (I'm not a traitor.)

> My entire house is made from the stone of Jerusalem. (I'm not a traitor.)

> (I'm not a traitor.) (I'm not a traitor.)

> At work, they asked me to change my name. (I'm not a traitor.)

Again, the theme of stones, a representative of land and ground for an otherwise

ungrounded, uprooted psyche, is regenerated here, echoing once again the Darwishian

primordiality of Palestinian-Arab identity. The repeated "I'm not a traitor" at once seems directed

at the listener, but even more so, it appears that the speaker is reassuring himself, reminding

himself through repetition who he is, as if to ground himself in the words for fear of falling for

the oppressor's representation of him. Furthermore, the theme of being seen as traitors by the rest

of the Palestinian and Arab world is itself a struggle for those who carry the "blue card", thus

their consistent repetition of "I'm not a traitor" and their reiteration of Palestinian cultural

artefacts. In the second chorus they sing:

> I'm learning about the Darbouka [a drum]. (I'm not a traitor.)
>
> In the same room in which I've lived for seven years. (I'm not a traitor.)
>
> My grandfather died wearing the *kufiya*. (I'm not a traitor.)
>
> (I'm not a traitor.) (I'm not a traitor.)
>
> I cried when [Gamal Abdul] Nasir died. (I'm not a traitor.)
>
> My son pronounces the letter "Daad." (I'm not a traitor.)
>
> We celebrate at weddings. (I'm not a traitor.)

DAM's rappers summon those pieces of culture that reflect their Palestinianness the best:

the *darbouka,* a classical drum, emphasizing the historically significant character of

Palestinian/Levantine music; the *kufiya*, a checkered scarf, historically worn by desert Arabs,

now a symbol of Palestinian resistance; Abdel Nasir, whose promises of an Arab nationalism led

by Egypt made him a symbol of hope to the Arabs of the Middle East; and the letter "*Daad*", that

hard "d" phoneme particular to the Arabic language, recognizing and upholding the centrality of

language in cultural struggle, and even more so, the Arabic language as "a language of struggle"

(not unlike hip hop itself). As Tamer Nafar says, "Write it down: Arabic is the language of the mother, a language of struggle".

DAM's earlier records focused on more local issues, like narcotics dealers that were infesting their communities, instead of national politics. This was during the brief period of peace that followed Oslo, and Nafar was mostly performing for Israeli audiences in collaboration with the Israeli Jewish rapper, Subliminal. But their material shifted dramatically after the eruption of the second intifada in 2000. Swedenburg reports that "On October 1, large numbers of Palestinian citizens of Israel went out to demonstrate in support of West Bank and Gaza Palestinians and were met by fierce Israeli police repression, which resulted in the deaths of thirteen protestors," (20). 'Who's a Terrorist?', the song to put DAM on the map, was released online shortly after and has since garnered millions of views across several platforms. According to Swedenburg, "The song deploys powerfully condensed and angry lyrics to flip the charges of terrorism, so typically aimed at Palestinians, back in the face of the Israeli state," (20). In the song, DAM addresses the hypocrisy of the Israeli state by placing the responsibility of the resulting terrorism, particularly suicide bombings, on the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian Arab people, going as far as to equate the Israeli regime to Nazism, rapping:

> Democracy? Or are you really Nazis?
>
> You raped the Arab soul so hard that you finally impregnated it and it gave birth to your son,
>
> a child named Suicide Bomber, who you turned around and called Terrorist…
>
> who's the terrorist?
>
> I'm the terrorist?
>
> How could I be a terrorist in my own home?

> Who's the terrorist?
>
> You're the terrorist!
>
> You barged into my home and ate me.

Rather than describe the regime and its ideologies in the third person, thereby defining themselves as outsiders to the state, the song is addressed *to* the Israeli state by those within it. Being Israelis, they speak to the state of Israel from within the state of Israel, while remaining in solidarity with the Palestinian national struggle. According to Swedenburg, "As second-class citizens of the Jewish state, the band's members are positioned in dialogue with it, and so their raps typically work to subvert hegemonic Zionist logic from within," (20). The issue of identity becomes more explicit near the end of the song, when they ironically (and rhetorically) ask the state what they should do to be considered human, comparing their treatment to that of dogs, and reiterating their stance to retain their identity despite the definitions imposed on them:

> When do I stop being a terrorist? When you slap me, and I turn the other cheek?
>
> Do you want me to thank those who harmed me?
>
> You know what, tell me how you want me to be. Down on my knees with my
>
> hands tied…?
>
> We'll be patient, we'll suppress our pain – the most important thing is that you
>
> feel safe…
>
> When a dog dies it receives sympathy, when we die you celebrate.
>
> You may think our blood is less valuable than a dog's, but it's not, and we'll
>
> continue to defend ourselves, no matter how long you call us terrorists.

On a side note, there is something almost erotic about these lines, suggesting a sort of sadistic inclination behind Zionist logic. But ultimately, in addition to oppression, segregation,

second-class citizenship and state affairs—the new Palestinian struggle is about language and representation. More than that, as embodied in the verse's last line, the Palestinian struggle is, above all, a struggle against false representation. Refusing the 'canonical logic 'of Palestinian nationalism, whose interests are confined to "histories of anti-Palestinian oppression and dispossession," (Swedenburg 14), these bands create an insistent dialogue with the Israeli and international society about who they are despite the threat of disappearing under colonization.

The threat of a vanishing identity is addressed most explicitly in another song by Tamer Nafar done in collaboration with Jowan Safadi, a Haifa-based musician known for his satirical and often provocative political songs. The song, entitled Awal B'awal, meaning "One by One", addresses the toll that the Israeli regime has taken on their identities as Palestinians. Besides the numerous allusions to the government's treatment towards them in their day-to-day lives, the chorus puts the issue of identity at the forefront in a highly overt manner, saying: "One by one, little by little, we're transforming into Israelis. They stripped us of our land and our identity and dressed us in their boots and military suits." As becomes clear in Tamer's rap verse, however, their identity crisis is not only a result of Israeli oppression. Rather, the rap reveals that this 'Israelifying 'is taking effect on an already vulnerable youth.

> To be settled with them we must be ashamed of ourselves.
>
> It's alright to be angry, our situation is truly outrageous,
>
> stuck between bad and worse.
>
> I have a dream of ending the Jewish state.
>
> I have a nightmare of living under Arab regime.
>
> The choice is either a settler stomping on my head
>
> or a beast ISISing on my head.

In his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott claims that "most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites," (136). "Awal B'awal" tells the story of this vast in-between territory occupied by young Palestinians, who are neither in complete defiance of their powerholders – from the Israeli state to Hamas – nor are they in complete hegemonic compliance, but somehow straddle the fence in-between, unsure how to define themselves and where to go amidst these equally divisive alternatives. Furthermore, the lyrical content and contemporary hip-hop style symbolizes the imminent clash between modernism and tradition experienced by these youths. As Mitchell puts it, "here is one country, divided between an aggressively nationalist and modernizing political economy on the one hand, and a more traditional agrarian and artisanal economy on the other hand, whose claims to national identity are disputed and even denied," (663). However, as Mitchell recognizes, the tension between modernity and tradition is even "immanent within the Palestinian and Israeli peoples as well," (Mitchell 664). While Israelis struggle between the "contradictory impulses of Zionism" that, on the one hand, is a "progressive, modernizing nationalist ideology" and on the other, "claims a foundational myth in ancient tribal and racial identifications, quite literally 'grounded 'in the sacred soil of Israel", Palestinians grapple between having some of the "most literate and intellectual of the Arab peoples…whose national struggle has been inspired by third-world revolutions and forms of socialism that, at some deeper level, are consonant with the socialist forms of Zionism" on one side, and "a deeply religious and tribalistic culture, rooted in the land and subjected to abject economic and political deprivation in the form of half a century of occupation," (Mitchell 664) on the other. Thus, before conflicting with each other, each of these peoples is first and foremost in conflict with themselves, with both

"sides of the struggle (and the governmental entity) that is Israel-Palestine and Palestine-Israel [being] self-divided, increasingly faced with the prospect of civil war between secular and religious movements," (Mitchell 664). Palestinian Israelis, in particular, are nowhere near identifying with their political leaders and are quite critical of their own government's impotence and bestiality, with Tamer comparing the Arab totalitarian tendency to a 'beast *ISISing* on his head'. In Arabic, the word stomp (*da ess*) is almost phonetically identical with the name of the fundamentalist Islamist group ISIS (*da esh*) differing only in that final 'sh 'sound. The militant group's name, here symbolizing the fundamentalists who hold political control of Palestinian regions, is used as a verb, suggesting the violent and beast-like nature of this alternative to an equally beastly occupier.

In addressing their own communities, culture, and religion, '48 artists 'work also steers into the realms of feminism and the discussion of issues related to gender and sexuality, work that is often in direct conflict with broader Palestinian resistance culture that is pervaded by heteromasculine narratives or heroism, and can be as countercultural rather than subcultural within Palestinian society. Many notable bands and artists, including DAM, Jowan Safadi, and Maysa Daw, have been vocal about their engagement in LGBTQ+ activism, participating in such projects as alQaws" '*Ghanni an al Ta rif*" ("Singing Sexuality"). In the realm of feminism, women's bodies and criticism of their treatment in Palestinian society, three songs by '48 artists stand out:" *Meen Inta*" ("Who You Are") and "*Jasadikhom*" ("Your Body of Theirs") by DAM and Maysa Daw, and "*Law Erja bel Zaman*" ("If I could go back in Time") by Tamer Nafar and Amal Murkus.

DAM's "Who You Are" embraces Butler's notion of the body as a verb or process, or as something "one does", especially something "one does differently". It also recognizes and

presents the gendered, female body as a site of intersectional oppression, but from a more satirical angle than "Jasadikhom". In its lyrical composition and choice of perspective, the song situates gender at the center of the discussion by speaking through it rather than of it, making the female body both performance and site of performance. Woman is, for example, the act of divorce and the victim of divorce, her body both a place and perpetrator of shame and honor, and beginning with the chorus, the song presents numerous roles and labels expected of women to fulfill in traditional Arab communities, from the first-person perspective of "I" as in I, woman:

> I am the single, the sterile, the 'three-times-divorced '*(bel thalatha taleq)*,
>
> the 'better living with a man than alone'.
>
> I am the dishes, the ironing,
>
> I'm everything and I'm nothing,
>
> but tell me who you are.
>
> I am the women's gossip, I can't bear you boys,
>
> I'm the honor, the shame,
>
> I'm everything and I'm nothing
>
> but tell me who you are.

Like 'Who's a terrorist? 'the song subverts the roles of 'oppressor 'and 'oppressed', addressing the former directly from the perspective of the latter, creating the same insistent dialogue, this time with the patriarchal structure of their traditional, fundamentalist communities, and keeping at its crux the most pressing and fragile of issues: identity. From the get-go, the song initiates an insistent dialogue with the patriarchal structure of traditional Arab society. In these few lines, a number of core cultural phenomena are quickly addressed, listed before the listener, sharing two essential traits: that they are all patriarchal in their conceptual nature, and that they

all intersect within a larger intersection: Arab woman. The list consists of those "repeated acts" in Arab culture, from beliefs to expressions, that have contributed to the oppression and subjugation of women, such as the idea that a woman's ability to give birth to boys has a direct impact on her marriageability, and that her desirability and marriageability, by extension, are essential determinants of her value to society. One major reference, particular to Muslim Arab culture, that brings attention to an arena of power that is entirely dependent on gender in a court of law, is to the untranslated: *talaq thalatha*.

In Islamic jurisprudence there are two types of divorces: revocable (*raj i*) and irrevocable (*ba in*), both of which are initiated by the husband. In revocable divorces, the husband has the right to take back the wife during a waiting period (*idda*), while in irrevocable divorces, he does not. However, after the waiting period from a revocable divorce has ended, or even after an irrevocable divorce, the couple can still remarry—the first two times. It isn't until the third separation that the divorce becomes absolute (*talaq al-batta*), in which case the woman would have to marry, sleep with, and then divorce (or be widowed by) another man before the couple could remarry. Translated as "triple repudiation", and quite performative in itself, *talaq thalatha* is when a man immediately repudiates his wife three times, foregoing the chances of revocability or remarriage, and making the divorce immediately absolute. This act is entirely rhetorical, is performed verbally, and what DAM is, in essence, bringing attention to, is this arena where total power can be practiced with such banality as to be enacted and enforced with this simple, performative repetition. It is interesting to note here that while religion is often ignored by cultural theorists or written off as "as an instance of the pathological in culture" (Mishra and Hodge 392), in Palestine, as in the whole of the Arab world, religion is a key aspect of lived experience, and is deeply intertwined with the political as an inextricable characteristic by which

people identify themselves, through which they experience the world, and against which they often struggle. Mishra and Hodge argue that cultural theory, and even subaltern studies, have "failed to consider belief systems as legitimate modes of cultural self-empowerment and political intervention" (392). In Palestine, however, religion, and subsequently religious policy, and specifically Islam, is a source of both empowerment and repression, as is observable in songs like "Who You Are".

The chorus is sung from the perspective of the female body, who is both host to and embodiment of a variety of oppressive mechanisms, from street gossip to culturally legislated repudiation. However, the chorus is not merely representational in its aspirations, since each stanza ends with the insistence, "but tell me who you are", as if the former presentation were a set up, a preparation of a suggestive space pre-determining who the "you" is. It places this "you" in direct contrast to the "I" that has been speaking, and automatically suggests its role as the missing perpetrator of the previous lines 'atrocities. The final insistence emphasizes something else, as well, about the lines preceding it: that they are all different manifestations of the "performative accomplishment" of the female Arab body, and they all lack "substance", sharing nothing in nature to one another but their "tenuous" constitution in time, "instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 519).

Even more interesting, underscoring the satirical aspect of gender's performative nature, is the visual construction of the music video, wherein the female vocals (the chorus) are lip-synced by Jreiri and Nafar (the men) and the male parts (the verses) are played by Daw. Mixing the gendered voices and bodies is meant to take you by surprise, to show you just how fragile these constitutions are. This is evidenced in the way the video is set up. It starts off with Maysa holding a video camera in front of a mirror, casually vocalizing to herself. She then sees a guitar

next to her, picks it up, puts away the camera, and starts strumming, about to sing out when a man's calls out her name off-screen. The camera does a strange twist and turn around her room while she continues to strum, and a man comes in to give her a dirty shirt. The sounds of men and rap music come from outside and the camera continues to travel around until we return to the mirror, where an Arab man in a *kufiya* dancing *dabke* has replaced Maysa and is lip-syncing to her vocals. By beginning in what appears to already be a strange, yet natural world, with Maysa vocalizing over a camera whose eye magically holds its gaze on the mirror after she puts it in her pocket to pick up the guitar, while men interrupt her with orders and their own music, the video sets you up for something frustrating and tragic. We watch as the external conditions of Maysa's surroundings pull her away from self-expression and into the societal performance. When the song begins, then, and we are faced with a man in a *kufiya* bobbing up and down as if he were in a line-dance, the entire situation becomes one of ridiculousness, a topsy-turvy world foreshadowed by the twirling camera.

The verses are told from the male perspective and are lip-synced by Daw while she moves around the house separating laundry and picking things up around the men lounging in front of television. While the first verse continues in the same logic of the chorus, rather than responding to the woman's question, or really addressing the woman inquiring, the male interlocutor directs his speech towards to the audience, telling a story. It begins very satirically, with the man demonstrating how intellectual and strong he is, even calling himself "a feminist who lives on mama's food". But then it suddenly gets serious, and as Daw throws dirty laundry off the balcony onto Nafar, he raps:

> I'm not in your shoes to decide, but I try
>
> I'm not in your shoes but if I were

I'd be a provocateur.

It's either justice for both genders,

or we start honor-killing men.

We abuse her in Egypt then oppress her in Lyd,

we assault her in the US then rape her in India,

but she better be home in time

to make dinner and raise the kids.

In an eerie digression, Nafar traces the phenomenon being addressed in the song across its various forms and mutations, bringing awareness to the transnational intersectionality of struggles being experienced by women of all colors across the globe. Unlike Nafar's character, however, the speaker of the second verse appears more deeply rooted in tradition, his perspective more masculine, and his verse again lip-synced by an intense Daw now walking slowly down concrete steps, alone and in intimate proximity with the camera in the thin stairwell:

The first time I hit my sister, my parents applauded me and said, "You're the man!"

They empowered me and defenceless, she stood there in front of me, the Karate Kid.

From my sister to all the women in the world,

I want everything from them but having nothing to offer.

I'll take my anger out on you then buy you makeup to make you look pretty for the public.

You want your rights? I said. Go back to your parents.

So she left and thought they'd protect her because blood can never be turned to

water.

But her parents were the same as mine.

They applauded me and sent her back,

where I put her in the ring and force her to dance with me

because I'm her life partner who's mostly a criminal.

The dichotomies and tensions at work in the song directly reflect the tensions of modernity and tradition found within Palestinian society, portraying again that intersectional *mise en abyme*, struggle within a struggle, experienced by women in marginalized communities, women who deal with "life partners" who are also "criminals", who are thrown into "wrestling rings" to "dance", and who are subject to violence and bouts of anger by men who then buy them makeup to make them look "pretty for the public". In accordance with Butler's theories on gender and the stylistics of our existence, the verse reveals how women in Arab cultures are limited by "certain cultural and historical possibilities" (521) that everyone, even their parents, reinforce and re-enact, here for example by "applauding" and "sending her back". Woman, Arab woman, appears here marginalized by both her oppressive husband, her parents who applaud him, and the state that has marginalized them all as a group.

The chorus then repeats, reminding us once again of the urgent need for an answer: who are you? The male finally responds in the last verse, and the celebrated manhood that has found its capacities in the suppression of women is this time sung and lip-synced by Jreiri himself:

I'm the one who wrote the poems,

I'm the one who built the cannons,

I'm the one who might hate you,

but I won't let anyone else love you.

I'll prevent you from going to the beach,

and I'll face the storms alone,

but if I don't find safe land,

if I fail, maybe then I'll need you

Similar to Nafar in his first verse, Jreiry begins by boasting about his intellect and strength, but then moves from elevating traditional masculinity to priding himself for his hypocrisy and possessiveness. He, the subject, is active, he "does" things—writes, builds, hates loves, a direct contrast to the passive female object of the chorus who "is" divorce, is shame, etc. Furthermore, the invocation of poems and cannons are an allusion to resistance culture, and visions of national liberation from the occupation, that are presented to us here as deeply imbued with patriarchal values. Massad refers to this phenomenon as "nationalist masculinity…a new type of masculinity, which is implicated in temporal, cultural, and class schemas that define its limitations and have little to do with 'tradition.'" (467). As we observed in previous chapters, Palestine itself, in the national imaginary, is often seen as the motherland, and the Israeli occupation considered a rape. This is evidenced the Palestinian national charter, where the land is "portrayed as a mother. The Zionist enemy is clearly seen as masculine, and the wrong committed by this enemy against Palestinians is considered metaphorically to be of a violent sexual nature" (Massad 471). Her "children" thus are mainly her sons, her masculine protectors who "face the storms alone", keeping her "daughters" in a passive state of being hidden away—a concept alluded to in the lighting of the "Jasadikhom" music video, which comes directly from the right, leaving half of Daw's face in darkness. The statement published during the First Intifada by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) also endorses this narrative pattern, presenting the masculine agent as "producing the nation, and the nation's symbols cast in

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terms of a female guardian. In this paradigm, liberation is signified as a woman who needs protection from colonial penetration" (Alqaisiya 37). Interestingly, at the end Tamer Nafar and Amal Murkus 'much debated music video for their song, "If I could go back in Time", released in November, 2012, the female protagonist, carrying a cut-out of the word *al-hurr* (the free) as she walks backwards while simultaneously moving backwards in time, going from grown woman to child, eventually reaches a garden where she place her cut-out within the larger cut-out phrase *al-hurriya ontha* (freedom is female), conforming to notion of liberation as feminine *as such*, in need of an active masculine agent to become realized. The song and video, directed by Jackie Salloum (best known for the documentary *Slingshot Hiphop*), and funded by UN Women, addresses the culture of honor killing in Muslim Arab households (without explicit mention of Palestine), and ends with the Arabic postscript: "There is no connection between killing women and honor–murder is a crime. Say no, unite to end violence against women". In their critique of the song, Lila Abu Lughod and Maya Mikdasi argue that by "relying on an international and UN-promoted framework that removes the 'honor crime 'from the realm of politics, DAM ignores the committed Palestinian feminist activists who have been working for decades on the various forms of violence Palestinian women suffer" (*Jadaliyya* 4). In addition, liberation narratives of heroism, which are common to anti-colonial and liberation movements that have taken form globally, occlude the visibility of queer Palestinians and their involvement in the struggle for national liberation. It places queerdom at the bottom of a list of political priorities where national liberation comes first. Furthermore, the gendered liberation narrative, dominated and epitomized by the heteromasculine hero, add to the perception of homosexuality and queerdom in Palestine as associated with "collaborationism, and thus the (dis)honor of the nation" (Alqaisiya 37). Thus, queer activism in the musical scene works to subvert the heteronormative narratives of liberation

by literally "singing sexuality", the name of alQaws 'collaborative music project, "*Ghanni an al Ta rif*". As part of what alQaws calls an education musical project, the production "*Menkom O Feekom*" ("Of You, Among You"), a medley of 4 song tracks, queers traditional folk tunes like "*Ala Dal una*" and "*Ya Zarif al Toul*" by replacing the heteronormative narratives of love and marriage with stories of homosexual and queer romance and longing. As the "present-absentees" of Palestine, much like '48 Palestinians, alQaws describes this initiative as "a colloquial way for us to say we are an integral part of society, a statement against social denial and colonial narratives isolating Palestinian queers from Palestinian society, and an invitation for our society to engage in a discussion around sexual and gender diversity in Palestine"[5].

As a recipient of "cultural and historical possibilities" in its act of embodiment, the body becomes passive in its need for an agent, for someone to "do" it, because one "is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body" and, especially within the intersectional limitations of being a ;48 Palestinian woman, "one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well" (Butler 521). One of the main aims, for example, of "Jasadikhom", is to rhetorically break the chain of these "stylized acts" and "do" the '48 Palestinian body of woman differently, while in "Who You Are", the band "does the body differently" by having the men lip-sync the female verses and vice versa. Furthermore, while the body may itself be an active current experienced or "done" by the individual, historic conditions and cultural expectations create a kind of membrane delineating the limits of that embodiment, putting the body, to a certain degree, in a passive state of reception, and creating an interplay between external influence and internal engagement. What DAM and Daw attempt to do in these songs is capture, criticize, and rhetorically reject this

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[5] https://www.alqaws.org/news/New-from-Singing-Sexuality-Minkom-O-Feekom?category_id=0

interplay in an act of reclamation, as if attempting to return full agency to the body and render it impenetrable by external conditioning. Daw does this in "Jasadikhom" for example, as we'll see, when her speech acts change from representative and expressive to directive and declarative at the end of the song.

Released in March of 2019 as part of the album *Street Poetry*, "Jasadikhom" is a song that explicitly addresses gender inequality in general, while focusing on the Arab female, and '48 Palestinian female experience in particular. The word *jasadikhom* loosely means "Your body of theirs", an homage to the power of language and the spoken word as integral performative gesture enacted by the strange flaunting of two mutually exclusive inflections: *ik* (your [female]) and *hom* (their [male]) added to the noun *jasad* (body). The song's title thus reflects the rebellion consistent with the song's defiant mood and aspirations for subversion. Furthermore, by consistently referring to the "body" throughout the song, my body, your body, making comparisons between the accepted acts of each gendered Arab body, male and female, repeatedly addressing the Arab male as "your body" and the Arab female as "my body" rather than "you" and "I", Daw embraces Butler's notions of body as performance and site of performance while commenting on Palestinian "nationalist masculinity" and Zionism's role in it.

The first verse begins with an almost systematic listing of numbers and ratios: 90, 60, 90, 175 over 50. As she sounds out the numbers, it almost sounds like she's taking measurements for furniture, or meat. But then it is followed by an explanation in the next verse:

> These are the measurements of your [female] body.
> It should be called 'your body of theirs'.
> The 'your 'belongs to you but the body belongs to them.
> A free soul in a jailed body.

It took me time to understand my body, my feminine body.

His body goes around, sleeps around, disappears, makes mistakes, repents, we

forgive his body and it repeats.

His body is forever exempt by a doctor's note.

And my body?

One mistake is enough, one, slip, one picture, one video is enough.

In this second verse, Daw delineates the limits of possibility for the respective genders, highlighting the myriad of performances, and essentially the limitless possibilities that the male body is socially allowed to engage in while the female body remains restricted to the policing of all society's gaze. In Daw's song, one becomes a woman by learning what not to do, by compelling "the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman', to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility" (Butler 522). The cultural "significance" of her body, the body of woman, any woman, as representative of the gendered self, and the responsibility of that significance are emphasized by Daw's insistence that one mistake could ruin her reputation, one mistake and you're punished, echoing the notion that "indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (Butler 522).

Daw's tone changes from descriptive to inquisitive here, initiating the rebellion inspired by the desire to "understand her body" which she says, "took time" to do because there are so many questions to ask: "How many eyes are on my body? How many faces does my body have? My body is feminine, my body is Arab, my Arab feminine body." From mine, to my feminine, to my feminine Arab—without the "trance", Daw begins to see what her body is in the real, sociopolitical world. She is in a way recollecting an awakening to the intersectional space of

oppression that her body occupies, somewhere beneath Arabness and femininity. Then, beneath these designations, Daw digs further into her own locality and particular situation as '48 Palestinian, using language to shift from the broader intersection between Arab and woman to the very particular intersectionality of the Palestinian Arab woman living inside Israel.

> How many pronouns are there for my body?
>
> There's I and there's you, there's us and there's them.
>
> Them against us and you against I,
>
> all against I and I against all.
>
> Even in our struggle my responsibilities are twice as much as yours.
>
> If you resist, you suck from their Zionism.
>
> If I resist, I suck also from their masculinity.
>
> And even though my body has been privy to violence, it's still vulnerable to
>
> breaking.

While coming from a place of resistance and reclamation, the narrator remains aware of the fragility of both her body and identity considering the *mise en abyme*, intersectional nature of the female struggle within the struggle, but rather than succumb to the proposed fact, she then moves to the next stage of her rebellion: metaphorical action. Daw says she "looked in the mirror" and "took off [her] glasses because they're man-made". If "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through" (Butler 523), in "Jasadikhom", Daw rhetorically breaks open these consolidations and severs this "series" by declaring her disengagement with them. She wants to "see [her] imperfections through [her] own eyes", and says she stood before the mirror and "took off [her] glasses because they're man-made". The explicit acknowledgement of and disengagement from the metaphorical male gaze

that she herself has internalized and is now willing to unlearn, shows us that Daw realizes that while men are the "authors of gender", to some extent, she too has "become entranced by [the] fiction" (Butler 522) of her gender. Furthermore, the verse's opening line, "How many pronouns are there for my body?" is a direct reference to "Western LGBT strategies" or Western ideas of "perfect" queer activism, something that alQaws, an organization that Daw is a participating member of, actively works against as part of its antipinkwashing campaigning. As alQaws director Haneen Maikey recounts in her 2014 talk for LGBT History Month and Israeli Apartheid Week in London, in Western LGBT strategies, "the holy, right strategies, you need to face homophobia, you need to come out, you need to feel pride, and then you need to visible and change the world. These are the four main steps any healthy gay person in the world should go through" (17:30).[6] However, as Maikey notes, Western ideas of LGBTQ activism, such as this four-step process, are not relevant to Palestinian society.

When Daw" takes off the glasses", another shift happens. Her speech acts change from representative and inquisitive to directive and declarative and she concludes the song with a series of demands:

> Put your eyes away, these breasts are mine.
>
> Put your hands away, these are my thighs.
>
> Put away your comments, the arm and pit hair is all mine alone.
>
> Control your expression, these few extra kilos are mine.
>
> The cellulite is mine, the stretch and birth marks are mine,
>
> the grey hair, the warts, moles, hips, zits, only mine.

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[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Zqh5rtNGQ4

Daw refuses to engage in the "tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders" (Butler 522). In the last lines of the song, she says "For the first time, I see my eyes through my eyes". It is as if by performing this speech act, she has subverted her gender's social contract, challenging of the limits of her body's possibility, and awoken herself from a slumber. A veil is lifted as she lists numbers, echoing the song's beginning, then starts to peel them back, revealing an array of statistics underneath what were the body's dimensions, presenting it as a palimpsestic site of both violence and power: "42, 200, 120 over 136—42 million times they sold my body, 200 million times they sterilized and took responsibility over my body, 120 million times they raped my body, and 136 million births a year, all this life, from my body". Daw reveals the "historical situation" that is woman and the female body beyond even "the tacit conventions that structure the way the body is culturally perceived" (Butler 524) emphasizing, with its last line, the feminine power to create and carry life which, the song suggests, is the only tangible, real thing underneath the performance.

In the last of these demands, Daw subtly switches her address from the Arab man to the occupation when she says, "This kitchen isn't mine, but the olive oil, the thyme, and the punishment are all mine". The first part of the sentence still appears to be directed at the Arab man, and suggests that the addressee is someone intimate, a husband or roommate with whom she shares the kitchen. The focus in then shifted to the ingredients in the second half of the sentence, redirecting us to a binary between natural and mechanical or "imperial", between indigenous and settler, and alludes to the appropriation of Palestinian culture by Israelis, a sentiment expressed by many Palestinian artists and musicians, such as Shadia Mansour. Schept points out that Palestinian artists often engage with this natural vs. mechanical binary to signify the contrast between the resistance and the occupation respectively. (105)

The you and I, us and them narrative is most effective when the 'us 'and 'them 'are easily

identified. For one thing, with some Palestinians living west of the Wall with Israeli passports,

others living east of the Wall with Jordanian or no passports, even the Palestinian 'us', the

population still living within the borders of the historic homeland, is politically fragmented.

Furthermore, for those living in close proximity with the Israeli population, the lines between

'them 'and the fragmented 'us 'tend to become blurred—or are blurred intentionally. In "Mama, I

Fell in Love with a Jew", DAM uses irony and the English language to accentuate and ridicule

the binary between Palestinian and Jew living in Israel, while addressing and undoing larger

binaries at the same time. The song follows a love story between a' 48 Palestinian man and a

Jewish Israeli female soldier stuck in a faulty elevator, where the lines are ultimately blurred, not

only between '48 Palestinian and Israeli Jew, but between representer and represented, self and

other, creating a performance of cultural intimacy that, through the use of a foreign language,

invites, and even necessitates, the presence of a foreign, English-speaking spectator—albeit, not

without limitations.

In the song, Nafar is trying to appeal to the Israeli girl by making sexual suggestions

amidst humorously self-deprecating remarks. At first, she filters his comments, recognizing in

them only the political, the violent, the (ironically enough) familiar in the other—the stereotype.

However, in this subversion of representation, where the often 'represented 'is now the

'representer', it is not the Palestinian who is put under scrutiny but the white Israeli Jew. In this

narrative, the free, "democratic" character is forced to broaden, to become exposed to a new

extreme within themselves which, up until now, was safely externalized by its perceived

embodiment in the other. And to the observer, watching through the comedic lens, it is the

oppressor who appears ridiculous, who becomes the "irrational, rage-filled, violent and

unrelatable" (Zimbardo 61) character. In one line near the end of Nafar's second verse, the narrator says, "I said 69 she heard 67". Despite the progress they appear to be making, his sexual innuendo is mistaken for an allusion to the Six-Day war.

Another way Nafar scrutinizes the Palestinian-Jew binary to the point of ridicule is through direct contact with language. He exposes the characters 'relationship of one another via a display of their understanding of and familiarity with each other's language. The extent of the typical Palestinian Israeli's Hebrew consists of labor-related expressions and comes in the form of a question ("Yash Havoda means, you got a job for me?") highlighting the working-class role of the characteristic '48 Palestinian and underscoring his role as subordinate; while the extent of the Israeli woman's Arabic is a threat of violence ("*waqef ya batokhak* means freeze or I shoot"), accentuating her dominance, her indoctrinated mind-set and the type of dehumanizing propaganda soldiers like her are exposed to every day. In the flirtatious context of the heated elevator, her threat seems bizarre, as does her behavior in the video, and even she eventually succumbs to the new, blurry space of cultural intimacy, admitting eventually that "without the sniper lens, you look cute too".

The song's progression foregrounds cultural intimacy by chipping away at the separatist imagination with subtle cues—their destined physical presence together in a broken elevator, suggesting the inevitability of their worlds colliding; the galaxy background that comes and goes, creating a sense of space beyond the imagined boundaries of nation and identity; and the use of English, a language foreign to both, as a lexical common-ground. The final, lyrical breaking point of the song, comes at the end of Nafar's second verse, when he says: "All I wanna make is sweet love, But if you wanna make tough love too, for a change, can I be the one to handcuff you?" The suggestion of this act of reversal, this literal subversion of power-roles, invoking

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eroticism once more to make a direct comment on the dominant political, militaristic paradigm, comes with a new confidence, a triumphant culmination on the part of pursuant, enraptured man. The visual breaking point, however, comes later, after Jreiry code-switches in the third verse from English to Arabic. While remaining consistent with the dominant, humorous mood of the song, this is the only stanza that suggests any kind of seriousness. To translate, Jreiry says:

> What's our story?
>
> When I speak and she speaks, she likes Arabs, she told me so,
>
> and in a second, she could name all the *balad s* restaurants.
>
> I mustered my emotions,
>
> I want to build a relationship with you.
>
> She said: I want you to build.
>
> I grabbed my hair, realizing that you and I will meet
>
> when the Arabs 'work starts, and the occupation ends.

On a quick sidenote, I've kept *balad* untranslated because, while it can mean nation or country, in the colloquial context, the *balad* in Arab-Islamic communities is a kind of combination of a marketplace and cultural center that extends across multiple districts and can have anything from the fruit and vegetables stands and *kaak* on trolleys to used car dealers and fine-dinery. It's a kind of messy, post-colonial, pre-industrial inner-city.

As soon as Jreiry's verse is over, and as it satirically portends, the inevitable altercation happens. In the video clip, we see Nafar's relationship with the soldier develop outside of the original, physically imposed space—demonstrating and perhaps even inspiring hope in the transformative potential of cultural exchange—until we arrive at the wedding. At first, everyone is celebrating and dancing. Then just when you think the clip is about to end like a classic

Shakespearean comedy, the bride cuts a tiny piece of cake for the groom's family and tries to take the rest of it for her own, and the two families collide. The bride's cake cutting can be read as a parody of Israel's voracious appetite for a land that was meant to be shared, as well as an appeal to an American audience that knows what it means to not get "a slice of the cake".

What is most interesting and ambitious about the song, however, is that it's written in English, because, not only does it force the '48 Palestinian and Israeli Jew into a common expressive space, imposing on them the intimacy of their shared experience of English as a second language, but it also reveals the artist's rhetorical awareness of, and intention for, English-speaking audience. The song is allegedly intended for the narrator's mother, but the irony is that this typical Arab Palestinian man's mother probably doesn't speak English. In Nafar's broken elevator, listening to his unabashedly broken language, we're encouraged to interpret the song as a "direct response to mainstream Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism" (Zimbardo 61), challenging entrenched stereotypes propagated in "film, news media, colonial literature and the American national imaginary" (61). By choosing to write, think, and joke in English, his third language, Nafar is intentionally reaching across boundaries to challenge these stereotypes. However, the song is limited by a certain cultural ignorance on Nafar's part.

To a Palestinian inside Israel, it may be enough to refer to an Israeli Jew as simply, a Jew. Nafar himself tells Haaretz in an interview that he chose to say "Jew" and not "Israeli" to "make the distinction". To him, the distinction is between Palestinian and Jew, both under the umbrella identification of "Israeli". But this distinction would likely be lost on an Anglophone audience, who might be inclined to interpret the song as antisemitic, directed at all Jews. It doesn't help that the lyrics tread dangerously on antisemitic stereotypes, and the title itself raises questions with its derogatory implication of "marrying a Jew". Unsurprisingly, the song's reception was not

without controversy when it was performed for the first time at the University of North Carolina in 2019, but overall, its ambitions are clear: to comically subvert and expose the inequalities between Palestinian and Jewish Israelis that bar the way for coexistence. Written and performed in English, the song challenges Western hegemonic ideas about Arabs and, according to Nafar, responds to the age-old question, "Why can't you just get along?". While they are equals in the linguistic realm of the song, their situations in reality are far from equitable. Nafar himself tells Haaretz: "We refuse to talk about co-existence when we don't exist. Yes, we are in the same elevator, in the same situation, in the same country, but it doesn't mean that we are equal…You can't talk to me about co-existence while you're holding a gun".

Another interesting language choice that DAM make, which sets them apart from the rest of their subcultural co-actors, is their use of Hebrew in songs like "Born Here". While Nafar jokes in "Mama I Fell in Love" about his limited knowledge of Hebrew, most '48 Palestinians speak both Hebrew and Arabic fluently, and are thus able to sing and rap in Hebrew. The conscious decision to release "Born Here" in Hebrew in 2006 is an explicit effort to reach and communicate with an Israeli audience, and a response to the 1991 Israeli nationalist song "Kan Noladeti" ("Here I was Born"). Addressing the IDF's repressive and illegal use of power in Palestinian neighborhoods, Tamer raps in the opening lines that:

> Every day I see at least 100 soldiers,
>
> To arrest a dealer? Here or there? No,
>
> To destroy a neighbor's home.
>
> What's this? A hate bubble around the ghetto.
>
> Wherever I go, excuses greet me,

> I broke the law? No, the law broke me.

The opening lines comment on the IDF's abuse of power, wherein they will find any excuse to arrest and disenfranchise Palestinians rather than use the law to help better their communities or imprison people causing real harm and committing real crimes like selling drugs. As the rest of the verse reveals, these arrests and demolitions and the overall role of the IDF is not for the genuine enactment of justice, but is ultimately in service of the larger project of Palestinian erasure. Thus, Tamer expresses his defiance in the next lines singing:

> Here, I was born, my grandparents too,
>
> You will not sever me from my roots.
>
> Here, I built my house and here you destroyed my house.
>
> Even if I believed in this phony regime,
>
> You'd forbid me a porch to proclaim it from.

The lines here are in direct contrast to the Israeli nationalist "Kan Noladeti" which opens with the lines:

> Here I was born, here my children were born to me,
>
> Here I built my house with my own two hands.
>
> Here you're with me and all my thousand friends,
>
> After 2000 years, our wanderings are over.

The nationalist anthem, performed at Eurovision in 1991 by Duo Datz and written by Uzi Hitman, brings together the religious "promised land" narrative with the propagandic portrayals

of Palestine as an empty, barren, uncultivated land whose flourishing came at the hands of Jewish immigrants ("a land without a people for a people without a land"), with the repetition of lines like "Here I planted grass in the desert" and "I have no other place in the world". DAM's song, after their explicit allusion to "Kan Noladeti", then moves to an Arabic chorus that subtly reinscribes the notions of the nation, land, and liberation as female, anthropomorphizing the neighborhood as an embarrassed bride not dressed in the silk she deserves.

> A bride without a veil,
>
> I wait, I long for her beauty.
>
> Time has passed her over, has forgotten her,
>
> The separation walla mutes her hopes.
>
> Like a bird that breaks from a cage,
>
> She'll spread her wings and fly.

The separation wall, which is invoked in a number of songs, especially those living on its eastside (the West Bankers and East Jerusalemites) is placed here as the central perpetrator of ethnic division and oppression, holding the "bride" that is the eponymous Palestinian town hostage. A symbol embodying the multiple forms of intersectional oppression and violence faced by Palestinians on the daily, we will see in the following section how the wall is experienced by those living on its "outer" side, both physically and metaphorically, in the West Bank and Gaza.

3.2 West Bank, East Jerusalem & Gaza

Moving to the Occupied Territories, the limits on freedom of expression and movement tighten, and the perspective of our rebellious artists takes a shift towards a more violent, masculine vision of resistance that engages more heavily with hetero- and hyper-masculine narratives of liberation. The voices of the OT do not come from the other within the system, or those it has repressed as part of itself, but from those it has oppressed as entirely rejected Other. I have included East Jerusalem in my delineation of the West Bank here because, while the occupation regime in East Jerusalem differs from the heart of the West Bank, many of the West Bank artists I have chosen to look at are originally from Jerusalem and call themselves "the sons of Jerusalem".

As aforementioned, the collective Palestinian populations still living within the borders of the historic homeland are both physically and culturally fragmented, and up until very recently, were barely aware of one another. The Oslo Accords were used to split the West Bank into three "areas", two of which could be resided in by Palestinians, and one which was entirely allotted to settlers. The areas which were Palestinian (Area A), moreover, were surrounded by the areas that were nominally Palestinian but open to settlers (Area B), making it near impossible to Palestinians to go from one town to the next even within the West Bank. Music, with the help of the internet, has become a major space for transnational Palestinian resistance, being used to build bridges both real and metaphorical. In the case of Palestinians living in the historic homeland, separated by walls and checkpoints, the problem is not only one of dissonance between modern and traditional cultures, young people and older generations, but of real, oppressive, political regimes and their infrastructure, like the West Bank Wall, the

intercommunal military checkpoints, and the violent invasion of Palestinian cultural spaces by the occupation army.

As one of Jazar Crew's founders and main DJs, Ayed Fadel, explains in an interview with Vice, "Palestinians without an Israeli passport don't have freedom of movement, so we grow up in separate communities and were disconnected from each other. We started to build a bridge between the communities and build up a [unified] Palestinian electronic music scene"[7]. Jazar Crew is an arts collective now based in Haifa that performs in Galilee, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Yaffa & Europe. It was founded by a group of young Palestinians aimed at creating an underground scene for Palestinians on both sides of the wall. According to Fadel:

> `We started our collective out of a need for a dance floor and safe space for the Palestinian community in the Israeli city of Haifa, where we live. We took the first step unconsciously, because we didn't feel that, as an Arab community, we were welcomed and involved in the electronic music scene in Israel.[8]

The parties started off in 2010 with an exclusive list of 50 people. The idea was to create a "strong core" as Fadel puts it, a Palestinian underground on Israeli territory. At the time, '48 Palestinians had no connection with the Palestinian community in the West Bank or Gaza. Many people in the West Bank can't even reach one another. Jazar Crew have been actively building a cultural bridge among these communities through dance parties, reuniting communities that have been separated both geographically and culturally for decades. For young Palestinians living under occupation, Jazar Crew's parties become a space like Fanon's African dance circle, a safe space for expression, "a permissive circle" that "protects and permits". Fanon describes the dance

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[7] https://www.vice.com/en/article/kzj9xw/meet-jazar-crew-the-dj-duo-bringing-electronic-parties-to-palestine
[8] https://www.vice.com/en/article/kzj9xw/meet-jazar-crew-the-dj-duo-bringing-electronic-parties-to-palestine

circles as "the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to liberate itself, to explain itself. There are no limits—inside the circle" (57). Beginning in Haifa, their parties stretched into Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Galilee and even Gaza and the West Bank in Bethlehem and Ramallah with artists and groups like Muqata'a and Jazar Crew expanding into trap and techno, with the intent of building and strengthening Palestinian communities across the different territories. Furthermore, these spaces, once underground but now more visible and more accurately described as "alternative", have become refuges for Israel and Palestine's Palestinian "deviants", where they can "maintain their own dress codes, dance styles, music genres and catalogue of authorized and illicit rituals" (Thornton 200). A similar initiative born out of the West Bank is BLTNM, the independent record label recently founded by Al Nather, Shabjdeed, and Shabmouri, young artists from Ramallah and East Jerusalem looking to create connections between disparate Palestinian communities as well as with the wider Arab world.

Of the several artists that work with BLTNM, those with the widest reach today are Daboor and Shabjdeed. Abu Othaina, popularly known as Shabjdeed (literal translation: New Guy), is a rapper originally from Kfar Aqab, East Jerusalem. Currently based in Ramallah, with over 160,000 followers on Instagram, he has become one of the most influential figures in the Palestinian hip hop scene. He helped found BLTNM (pronounced "blatinum", in reference to Platinum Records in Dubai and a play on the fact that there's no P phoneme in Arabic) in 2016 with Al-Nather and Shabmouri in an effort, as Al Nather puts it, to "deconstruct hip-hop to fit [their] culture" and to re-imagine the sounds of their occupied city. Shabjdeed's songs deal primarily with the conflicts between the Palestinians and Occupation Forces in the West Bank, addressing things like the West Bank Wall and being held at military checkpoints. He uses a thick, Bedouin-style accent, and his use of Arabic is playful, rhythmic, and heavy with

alliteration and rhyme-schemes that create a unique style of delivery, described as a "constant overflow of words that fills every corner of a track, with earworm choruses repeating like a broken record" (Faber 2019 *The Guardian*). For example, in his song "Amrikkka", Shabjdeed raps:

I am the liar's tic (*arrat*)

I am the authoritative sorcerer (*arrat*)

Who challenges the cub

of that lion

Who fucked this land. Do you understand?

In the colloquial Bedouin Arab dialect, the *arrat* is a tic or flea, here meant to represent a nagging conscience that Shabjdeed identifies himself with. He then uses the word again in its formal meaning as "sorcerer" to identify himself as a kind of trickster challenging the "cub" or brainchild of "that lion". While *al asad* literally means "the lion", it is also the name of the Syrian dictator Bashar Al Asad, whose politics have been in direct conflict with the U.S., as well as Israel, and whose "cub", or in other words, whose government and war, have had a direct impact on the Palestinian population. The concluding "do you understand" of this verse flows directly into the next one, and the whole song rolls on in the same fluid manner.

In May, 2021, Shabjdeed and Daboor released a song in response to the Sheikh Jarrah attacks entitled "Inn Ann". Produced by Al Nather and BLTNM, the song has garnered over 40 million views on YouTube, and is BLTNM's most popular creation to date, followed by Shabjdeed's "Amrikkka" and "Sindibad", which have gathered 15 and 8 million views each

respectively[910]. "Inn Ann" was released amidst the Sheikh Jarrah attacks, empowering Palestinian youth all over the diaspora.

Inn ann is a hanging phrase, loosely meaning "if that" or "if it". The repeated chorus of the song goes as follows:

> If its time has come,
>
> boom, bakh, they sold my country's libra.
>
> But how? Hypocrites are half the population.
>
> Change him and everything stays the same".

This little chorus is filled with allusion and metaphor. "Boom, bakh" are the sounds of bombs that could fall at any time, when "its time"—the country's time—"has come". Just as quickly, the country was sold, and to have its "libra sold" is to say that there is no justice. Why? Because the people in charge are hypocrites, the allusion here being in particular to Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and the Palestinian National Authority, Yasser Arafat, and others like them in the past who have been known to collaborate with the Zionist state for personal benefit. And unfortunately, as the last sentence of the chorus plainly lays out, even if Abbas were removed from power, he'd only be replaced by another traitor, and everything would remain as is.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnQUKgturj0&ab_channel=BLTNM%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%85

10

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmvo1VmQ1EA&ab_channel=BLTNM%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%85

The chorus repeats a few times in a muffled playback until it's halted by the first word of the first verse: "chill" as if responding to the anxious chorus on repeat. The verse goes:

> Chill,
>
> Everything is clear in our misery
>
> God bears witness to who we are
>
> Men who will shed blood for you
>
> When boom, the fight starts in the night, but we never fall back.
>
> A mountain? We'll bring it down for you.
>
> The children of Jerusalem welcome you,
>
> We always figure it out, we solve the puzzle,
>
> We even call our friends in Nafha and they answer.

The first two lines are a sentiment that runs throughout the whole song like a subtext, repeated in several ways throughout the verses. The idea is that the Palestinian plight is no longer a mystery, no longer obscure, but clear, to "God" and all. This sentiment is alluded to again later in the same verse, when Daboor says, "Everyone knows, everyone sees, everyone is afraid, so the world settles for it". The third line is where the true agency and rhetorical playfulness begins to emerge, where Daboor calls himself and his crew "men who will shed blood for you". This suggests that they, as Palestinians, are ready to go to war in the name of the cause, to have their own blood spilt and to spill the blood of others. Israel always attacks in the night, as the fourth line references, and thus the element of surprise in those attacks has been lost. They, the Palestinians, he claims, are no longer "taken aback" by them. The "mountain" alluded to in the

fifth line is in reference to the occupation itself, which is often referred to in the Arab world as a "mountain", a way to say that it is massive, overbearing, and immovable. But Daboor waves it away in his verse, suggesting that Palestinian courage can bring the mountain down.

The more interesting parts of the verse, though, begin in the next three lines: "The children of Jerusalem welcome you, we always figure it out, we solve the puzzle, we even call our friends in Nafha and they answer". There are several subtle subversions in these few phrases. First, by calling himself and his buddies the children of Jerusalem, Daboor undercuts the occupation's power and presence in the region, and in particular, its hold on Jerusalem, the most disputed piece of the entire territory. Furthermore, it is in Jerusalem that the conflicts happening during the song's release are taking place. Jerusalem is ruled by Israel in all respects, and the Zionist authorities always seek to put pressure on the Palestinian population, as during the Sheikh Jarrah clashes in 2021. And as the next two lines suggest, this unique geopolitical existence of being both within and without has instilled in them a particular kind of cunning and wit that undercuts the Zionist authority time and again, like make calls to Nafha and expect answers. The subversion here is in the fact that Nafha is the infamous prison where Palestinians, many among them children, are imprisoned and tortured, often for years, sometimes for their entire lives, by the occupation. The fact that they can find a way to contact those inside the prison is a testimony to their ingenuity, and the fact that they're saying it in this song is the ultimate insult to the occupation's authority.

Subversions like this are featured throughout the song in a number of ways, for example when they allude to the Gazan men who "dig tunnels and return with potato sacks filled with body parts", a reference to the "heroes of resistance" who kidnap soldiers and their corpses to exchange them for the freedom of Palestinian prisoners being held by the occupation. This is

followed by an aggressive repetition of the word "Balagan", a Russian-derived Hebrew word

meaning "mess" on any level—from a messy desk to a geopolitical crisis. The word is repeated

as if in mockery of the soldiers who would say it to the Palestinians. Another way is through

insults, like when he says, "With courage, I opened a shop. We don't sell to cowards, and we

only loan to lions, just read the sign, it says 'fuck the miscreants'". In other moments, they

summon images of "panicked occupation soldiers" trying to escape their retaliations, or when

they glorify those who can find a way to "fuck the country" by "calling them a rooster among a

herd of sheep", the rooster being an indicator of leadership and individuality, and the herd of

sheep representing the occupation, a symbol of followership and cowardice. It is interesting to

note here that, unlike in DAM's music, the songs of those living in direct contact with military

occupation also have particularly violent, masculine undertones. This song, for example, in its

use of lion imagery and militaristic metaphors presents a hyper-masculinized image of

resistance, calling to mind DAM's "Who You Are", which engages in a rhetorical parody of the

masculinist nature of the parent culture. "Inn Ann", in contrast, appears to embrace masculinity

as an essential part of the resistance, internalizing the militaristic, aggressive imagery often

associated with the occupation.

Other instances of rhetorical subversions of power in the song touch on concepts that

often go unnoticed in discussions of the occupation, like when Daboor says, "my grandson fucks

with Falasha". The word Falasha is a derogatory Hebrew term used to describe Black Ethiopian

Jews who emigrated to Israel. The word is of Amharic origin and literally means "exile,

immigrant, stranger". The idea behind this statement is that the "exiles", both Jew and Arab, are

in the process of uniting, that by the time of Daboor's grandson's generation, the resistance will

have grown stronger, that the resistance is growing stronger with every generation, and will one

day soon include Jews who live with the occupation's injustice. The sentiment highlights the fact that Zionism isn't for all Jews, as it proclaims to be, but for Ashkenazi Jews, and the statement highlights the ethnocentricity of the occupation, that makes "strangers" of the people it purports to represent. According to Ella Shohat, in her essay, "Zionism from the Stand-point of its Jewish Victims", "Zionism has been primarily a liberation movement for European Jews," and inside Israel, "the Sephardi voice has been largely muffled or silenced" (1). Shohat shows how European hegemony in Israel is in fact "the product of a distinct numerical minority, a minority in whose interest it is to downplay Israel's 'Easterness 'as well as its 'Third Worldness'" (2) despite the fact that about seventy percent of the population, between Palestinians and Sephardi Jews, is what they consider to be "Third World-derived" (2).

Shabjdeed's "Mtaktak" and "Amrikkka" translate the same kind of bittersweetness of community formed around injustice as "Inn Ann", but with more of an emphasis on the bitter than the sweet. The focus of "Mtaktak" is on the occupation itself, while the focus of "Amrikkka", as suggested by its name, goes beyond that, into the realms of power behind the occupation that support it and America's impact on the geopolitical situation of the Middle East as a whole. While "Mtaktak" isn't necessarily Shabjdeed's most played song, it is critically acclaimed, and has been identified by Ma'an Abu Taleb, a Jordanian British novelist and cultural editor, and founding editor of the Arabic music magazine, *Ma3azef*, as one of the greatest hip-hop songs of all time[11].

The word "*mtaktak*" can have a number of meanings. It can mean small, petite, or tidy, or even tickled, touched, and sensitive. And in the context of the song, it appears to carry all its

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[11] https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20191007-the-greatest-hip-hop-songs-of-all-time-who-voted

meanings. Like in *Inn Ann*, the post-linguistic sounds of war are an essential part of the lyrics. The chorus goes:

> The sound of takh, the sound of takh, lights like a party in the night,
>
> The occupation extinguishes Al Aqsa with my uncle in it,
>
> so even if I blaspheme, my roots are religious.
>
> Bring soldiers to the sanctuary and overcome
>
> the sounds of bombs while you toss and turn in your bed.
>
> I'm a *mtaktak* guy with well-mannered origins"

The chorus sums up the overall bittersweetness (emphasis on the bitter) of the song, the general sense of being so small in the face of so big a thing. Unlike in "Inn Ann", which emphasizes their courage in the face of conflict, even though the rapper begins by likening the sounds and lights to a party, the sounds of war ultimately inspire fear and anxiety and push him to say that he's powerless, that he's just a well-mannered guy who tosses in bed at night waiting for the fighting to be over. There is also the return to and reconciling with a religious sensibility in this song, with references to the mosque and religious roots. It almost feels like the rapper is seeking a kind of redemption, associating their rising anxieties with their stray away from faith, saying that "even if I blaspheme, my roots are still religious". The implication carried within this is reminiscent of the hyper-masculinized religious resistance, in that it necessarily indicates towards the notion of *jihad*. The rapper is saying something along the lines of "I may look like a nonbeliever, but deep down I know what I stand for". This gives the last line a more ironic, somewhat sarcastic, and almost threatening tone. The back and forth between irony and

melancholy, comparing war sounds to party sounds, the recall of a dead uncle and reference to religion, followed by the passivity of tossing and turning in bed as an act of overcoming, brings us to the final line with a sense that the narrator is building towards a mode of action that is rising out of a dialectic with himself. Yes I am religious, even if it doesn't look like it, and yes bring the soldiers, but also—I'm just a little, well-mannered guy.

While many of these young Palestinians are embracing hip-hop and party culture, not everyone in the region sees this as a welcome addition. Hip-hop artists in Gaza, for example, are in constant conflict with the Islamists connected to Hamas, who often go to violent measures to censor their concerts. Fundamentalist groups such as Hamas consider these events morally suspect, undermining the history of Palestinian struggle, and violating the code of conduct that seeks to respect the hardships and losses of the Second Intifada. A rally celebrating the end of Israeli military rule in the Gaza Strip ended abruptly when supporters of the Islamic group Hamas stoned a young rap group on stage. "People got more religious during this uprising and they prefer to listen to Hamas songs," said Mohammed al Fara, one of the members of P.R. "They didn't like the music. Hamas guys were mostly upset because a lot of girls were excited about us and they were waving their hands as we sang."[12] One young artist who challenges this is MC Abdul.

The youngest on the scene, at 12 years old, MC Abdul began by freestyling over beats he could download for free off the internet. He released his hit single, 'Shouting at the Wall 'in June, 2021 with the record label Empire, founded in San Francisco in 2010 by Palestinian-American Ghazi Shamiand. While his songs pick up and continue the discussion on dispossession and life

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[12] https://web.archive.org/web/20070816154001/http://jewishworldreview.com/0905/arab_hip-hop.php3

in occupation, what is most distinct about Abdul's work is the urgency and immediacy of conflict and trauma that comes through it. Abdul isn't angry from afar, he isn't longing for home, or trying to be ironic or sardonic or challenge the status quo. Abdul lives with the occupation in real time, it dominates his daily life. He wants "freedom for the population", and by the population he means the "2 million prisoners living in this location"—Gaza. Correspondingly, St Levant, an American Palestinian whose work we will look at as well, is often particularly concerned with Gaza in his music, partly as a response to the events as described by Abdul and his people's experience of them, and partly due to his having being raised there.

"Shouting at the Wall" opens with the blunt declaration: "I'm exhausted". Why? Because "Last night, I couldn't sleep, and when I did, I could hear bombs in my dreams". The urgency and trauma being created by the situation is immediately expressed in the song's foregrounding. In these first two lines, Abdul has already summed up the predicament of every man, woman, and child living in Gaza, dealing with daily bombing, oppression, and occupation, the "nightmare situation" that is Gaza, as Abdul puts it. He goes on to color this "nightmare" with the details of everyday life in Gaza. He says, "we expect the bombs, not knowing where next, huddling in the corner of my room trying to protect my little brother as the building shakes like its possessed". The psychological distress being created by the instability of the situation, the fact that war could break out any moment, is expressed with such rawness, coming through in the words of such a young mind. Abdul's youth shines through the song in his unself-aware freestyling, a young boy being forced into an awareness of trauma and anxiety because of ongoing conflict, having to be a protector for his brother and sister, who in the second verse we learn is also losing sleep, and who he assures that what she thinks are bombs are only fireworks, at only twelve years. In the second half of the stanza, the instability of life is emphasized when Abdul so subtly shows how

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the simplest things, when you live in Gaza, are never simple, from a partly cloudy sky to buying groceries.

What's hiding in the clouds hanging over my head?

My dad risks his life outside to buy bread

The fourth war in my twelfth year

At this stage, I'm numb though I haven't felt scared

There's nothing I can do in this case to stay safe, I'm brave

Even though this house could be my grave

That last line: "I'm brave even though this house could be my grave", cuts right through the concept of inside and outside. There is no outside and inside. There is no boundary between safety and the danger zone. Everywhere has been infiltrated, everywhere is a potentially dangerous zone, everything is a risk. Going out for groceries is as much a risk as staying home and starving. Even the spirit has been infiltrated. At 12 years old he says he has already lived through four wars, and "at this stage, [he's] numb".

Moving forward, Abdul continues to describe scenes he's witnessed after attacks, with a sense of responsibility that seems almost to extend to the listener. As he describes the horrors taking place around him, he slips in the idea that he, himself, is not to be worried about, because his mind "is made of steel":

Mothers mourn fighting with grief

White sheets cover bodies that lie on the streets

Buildings turn to ash but my mind is made of steel

So, it doesn't take much for me to heal

Or lose the will to live or lose our minds

My auntie lost her home, so she lost her life

she's still alive but traumatized

By the bombs that flew in and dropped that night

Interestingly, despite having a mind "made of steel", Abdul knows that this doesn't mean he, like many others, and like the aunt he describes, isn't susceptible to losing "the will to live" or even to lose that steel-hard mind. His awareness is highlighted by his mention of his aunt, who he recognizes lost her life when she lost her home, even though she may still be alive. He knows that survival means a life lived in trauma and fear. Furthermore, he goes on to describe the more systemic, insidious ways the occupation oppresses them, alongside the surprise attacks and unsolicited bombings, saying, "It's like they want us all to live in darkness, Cutting off water and electricity for hours…knocking towers". He realizes that life and power are being cut off from the source, that they're being tested on the daily, that they're being encouraged to give up, surrender.

Another interesting distinction in Abdul's song is his willingness to ask "why" and wonder where the humanity of the other is. This is interesting because, in contrast to other rappers, Abdul appears almost open to hearing an answer, to opening a dialogue, which he does by writing this song. Other artists are more intent on reprojecting "otherness" on the oppressor, of emphasizing the divide between themselves and the occupation. Mansour, who we will look at

next, even goes as far as to dehumanize the other, to refer to them as dogs who need to learn humanity. Abdul has no doubt that they're human, but wonders—where is the humanity? He asks, in the middle of the first verse, "How could they be so evil? Making mortars out of children and innocent people". In the second verse he asks, "Where's the compassion? This is heartless, it's like they want us all to live in darkness". Abdul's questions suggest that there is compassion to be found somewhere, yet for whatever reason it is gone. His ability to see the humanity in the other, and address that humanity, rather than dehumanize them, is emphasized later in the same verse when he says, "I wonder how the fighter pilot sleeps at night knowing he can turn the city upside down all of a sudden, slaughtering families with the push of a button". Abdul appeals to the human in the fighter pilot, almost feels for him, wonders whether it must be a burden to carry, the responsibility of pushing the button that "slaughters families".

Furthermore, Abdul understands the power of music and rhetorical mastery. As he lists the endless number of horrors and atrocities that he and other Gazans live through day after day, he arrives at the final statement, the "despite everything" moment, near the end of the second verse, before turning his attention to the fighter pilot and his broken humanity, assuring us that:

> They're knocking towers,
>
> but that's not knocking the power
>
> that I have in my pen
>
> When I'm writing, I'm unstoppable
>
> The microphone is the only escape possible
>
> 'Cause that's the way that I can speak my mind

This is alluded to in the first verse, when he describes the possessed, shaking building that he shelters his brother in, telling us that "nothing's stronger than the will of the oppressed. I bomb back with my lyrics and rhymes, living in the times that are trying to break Palestinian minds". In other words, the ultimate weapon, to Abdul, is the mind itself, the ability to think and articulate. There is a strong sense of empowerment in the fact that no matter how they are attacked, no matter that their homes are no longer safe, that they live in fear and trauma, their will, the "will of the oppressed" is still strong, and so long as he raps and expresses, the Palestinian mind has not been broken.

3.3 Refugee Camps

While there are several examples of hip hop and rap groups in the refugee camps around the West Bank and Gaza, there appears to be less hip hop activity in the camps outside the occupied territories. Their music, as well, is harder to access online, as much of it happens and remains within the camps themselves. However, there a few more prominent groups who have become more well-known around the Palestinian community and whose music can be found online, one example being Katibe 5 (Brigade 5). As Thomas Burkhalter points out, in his book, *Local Music Scenes and Globalization: Transnational Platforms in Beirut,* Katibe 5, who were based in the Burj al Barajneh camp in south Beirut, focuses its music on the external actors who have played a role in placing them in the position they are today, namely the UN. Katibe 5 "lambastes the UN agency working in the camps for pocketing funds while pretending to be the world's benevolent hand for the uprooted Palestinians" (208). While this song in particular appears to be inaccessible online, there are other songs, including "Hatta Ish'arin Akhar" (Until Further Notice) from the *Golden Beirut* compilation album that can provide us with a sense of the sentiment being expressed in the camps.

Most importantly, Palestinians in the camps are most concerned with longevity and maintaining hope that their internationally recognized right of return will one day be recognized. In the short film, *Cultures of Resistance*, the band's members demonstrate their awareness of the role of their music in securing their cultural longevity as Palestinians, saying "as long as I'm here, and my voice is reaching someone, my image is reaching someone, then Palestine continues to exist". The short, three minute film, begins with a few verses improvised over a spontaneous beat, taking place in a small, barely furnished room with unpainted walls decorated with images of the *handala* and past martyrs of the struggle. A boy of no more than eight or nine years old is told to start a beat for the rapper who sings:

> Honestly, in all simplicity,
>
> And without taking too long,
>
> You can't go on like this.
>
> And as a last word,
>
> This is how we'll play,
>
> Until our last days,
>
> This is how we'll throw down,
>
> Always with the energy of a Molotov.

A man on the floor with a cigarette in his mouth then repeats, "Molotov, Molotov, Molotov," before the young boy closes the verse with the line, "Katibe 5 will burn it down". What the boys in the group are hinting at in these verses is the idea that their music is their weapon (echoing the title of McDonald's book that I quote so much from). The last line communicates, however, the fact that the lyrics themselves are the focus of their music, the message being portrayed, rather than the music itself, is the weapon, akin to a homemade bomb

when delivered "with the energy of a Molotov". This sentiment is echoed in the conversation afterwards, as the rappers tell the camera that:

> …every battle needs its own weapons. There are situations where it's better that I use a Kalashnikov rather than a microphone. Here, in this battle though, I need to use a microphone rather than a rifle.

The group's name, "Katibe 5," translates to "Brigade 5" in English, which references the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) military wing. However, unlike the PLO's militant approach, Katibe 5 employs a different type of warfare—one that fights with words and music rather than weapons. Furthermore, the film reveals in the text on-screen that Burj al Barajneh has an area of only one km^2 packed with over 16,000 Palestinian refugees, where the rappers of Katibe 5 were born and raised. They continue to say:

> We talk about the things that Palestinian youth live through in the camp, and we're mostly singing to people who don't listen to rap. But the point isn't to make you listen to rap. The point is the [Palestinian] cause, which is more important than the medium or the genre of the music. The cause is the most important thing.

The "cause" in the particular case of Katibe 5, is the raising of awareness about the hardships and injustices faced by Palestinian refugees, who have been displaced from their homes and denied their basic human rights. This comes through in the song "Hatta Ish'arin Akhar", which sheds light on the daily struggles of Palestinian refugees, who live in overcrowded and under-resourced camps, facing poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and healthcare. The song begins with a mid-tempo, eerie *oud* overlayed with a voice

whispering the word "bitterness" which can also translate to "pass", a wordplay that is repeated throughout the song. The first verse begins:

> This body has been restricted, squished,
>
> As if a tractor had run over it, touched it and turned it to stone,
>
> The smell is in my mouth and it's giving me a headache,
>
> It's constricting my breath, it's creating pain,
>
> Don't be afraid, listen (there's someone next to me, go)
>
> Come back, I'm saying listen,
>
> Pass by/bitterness, come if you find the time,
>
> Pass by/bitterness, but don't fall,
>
> Be careful because anything sweet will burn my teeth
>
> The cold is licks so harsh as if its clearing out our ancestors
>
> This smell, in all its disgustingness, at least I know it,
>
> I smell at the bus stop, in the lobby,
>
> Most of the time at work, at parties, at celebrations,
>
> In my clothes, in the salons,
>
> When the kings give out diamonds and money and food,
>
> It stretches and moves forward and is thrown onto the people,
>
> The darkness stifles you and you feel like a criminal,
>
> You close your mind and your heart, you blind yourself,
>
> You pretend you don't smell anything.

The opening verse quickly intimates the bitter feeling of life and movement in the camps that appears to be haunted by a smell that, in the chorus, we find out, is the smell of death. In an

increasingly eerie manner, several voices, those of men and women, sing and whisper the chorus with the words, "There are dead people here. There people dying here, and I've decided to be afraid of everyone". The body is described as being restricted, squished, and turned to stone, as if it had been run over by a tractor. The imagery of being crushed and immobilized emphasizes the oppressive and suffocating nature of life in the refugee camp. The sensory imagery of the smell causing a headache and constricting breath symbolizes the pervasive and inescapable nature of the occupation, emphasizing the psychological toll it takes on the Palestinian people. The line "Don't be afraid, listen" suggests a call to action, urging the listener to confront the bitter truth of the situation. The second part of the lyrics speaks to the bitterness that pervades the refugee camp. The repeated phrase "pass by/bitterness" creates a sense of resignation and acceptance of the harsh reality of their situation while the mention of sweetness burning the teeth, rather than juxtaposing the bitterness, only emphasizes the absence of pleasure and joy in their lives while highlighting the lack of access to basic health facilities. The harshness of the cold is likened to the erasure of their ancestors, further emphasizing the loss of heritage and identity and the last lines of the song address the psychological impact of living in such oppressive conditions. What differs in the lyrics of this band from those in the occupied territories or in Israel proper is the defeatism. Unlike in previous songs, here there is less a spirit of resistance and more one of futility, of absolute nihilism and helplessness. The lyrics are not offering alternatives, nor are they espousing solutions for their situation, but are rather expression the lack thereof, describing the immense weight of the situation as it is. They play on the word *murr*, creating simultaneous layers of meaning and adding to the claustrophobic sensation of being surrounded by darkness and bitterness, a bitterness you might "pass by" if you have the time. Furthermore, while the impact of "kings" and leaders is acknowledged, there is also an element of blame being put on

the self, rather than the characterization of the narrator as pure victim. The verse concludes with the idea that "you blind yourself, you pretend you don't smell anything" because the king has offered his gifts, but ultimately, it makes you "feel like a criminal". Simlar to Shabjdeed's attitude in "Mtaktak", a dialectic seems to be taking place, but unlike Shabjdeed, it does not lead to a declaration of ironic courage, but rather a very unironic futility.

Interestingly, the lines about kings giving out diamonds, money, and food might also be seen as a critique of materialism and superficial gestures that do not address the underlying issues faced by the Palestinian people. The darkness that "stifles" and makes one feel like a criminal represents the psychological impact of living under occupation, as well as the struggle to retain one's identity and humanity. Overall, the lyrics by Katibe 5 in this song offer a vivid and poignant portrayal of life in a refugee camp. They highlight the physical and emotional pain, the loss of identity and heritage, and the psychological impact of living in such oppressive conditions. The use of sensory imagery creates a visceral and immersive experience for the listener, drawing attention to the plight of refugees and their ongoing struggle for freedom and self-determination.

3.4 U.K. & U.S.

An interesting distinction to be observed between Palestinian cultural expression within Israel and that without is the increased aggression in the latter. Shadia Mansour's *Kufiya Arabiyah* for example is notably more aggressive in its tone and lyrical content than any song by DAM, and engages in more direct insulting of the Israeli state than those in the Occupied Territories. Rather than speaking to the Zionist system as oppressed from within it, as the denied other within the self, Mansour positions herself, and her Palestinian-ness in direct opposition to

all things Israeli or Jewish. Written in direct retaliation to seeing *kufiyas* in New York with stars of David on them, Mansour's song is directed at the Jewish Israeli enemy, the clear-cut other who continues to steal, dispossess, and appropriate what she sees as her people and her culture. The lyrics are bold and insulting, with such statements as "Go learn what it means to be human before you wear our scarves"; "This is how we wear our scarf, the black and white, but it's become a trend nowadays among these dogs".

One essential element that stands out in these lines is the subversion of the dehumanization that Palestinians have faced at the hands of the Zionist regime. In contrast to MC Abdul's approach, by comparing Israelis to dogs, by demanding that they learn the meaning of humanity, Mansour suggests that Israelis are disconnected from humanity, building on the song's over-arching narrative that the entire Israeli culture is constructed, a mere appropriation of Palestinian Arab culture, from the scarf to the land. She says:

> They want to take everything from us
>
> our land, our culture, our dignity and everything that we own.
>
> No we won't let them do that, we won't stay silent about it
>
> They steal what is not theirs and does not suit them
>
> They dress the same way like us, and they have their eyes on Jerusalem".

She ends the first verse saying:

> We came to show them who we are *(meen ehna)*
>
> Whether they like it or not *(ghasben aan abouhom)*, this is *hattetna*

The final word of the stanza, *hattetna*, is a play on both the scarf and the land. From the root word hatt, or 'put, place, placement', she refers to both "our place" or "where we were

placed" as well as "what we place" or "what we put" on our bodies, our clothing, our style, hence

our scarf. Furthermore, that whole line carries an untranslatable violence. While it does loosely

mean "whether they like it or not", the phrase is a lot more aggressive in its absolution, with

ghasb meaning something like usurpation or force, *abouhom* meaning their fathers, and

ultimately translating to something like "forcibly, against the will of your fathers, this is ours".

The father is important here because it represents the ultimate source of power and control, the

will beyond the will of the self. Not only against *your* will, but against the will of your *father*

will this truth be declared, suggesting the summoning of an ancestral struggle.

Mansour's language throughout the song purposely veers into violent territory like this,

using militaristic imagery and references to weaponry to communicate the power of language.

She says, "My tongue stabs (like a knife)/It shakes earth (like an earthquake)". Violent imagery

is featured also from the very beginning, with the opening lines alluding to the blood and tears of

the Arabs that have been paid. In a sarcastic tone, the song begins:

> Welcome, our cousins,
>
> come in, make yourselves comfortable.
>
> What would you like us to serve you:
>
> Arabic blood or maybe the tears from our eyes?

Playing on that characteristic Arabic hospitality, as well as on the suggestion that Jews

and Muslims are ethnological "cousins", Mansour flips the switch: when you expect her to offer

her guests coffee as a typical Arab would, and she instead offers blood, emphasizing her

"cousins'" apparent appetite for Arab blood and pain, alluding to all the Palestinian blood spilt in

the conflict. She also then harkens to the Darwishian notion of "recording" who one is,

emphasizing the lasting effect that recorded representation and identification has had on

Palestinian identity, echoing Darwish's "Record! I am an Arab!" with her own "Record! I am Shadia Mansour, and the scarf is my identity". She further solidifies this identity by ending her second verse with absolute identification between the scarf and herself, merging herself with the style, both coagulating the Palestinian identity with the wearing of the *kufiya* and with the Arab identity, saying "I am like the scarf, no matter what happens, put me on, take me off, I will remain Arabic". In other words, despite the appropriation, and no matter who tries to change its colors and how, the *kufiya* will remain and essential element in, not only the Arabic style, but the Arab memory and identity.

An additional element of Mansour's song that sets her apart from the rest in this study is her collaboration with M1, an African American rapper, whose solo focuses on the overlap between the collective African and Palestinian struggle. His verse also extends to other transnational resistance movements, bringing them into one rhetorical space or under one rhetorical flag that is the *kufiya*. Furthermore, M1's verse reaches beyond Shadia Mansour's Arab audience to both an English and Arab audience. The verse is like a moment where the song turns its attention from the occupation towards the spectator watching the conflict from afar, as if exposing a hidden connection. He raps:

> The symbolism is resistance,
>
> No coincidence that you can see the RBG in it
>
> Qué bonita bandera, ain't it beautiful?
>
> I say this in Spanish, the solidarity, the feelin's mutual
>
> Meem Wahad that's M1 in Arabic
>
> I'm pro-Palestinian does that make me a terrorist?

> You can catch me in Gaza, Haifa or Ramalla

> But I'm still just Mutulu Olugbala

M1 draws a connecting thread from his own African American self in resistance, through Latin America, the Arab world and Palestine, back to his African roots. By pointing out the RBG colors hidden in the Palestinian flag, he reveals the first, and most essential, layer of this intersectionality, because in the end, he is just "Mutulu Olugbala"—his self-given traditional African name, and emulation of Mutulu Shakur, a member of the Black Liberation Army who is still alive and in jail, and whose birthday it is as I write this. Furthermore, the song, released in 2011, before the Michael Brown murder, was a powerful realization of the development of African American and Palestinian connections, collaboration, and solidarity that was discussed in the previous chapter, and one of the earliest Palestinian-African American collaborations.

Saint Levant (born Marwan Abdel Hamid) is a Palestinian-American rapper currently on the rise. Levant's music career took flight on TikTok in 2020, where he would post freestyles inspired mostly by the Palestinian conflict. Combining French, Arabic and English into his records, he draws inspiration from a broad array of influential figures in different areas—from Said and Darwish to Masari (a Lebanese pop singer)—to create the sense of a kind of progressivist nostalgia. To date, he's only released singles and EPs rather than full on albums, and in 2020 released his first single, "Jerusalem Freestyle", which garnered hundreds of thousands of streams online.

While he raps primarily in English, Levant is best known for his extensive code switching between Arabic, English, and French. "Tourist" for example moves between Arabic and English seamlessly, so that you barely feel the shift from one language to another, and a bilingual listener may not even notice the language change at all. "Haifa in a Tesla" incorporates

more French than "Tourist" while also being more ironic in nature, and his latest single, "Caged Birds Sing", is a mesh of all three languages, and treads on that shared boundary between the personal and the communal. The song oscillates between themes of healing from both personal and political conflict:

> I'm just cleaning out my closet it's a wardrobe
>
> I miss when all my friends were on the same time zone
>
> I miss not knowing I was living in a war zone
>
> But give me two years and I'll be repping Gaza at awards shows.

The first line reveals the entanglement between the self and the political unrest of his homeland, with the play on the word "war" in "wardrobe". Epitomized by another American rapper, Eminem, the phrase 'cleanin out my closet 'is a metaphor for shedding the old, letting go of past anger, etc. The first line's theme of release is a direct response to and comment on the song's name—the caged birds sing to release, and the only way to go for the caged bird is inward, or to the "wardrobe". Moreover, the song's name is a direct allusion to Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, a book about art's power to help us transcend trauma, and in Levant's case, this means encountering and releasing war trauma. Just beneath the surface, the first feeling, or the most immediate preoccupation, is fragmentation, the fact that his family and friends have been scattered by war, living in different "time zones". And interestingly, what Levant longs for the most is not peace, nor a politically antediluvian Palestine but a personal one—a time before his own family's exile, not marked by peace of safety, but by innocence and ignorance of the conflict, when he didn't know he "was living in a war zone". This is interesting again in the context of the song's title and what it suggests, especially since Levant, being an American citizen, is not a "caged bird" in the same sense as his contemporaries in the historic

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homeland, but almost in the opposite sense—he has freedom of movement to travel the world, but he doesn't have the freedom to go back home. Perhaps this is why the song is called "Caged Birds" and not "Bird", as a dedication to the caged birds whom he cannot reunite with.

While "Caged Birds" focuses more heavily on Levant's personal journey, with allusions to larger struggle, his earlier work had a more political overtones. "Jerusalem Freestyle", his first full single, is a melancholic song about nostalgia for a place that only longer exists in memory. He says quite bluntly of Palestine in one verse that "we call it home, but it isn't". The theme of loss and disillusion are underlined by the ghost-like images that Levant harkens to, saying things like "you got children playing by the sea; the language different so they gone now, always wishing it was me". The image of children playing acts as a kind of ghost pain, something he imagines to have been there once but knows is no longer. However, just after this, Levant remembers the truth of his childhood, one that consisted of "late nights and trauma" that ate "away at [his] soul", despite which he feels "guilty that [he's] not there". He does, however, reassure both himself and the audience that he does what he can, mentioning that whatever money he makes he "just reinvests in the community", because ultimately the goal is to help the people still in the historic homeland, whom he regards as the true heroes (reinforcing the theory that the "caged birds" is an illusion to those back home). After a series of quick reflections on the changes in his relationships, the unrest in Jerusalem, his guilt for being in America, Levant finds a kind of resolve in the sense that everything that has happened has been, essentially, for a reason, so he could learn "the tools to success" and use them:

> Damn, this is all part of a plan.
>
> Gotta get rich and give back to the people

who never gave up on staying in the land.

Money is nothing to me

I just reinvest in my community

It is interesting to note that, in March 2022, two years after the initial release of this song, Levant launched his "2048" program, a stipend-based grant for Palestinians pursuing higher education anywhere in the world.

The next line then switches suddenly back the situation in Palestine, saying the Israelis "bomb our cities and then they be sayin 'it's all for security'" and that in Arab cities, "bullets be flyin 'all over the place…already know that somebody gon 'kill me" and most importantly, Levant harkens back to the idea of identity at the boundary, and re-emphasizes the importance of the border as a locus for identity in the Palestinian reality, because it is at the boundary where they are reminded of who they are, that they are "below". As Levant puts it, "We ain't got nowhere to go, IDs at the checkpoints so we know we below". Harkening back to the Darwishian ID poem, and the centrality of the "checkpoint" in Palestinian identity, Levant summons the role of representation and agency in the Palestinian struggle. Furthermore, this particular identification aligns him with '48 Palestinians, and aspirations that are better aligned with a civil rights movement than a full on nationalistic agenda. The association with civil rights movements is also underscored, not only by the use of hip-hop, but of what is called AAVE, or African American Vernacular English, a dialect that most, if not all, rappers emulate in their music. In Levant's case, besides the typical dropping of the "g" in the inflecting "ing", and the repeated use of the contraction "ain't", there is a consistent play on the verb "to be" as is central to AAVE. For example, he uses the root verb "be" in the present tense instead of the standard linking verb "are"

in "bullets be flyin','", as well as inserts it with the inflected verb in "they be sayin','". Similarly, the simple future tense of "is going to" is dropped entirely and replaced the contracted "gon','", which is itself a contraction of the contraction "gonna,'".

Digging deeper into representation and agency, the lyrics of the second verse are directed at the theoretical lover that he describes himself and his city to, saying:

> Come take a trip to my city…
>
> Don't listen to the media tellin 'you stories
>
> just take it directly from me,
>
> more than a century since we been free,
>
> just come to my city
>
> and see for yourself how they livin'.

Levant attacks the media's inadequacy and inability to capture the reality of the situation and give his people proper representation, urging his potential love to "come see for herself" rather than allow the media's representation to dictate her knowledge on the situation, and echoes DAM's sentiments of being misrepresented by media. Furthermore, Levant aligns himself with a vision of diversity and universality, one that contradicts Zionism "with the vision" of a unified yet diverse people:

> Muslim or Christian no time for division.
>
> My people in Gaza, Jaffa, and Jenin,
>
> the people of Nablus, Haifa, wel Khaleel.
>
> My people in Yemen, Sourya, and Lebanon,

we got your back 'cause we know how it feels

The struggle, once again, extends beyond the borders of Palestine or the Palestinian to the entirety of the post-colonial Middle East. It is interesting to note, however, that Levant doesn't mention Jews as part of that vision. The French bits offer further (perhaps intentional) confusion, fusing together the idea of both the land and the lover being appealed to. In the first French verse, Levant remarks:

I don't care what's going on around me, I don't hear anything,

Alone in my world but that's where I feel good,

There's only one place I want to be and that's Gaza,

I saw her from afar and she told me to come back.

At this point, it's hard to tell whether the artist was even speaking to a lover to begin with, or whether it was the land all along, and perhaps this is intentional. Perhaps it is Gaza herself that Levant wants to take to Jerusalem, because it is after this first French verse that Levant starts speaking to an imaginary lover, inviting her to come visit his city. It speaks to the fact that those in Gaza rarely ever leave Gaza and would be disconnected from the Jerusalem community. The song ends on an ironic sentiment, one that is shared by diaspora and homeland Palestinian artists alike: the irony that Zionists represent everything they supposedly "saved" their people from. He ends the song quite bluntly saying "we fight for our rights and its antisemitic, you'd think after being oppressed they would get it, yeah?" This also echoes a sentiment put forth by the Haifa-based Jowan Safadi who, in his 2021 single, "Super White Man", laments, "they told me all about the holocaust, but no one told me why I should pay the cost".

The issue of false representation and the manipulation of mass media in favor of Western ideologies and particular political agendas is addressed more closely, and touched on more universally, in Levant's second single, "Nirvana in Gaza". The song begins quite bluntly, and in English:

> You see how they doin 'us
>
> The images that you be seein on TV ain't nothin 'to do with us
>
> They pin us against one another they love when we fight cuz they usin 'us
>
> Taking our homes / tearin 'em down and they claim that they moving us
>
> They wish they were through with us
>
> You see how they doin 'us
>
> Strippin 'us of our humanity

Reminiscent of the chorus in "Awal Bawal", that describes them being "stripped" of their identity, as well as the sentiments of frustration in "Who's a Terrorist?", the song quickly summarizes an intersectionality of struggle experienced by Palestinians across the globe: racism, dispossession, dehumanization, erasure. Then, in the last line of this second stanza, Levant codeswitches to the mother tongue to emphasize the feeling of estrangement, saying in Arabic, "A Palestinian, I feel like a foreigner inside my own country". This sense of being a foreigner in one's own home is one that repeats itself and echoes throughout the works of musicians, poets, artists, writers, and all Palestinian work, both from those within the country and across the diaspora, as well as in the works of the early resistance movements and up to the most contemporary work.

Levant also, in a style similar to his contemporaries, with a certain *air du temps*, codeswitches into French to highlight the global intersectionality of struggle shared by people of color around the world, from "Astana to Botswana", alluding to people like Thomas Sankara and George Floyd, saying "the moment that we saw that video of George Floyd man, you know we relate". Considering the Palestinian community's response to Michael Brown's murder in 2014, it isn't surprising that there were demonstrations held in honor of Floyd all across the Palestinian community. Once again, these allusions reinforce the universality of the Palestinian struggle, emphasizing the fact that the oppressed are one people, one nation, of one sensibility, and alluding to the idea that Palestinian freedom and African freedom are synonymous with the notion of freedom itself, making however romantic a claim that to liberate Palestine and Africa is to liberate humanity as a whole. The Palestinian territories are considered unsafe, like Botswana, and Israel changed the names of Palestinian cities the same way the Kazakh president renamed Astana to Nur-Sultan—after himself. Levant likens himself to Sankara, the Burkinabe military leader known as Africa's Che Guevara, who was assassinated by his former colleague and associate, Blaise Compaore, using Sisi and Bibi as metaphors for backstabbers, likening them to the gulf leaders who left them hanging.

After the second English chorus, Levant returns to the notion of foreignness and otherness, emphasizing them as part of the natural Palestinian disposition, saying (in Arabic):

A Palestinian is a foreigner

émigré by nature,

thanks to the world that sold his cause,

all he plants is by his own hands.

In other words, the otherness that the Palestinians find themselves in today is the result of betrayal on the parts of those they thought were their allies, and today, they wake up to the reality that their destiny, their representation, and the future of their national identity is solely in their hands. For Levant, the struggle isn't for national identity, or for religion, but for land. And despite everything, it's "only in Gaza that [he] can reach Nirvana". Just like in Kanafani's novels, as Elias Khoury puts it, "there is no identity outside the framework of the relationship to the land" (87).

3.5 A Transnational Musical Subculture

Hall writes of subcultures that:

> …we may distinguish respectable, 'rough', delinquent and the criminal subcultures *within* working class culture: but we may also say that, though they differ amongst themselves, they *all* derive in the first instance from a 'working class parent culture': hence, they are all subordinate subcultures, in relation to the dominant middle-class or bourgeois culture. (Hall 7)

Similarly, while we may distinguish between musical Palestinian subcultures based on locale and proximity to the occupation, they all derive from a Palestinian parent culture, making them subordinate subcultures in relation to the dominant Israeli culture. While artists living in Western countries like Mansour or Levant might seem to fall outside this subordination, given their positioning outside the historic homeland, their agency to narrate and represent themselves as Palestinian remains forever subordinated by the ongoing occupation wherever they might live. Their reassertion into the narrative and their engagement in rhetorical acts of resistance keep them tethered to their Palestinian identity. All over the *shattat*, Palestinians "inherit a cultural orientation from their parents towards a 'problematic 'common to the class as a whole, which is

likely to weigh, shape and signify the meanings they then attach to different areas of their social life" (21). Palestinians are born into a present infused with and informed by a history of loss and humiliation that the Israeli state continually reinscribes into their present, inheriting a political problematic that has worked for decades to undermine and ultimately erase their cultural presence.

Style is another important aspect of subcultures. and the Palestinian music scene is less significant as a space for the emergence "of styles one could call indigenous than…as sites for the reworking and transformation of styles originating elsewhere" (Straw 501). On the one hand, there are the styles of music particularly, which, while beginning with a hybrid Arabic hip-hop in the late '90s with DAM, has become a landscape of overlapping and intersecting fusion genres. In the realm of dress and clothing style, the most significant symbolic act is the wearing of the *kufiya*, as part of a collective allusion to Palestinian heritage. The *kufiya* was historically worn by farmers across the Arab word in various styles, but it became a symbol of Palestinian nationalism after the 1936 revolt. It is that spirit of national liberation that young Palestinian musicians like Shadia Mansour emulate and reformulate when they wear, or sing about, the scarf, and by wearing the scarf in Israel, '48 Palestinians challenge the state's Jewish hegemony, while songs like "Who's a Terrorist" debunk narratives that equate Arabs and Palestinians with terrorism. Furthermore, since the 1967 war, the *kufiya* has become a symbol of international solidarity with Palestine and national liberation on the whole among resistance groups and leftists around the world. Swedenburg notes that in "Sweden the kufiya's use was so wide-spread that the item in known there as a *Palestinasjal*, a 'Palestinian scarf'." (166) During the war in 1967, the Nazareth born musician George Totari and his family left Palestine for Sweden, and in 1972 he founded the band Kofia. Louis Brehony of the Asian Marxist review noted that the lyrics of the band's

debut album, *Palestine my Land* released in 1976, written in both Swedish and Arabic, opened

"with a militant and daring message" directed at both "the Israeli regime and to its allies among

the European ruling classes"[13].

Their second album, *Earth of my Homeland*, released in 1978, has a stronger sense of

internationalism and still militant but more feminine voice, emphasizing the land's fertility and

the role of women in the resistance. In his interview with the Asian Marxist Review (AMR),

Totari says that the album "told the stories of historical events, from the voices of mothers who

had lost their sons, daughters and everything". The album was written during a time that the

band's members were participating in solidarity movements with resistance groups in Vietnam

and South Africa while back home, Sadat was normalizing relations with Israel. They dedicated

anthems to "Chile, Oman and Iran, where the group were invited to perform in February 1980 on

the anniversary of the revolutionary overthrow of the Shah" (*AMR*). The second album ends with

the band's most famous song to date, "Leve Palestina" ("Long Live Palestine), entitled

Demonstrationssången ('Demonstration Song')/Tahiyya Falastin on the album. The third album,

Mawwal to My Family and Loved Ones, came out in 1984, during the Israeli invasion of

Lebanon, written in the wake of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. And finally, their fourth album,

Long Live Palestine, was written and sung entirely in Arabic, and gave emphasis to the lyrics via

the focus on Totari's voice over softened and less dominant instrumentation, demonstrating the

urgency brewing in the Palestinian community in the years leading up to the first intifada.

Released in 1988 in the midst of the first intifada, the album cover "featured Sliman Mansour's

illustration of a dove breaking through the bars of a prison" (*AMR*).

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[13] https://www.marxistreview.asia/leve-palestina-story-of-a-palestinian-swedish-band-kofia/

By the late 90s and early 2000s, American celebrities were donning the kufiya in public appearances, in films and on television, catching the attention of fashion magazines and news outlets. "Another sign of the conventional nature of the kufiya in that period was the appearance of Carrie Bradshaw (played by Sarah Jessica Parker) in a kufiya tank top on *Sex and the City* in February 2002" (Swedenburg 167) and by early 2006, "the Fashion & Style pages of the *New York Times* took note of the kufiya's growing presence in street and fashion" (Swedenburg 167). Like Palestinian hip-hop and other aspects of youth popular culture, the kufiya's political significance became a point of contestation among commentators, some of whom argued that the significance had been neutralized by its popularity and commodification, and most of all its association with "hipsters", a stereotype for "young urban followers of the latest trends in fashion, ready to abandon a "dated" style for a new one at a moment's notice" (Swedenburg 168).

Palestinian hip-hop also lies within the subculture of hip-hop as a whole, adapting its original ideological force to its specific situation. In their essay, "Hip-Hop and Youth Culture: Contemplations of an Emerging Cultural Phenomenon", Carl and Virgil Taylor assert that "Hip-Hop, like Rock and Roll before it, is not only a genre of music; it is also a complex system of ideas, values, and concepts that reflect newly emerging and ever-changing creative, correlative, expressive mechanisms, including song, poetry, film, and fashion" (251). Created primarily by and for African American youth, hip-hop as subculture has been taken up by communities around the globe, both Black and otherwise, and has been appropriated "by a wide segment of mainstream society" (UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools 1). As Kristine Wright points out in her essay, "Rise Up Hip Hop Nation", hip hop was created by African American youths as medium "that served as both an expression of and an alternative to urban woes plaguing their lives, namely underemployment, poverty, and racial discrimination" (9) but has now become "an

international youth phenomenon transcending racial and ethnic lines" (9). Among these international youth groups are Palestinians who use the art form, most particularly its rap style music, to articulate their own complex system of ideas, values, and concepts.

Subcultures arise in response to large historical shifts, and work to emphasize rather than fix society's perceived flaws, like the emphasis on working class solidarity in the styles of British youth subculture. For Palestine, Oslo was one of these major shifts, and naturally, it had profound effects on popular culture trends within Israel:

> …the changes were significant. The Israeli film industry underwent a process of radicalization: after a history of largely phobic engagements with Palestinian Arab culture, feature films and documentaries began critically to reassess the founding myths of Zionism. (Stein and Swedenburg 12)

As aforementioned, while there was a moment of peace and collaboration after Oslo, tensions rose again in 2000 with the Aqsa Intifada, and have continued to rise since. As Stein and Swedenburg point out, "the pervasive fear (real and imagined) of random Palestinian violence has, since the turn of the twenty-first century, increasingly curtailed customary rituals and geographies of consumption even as it has generated new ones" (13), and once again, images of Arab terrorists have become prominent in Hollywood films.

However, Hebdige insists that "forms cannot be permanently normalized. They can always be deconstructed, demystified, by a 'mythologist 'like Barthes" (16)—or interrupted, by youth subcultures. Hall and Hebdige maintain that British youth subcultures like mods and punks use style to interrupt the process of normalization. By borrowing and adapting the existing subcultural form of hip-hop, Palestinian hip-hop artists interrupt the dissipation and normalization of the "myth of consensus" that they are terrorists, or that the *kufiya* is simply a

traditional Arab headscarf. Their stylistic choices are "gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus" (Hebdige 18). Hall recognizes that one must trace the "maps of meaning" (*Resistance* 5), which every culture has, inscribed in these styles in order to discern the message being communicated by these people. In the case of Palestinian youth subcultures, however, while a similar process is taking place—a similar engagement with and defiance of hegemonic structures, similar struggles with a 'parent culture', and creations of alternative spaces of communication—their choice of expression has been primarily language and music, particularly political hip-hop. The "maps of meaning" in this situation draw themselves out to us as we listen to the music and interpret the lyrics, which are often very explicit and sometimes disturbing. From what we have seen, meaning is found by these artists in their deviation from the narrative of both their oppressors and their parent culture.

As the ones in closest proximity to the occupation, whose identity is most directly at risk of diffusion, and as the grandfathers of Palestinian hip-hop, '48 Palestinians act as the movement's focal point. Unlike those in the Occupied Territories, '48 Palestinians are not only in dialogue with the occupation but are part of it, and it is the occupation's othering of them that creates the essential dissonance. Like Hebdige's punks and mods, they bring to attention the gaps in the class system. Because the occupation has built itself around and propagates itself through the ethno-religious national classification of a "Jewish state", '48 Palestinian, i.e. non-Jewish Israeli, cultural expression and visibility challenge thus challenge its hegemony, positioning them as both subcultural and countercultural actors simultaneously. According to Swedenburg, "As second-class citizens of the Jewish state, [DAM's] members are positioned in dialogue with it, and so their raps typically work to subvert hegemonic Zionist logic from within," (20). These

efforts by DAM and other '48 artists empower Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to come

up with their own tactics to subvert Zionist hegemony and aggression, an empowerment manifest

in initiatives like the parties hosted by Jazar Crew and the founding BLTNM. They use their

(albeit limited) freedoms, of movement and citizenship, to extend their spaces of 'semi-absolute '

freedom to Gazans and West Bankers, strengthening the bonds between these disparate

communities and reinscribing shared cultural practices to replace, or reinscribe in new ways,

those lost. As mentioned earlier, in an interview with VICE, Ayed Fadel, one of the founders of

Jazar Crew, talks about the idea behind the initiative. He tells the interviewer that initially, Jazar

Crew started out of a need "for a dance floor and safe space for the Palestinian community in the

Israeli city of Haifa"[14]. But they soon realized that to create a "strong core, an Arab underground,

on Israeli territory" they would need to connect with Palestinians in other territories.

> At first, we as Palestinians on Israeli territory didn't have a connection with the
>
> Palestinian community in the West Bank. Palestinians without an Israeli passport
>
> don't have freedom of movement, so we grow up in separate communities and
>
> were disconnected from each other. We started to build a bridge between the
>
> communities and build up a [unified] Palestinian electronic music scene.[15]

Youth subcultures, both British and Palestinian, grapple with the struggle for

signification, for identification, and Palestinians have, for decades, been plagued with the mark

of terrorism and suicide attacks in the West. It is not until *jil Oslo* begin to express musically

their "objections and contradictions" that "the closing of the circuit between sign and object"

(terrorist and Palestinian, for example) is initiated (Lefebvre qtd. in Hebdige 17)—at least, in the

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[14] https://www.vice.com/en/article/kzj9xw/meet-jazar-crew-the-dj-duo-bringing-electronic-parties-to-palestine
[15] https://www.vice.com/en/article/kzj9xw/meet-jazar-crew-the-dj-duo-bringing-electronic-parties-to-palestine

West. Other signs being reinterpreted by these artists are the *kufiya* and even the body and role of the Palestinian woman, challenging the implications of their heritage and parent culture. Songs like Mansour's on the *kufiya*, for example, remove it from its original Bedouin context and turn it into a modern signifier of resistance that is now worn by people around the world, both Palestinian and non-Palestinian, to represent their political inclinations. The *kufiya* is transmuted from a Bedouin headdress into a symbol of "dispossession, systematic displacement, extrajudicial killings [and] oppression" as described by Palestinian fashion designer Omar Joseph Nasser-Khoury[16]. This reinterpretation, however, also faces the challenge of appropriation and corporatization, similar to that witnessed by Mansour in New York, by Western fashion companies. In an article written for *The Guardian* in summer, 2019, Ellie Violet Bramley exposes these appropriative practices specifically by luxury brands, bringing forward the "concerns that its connections with the Palestinian struggle are being diluted and exploited", a concern addressed by Mansour three years earlier in her song. The Palestinian woman and her body, rather than being the passive supporter of the male resistance soldier, is redefined as an agent of resistance in her own right in songs like "Jasadikhom" and "Who You Are". Her body becomes the site of intersectional oppression that challenges, first and foremost, her Arab parent culture and its traditional characterisation of femininity. This too is challenged within the Palestinian community, most conspicuously by Hamas in Gaza, due to its inherently religious, and particularly Islamic nature. As Islah Jad points out, in her essay "Islamist Women of Hamas: Between Feminism and Nationalism", Islamic regimes like Hamas "seek to establish an ideal society which depends upon a particular conception of the ideal woman" (138) that conforms to

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[16] https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2019/aug/09/the-keffiyeh-symbol-of-palestinian-struggle-falls-victim-to-fashion

what traditionalists consider "pure" Palestinian culture. This "ideal woman" in a traditional, Islamist setting, however, is in direct contrast to the woman's role put forth by DAM and other artists, as well as to the women themselves involved in liberatory sexual practices envisioning themselves within larger nationalist contexts. Jad explains that the "'traditional 'Islamist ideal woman has come to be represented as opposed to the 'modern 'ideal woman constructed in nationalist secularist discourse" (138) and the cultural purity of the former is often used to preclude the presence of the latter. As Alqaisiya mentions, "such calls for 'purity 'function as forms of 'political silencing 'of queer and native feminists that leave the indigenous neocolonial elite unchallenged" (39). While in this case, we are speaking primarily about Palestinian women, this dichotomy extends to and is reflective of the diverging views of gender and sexuality in Palestine and the Arab world at large. The discussion of the role of women opens up the space for discussions of gender and sexuality as a whole, making room for organizations like alQaws to provide new ways for women and queer Palestinians to "apprehend the ways that international development and assistance agendas often camouflage and normalize Israeli colonial violence" (Alqaisiya 39).

Back in 2004, Swedenburg wrote, "Palestinian rap has received far more attention in the West to date than any other musical genre from Palestine…prompted by Palestinian rap's apparent strangeness or novelty," (17). Apparently, it is "strange for Western reporters unfamiliar with the scene to find Palestinians, stereotypically known for terrorism and violence, doing something so familiar, so 'normal 'as rapping," (17). Interesting side note: both Palestinian music and British style is heavily influenced by Black culture, Palestinians by their exposure to the music online, and British youth "as a series of mediated responses to the presence in Britain of a

sizeable black community" (Hebdige 73). It would be interesting to dig deeper into why the

Black experience has such a profound influence on marginalized people worldwide.

Subculture is also identified by Hebdige as a mediation between experimentation and

tradition. According to Hebdige, the form is meant to "crystallize, objectify and communicate

group experience" (79). This is precisely something that Palestinian youth engage with

rhetorically, employing traditional rhetorical elements of poetry in their rap, rapping in Arabic,

and even expressing many of the same nationalistic dreams that their parents have. Stein and

Swedenburg claim that "these bands traffic in a kind of canonical Palestinian nationalism, given

their shared interest in the histories of anti-Palestinian oppression and dispossession that span

Green Lines and borders" ("Popular Culture, Relational History", 14). At the same time,

however, in the '48 Palestinian case, because they are engaged in an insistent dialogue with the

Israeli state and people, "refuses this canonical logic: it demonstrates the place of Palestinians

within the Israeli state even as it suggests ways in which Israeli-Jewish culture and linguistic

idioms can be repossessed by Palestinian-Israeli culture" ("Popular Culture, Relational History",

14). In other words, the work of '48 Palestinians is often more reflective of a countercultural civil

rights movement than a subculture committed to a national liberation project.

Thus, like British youths, Palestinian youth subcultures are essentially a culture within a

culture, intent on distinguishing themselves from both their parent culture, and the hegemonic

powers that control the outlets of representation. Palestinian youth subcultures use "hip hop to

stretch the boundaries of nation and articulate the notion of a present absence that refuses to

disappear" (Maira 1). They express the "shared social experience" of their "particular class

location" through "the construction of distinctive leisure styles" (Hall *Resistance* 172)—their

style of leisure being a particular combination of rhythm and poetry, desert sounds layered with

electronic beats. But, they "*all* derive in the first instance from a 'working class parent culture'" (*Resistance* 7), and while they "exhibit a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their 'parent 'culture" (*Resistance* 7), they nonetheless maintain "significant things which bind and articulate them" (*Resistance* 7) with it. As we have seen, and as Maira points out, their songs are laden with rhetorical, poetic and musical features specific to both Palestinian, Islamic, and Arab culture: "traditions of improvised and folk poetry in Arabic, such as *zajal*, *mawwal*, and *saj* , and the percussiveness and lyricism of Arab music" (2). While Hall identifies subcultural styles as "coded expressions of class consciousness transposed into the specific context of youth" (*Resistance* 203), in the less coded context of Palestinian hip-hop, this same process takes place on the level of linguistic and musical styles, where these artists create "a new genre of hip hop layering Palestinian, Arab, and American musical forms" (Maira 2)—a form specific to them.

Finally, Palestinian youth subcultures are similarly vulnerable to the transposing power of the media. Hall and Hebdige argue that the media not only records resistances like these but creates rhetorical spaces for them *within* the context of and in relation to the dominant ideology. This process can happen in two ways: by the conversion of subcultural signs/symbols into mass-produced objects; or by the labelling/redefinition of "deviant" behaviour, and both of these tactics are addressed in these artists 'music—the latter being the labelling of Palestinians as "terrorists", and the former being the appropriation of Palestinian and Arab cultural artifacts by Western and Israeli people. Resistance to labelling, as we have seen, is addressed by a number of artists, both explicitly (as in *Who s the Terrorist?*) and implicitly (as in *Mama, I Fell in Love with a Jew*, for example). But resistance to commodification is best exemplified by Shadia Mansour in *Kufiya Arabiya*, which was written in response to her having seen a blue-and-white *kufiya*

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scarf with stars of David on it—the ultimate form of commodification. She introduced the song onstage in New York with the statement: "You can take my falafel and hummus, but don't fucking touch my *kufiya*".

Conclusion

As we have seen, Elias Khoury was on point when he noted that "the Palestinian story would have dozens of different narratives all written in different places and from diverse perspectives: it would not be hostage to a single, closed narrative" (89). Since as early as 1799, people living within the area of Palestine and Southern Syria have expressed their adherence to loyalties based primarily on locale and kinship. It is in moments of danger and the threat of encroaching foreign powers that a larger territorial consciousness begins to become apparent amidst the area's population, and even then, there remains a significant cultural distance between the land's peasants, living traditional, mostly religious lives in the hills, and the urban populace. When the idea of the modern nation enters the Levant via the First World War, this rift between the *fellah* and the cosmopolitan is still unresolved, but the population as a whole is forced to contend with the nationalizing project of Zionism in addition to the already instated British Mandate. While there are moments of coalescence in the visions for a Palestinian nation, and instances of united resistance, for the most part there remained internal fractures based on both cultural-religious and economic lines, with the *fellahin* population feeling betrayed by absentee property owners who sold the lands they'd been working and living on, leaving them homeless, jobless, and entirely destitute. Cultural-religious rifts were further agitated by the great expulsions of the *Nakba* and *Naksa*, the establishment of the Israeli state, the rise and fall of Arabism, and the influx of Islamic groups from around the Arab world making their way into Palestine. After Oslo, with the division of the West Bank into zones, an empowerment and priority offered to Israel and its newest settlers by the international community, hope for the refugees 'return to Palestine was all but lost. Oslo solidified the presence of the Israeli state in a way that had not yet happened throughout the previous half century of struggle. It was on one

level the international community's acknowledgement of the state of Israel, and on a deeper level, an implicit rejection of the Palestinian right to determination. In response to that implicit rejection sprang forth the "dozens of different narratives" written and sung by Palestinian hip-hop artists "in different places and from diverse perspectives".

We saw how, in Palestine, the nature of music and the poem-song has morphed multiple times throughout the last two centuries in alignment with these geopolitical circumstances. The signing of the Oslo Accords brought about the most major and decisive shift in the Palestinian geopolitical sphere, which subsequently brought with it the most major corresponding shift in the poem-song. Coming about during a period of peace that opened the door for collaboration, Palestinian hip-hop was born inside Israel proper as the result of Tamer Nafar's collaboration with Jewish Israeli rapper, Subliminal, a period of peace that was cut short by the rising tensions in the Palestinian community that eventually culminated in the Second Al Aqsa Intifada, of which DAM was at the forefront. This original spark made way for the current, transnational Palestinian hip-hop scene which, rooted in the broader hip-hop subculture, has become a vehicle for youth of Palestinian heritage to articulate their political ideas, misgivings, and experience wherever they are in the world. Palestinian hip-hop artists adapt the original ideological force of hip-hop to their specific Palestinian context, addressing issues ranging from underemployment, poverty, and racial discrimination to dispossession and life in exile. Like their counterparts in British youth subcultures, Palestinian hip-hop artists also utilize style to interrupt the process of normalization. By deviating from dominant narratives, they challenge the perception that Palestinians are terrorists or that the *kufiya* is merely a traditional Arab headscarf. Their stylistic choices serve as gestures that offend the silent majority and contradict the myth of consensus, inviting critical engagement and reframing of Palestinian identities. As we have observed,

visions of Palestinian identity and articulations of resistance vary between artists based on, not only their proximity with the land itself, but also on their political realities as individuals and the different systems of power and oppression they are forced to grapple with, from religion to gender identity. Palestinian resistance and the resistance song are thus no longer limited to expressions that serve a larger Palestinian national cause, but rather include articulations of the Palestinian individual, serving personal rather than necessarily collective or national projects. '48 Palestinians in particular, the focal point of the Palestinian hip-hop movement, use their proximity to the occupation to challenge the state's Jewish hegemony, deviating from what would be considered by McDonald as Palestinian resistance culture and veering into Israeli counterculture. Their visibility and expression within the Israeli state disrupt the canonical logic of Palestinian nationalism and resistance as well as Zionist hegemony. Furthermore, in addition to representing their own struggle as citizens within the state, '48 Palestinians also empower and strengthen connections with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, thereby creating alternative spaces of communication and solidarity between otherwise disconnected communities, reinscribing and superimposing new connections on a forced division. What this has sparked is a larger, multigenre alternative music scene that allows young people to explore the politics of liberation from the individual to the collective, from the sexual to the national.

Drawing upon the insights of Hall and Hebdige, we have observed that style plays a crucial role in subcultures as a symbolic means of expression. While the media plays a significant role in both recording and shaping Palestinian youth subcultures, allowing their music to reach others around the globe, it also poses challenges in the form of commodification and appropriation. Palestinian hip-hop artists resist these processes by explicitly addressing labels imposed on them, such as the stereotype of terrorism, challenging the traditions of their parent

culture, and expressing their opposition to the commodification of cultural artifacts. Through their stylistic choices, language, and music, Palestinian youth articulate their own identities, disrupt normalization, and resist the systemic removal of their voices. The transnational nature of Palestinian hip-hop highlights its significance as a platform for the expression of shared experiences among marginalized communities worldwide. By engaging with traditional cultural elements and reinterpreting symbols, Palestinian hip-hop artists create a distinctive genre that merges Palestinian, Arab, and American musical forms. Moving forward, further research and engagement with Palestinian youth subcultures are necessary to understand their evolving dynamics and the transformative potential they hold. By amplifying their voices, we can challenge existing power structures, dismantle stereotypes, and foster a more nuanced understanding of Palestinian identities and aspirations.

This thesis contributes to the broader discourse on subcultures, resistance, and youth culture by emphasizing the vastness in variety of unique experiences and struggles Palestinian youth face across the globe, rather than attempting to contain them within one homogenous category. It broadens the definition of what is considered Palestinian resistance music by asserting that all instances of socially engaged hip-hop produced by artists of Palestinian heritage both stem from and fall under the category of resistance, whether they serve a larger nationalising mission or address the personal struggles of the individual in question. This leaves room for us to recognize the human experience taking place beneath the political one, to see what troubles the Palestinian youth beyond Palestine. In addition, while studies of Palestinian hip-hop as a budding youth subculture have been performed, they have been confined to Israel proper and the surrounding territories and have been presented as more or less homogenous, suggesting that this subculture begins and ends within the Arab world and is to a degree unified

in its vision. This thesis takes into account a series of global articulations of Palestinian hip-hop, rather than confining the limits of this subculture to historic Palestine, to argue for a larger, heterogenous, transnational youth subculture.

A limitation this thesis faces is the language barrier. The thesis primarily focuses on English-language sources and may overlook relevant scholarship, cultural expressions, and perspectives expressed in Arabic or other languages. Being an English language thesis, it also employs English translations of the majority Arabic songs, which often dilutes the poetry, meaning, and wordplay being employed, arresting many of the lyrics of their potential impact on the reader who does not know Arabic. This language barrier limits the depth and breadth of the analysis, potentially missing crucial insights and nuances. Future research could overcome this limitation by incorporating bilingual or multilingual approaches, and engaging with sources and participants in their native languages. Furthermore, while this thesis briefly touches upon the redefinition of the role of Palestinian women within the subculture, it does not extensively explore the gender dynamics within Palestinian youth subcultures or Palestinian society as a whole. Understanding how gender intersects with Palestinian identity and subcultural expressions would provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and agency experienced by Palestinian women. Further research should delve deeper into the gendered aspects of Palestinian youth subcultures.

The mosaic that is Palestinian identity, nationalism, and resistance is observable not only in contemporary Palestinian hip-hop, but in all the spheres of cultural production being utilized by transnational Palestinians today, from film to literature. Film in particular has become a dominant avenue for Palestinian cultural expression and resistance. In parallel to the emergence of Palestinian hip-hop, many films and film festivals dedicated to depicting the Palestinian

experience have been founded over the last 20 years world-wide, including Reel Palestine in the UAE, the Chicago Palestine Film Festival, the Ramallah-based Palestine Cinema Days, the Toronto Palestine Film Festival right here in Ontario, The London Palestine Film Festival in the UK, among many others. Three films that I have seen, depicting three different Palestinian localities, give us a similar mosaic sense as Palestinian hip-hop.

The first, entitled *200 Meters*, written and directed by Ameen Nayfeh, follows the journey of Mustafa across the apartheid wall to see his family. Mostafa and his wife Salwa are from two Palestinian villages separated by the wall which, despite them only being 200 meters apart, makes it extremely difficult for them to be together. Mostafa, being from the West Bank, does not have the Israeli citizenship that his wife and children do, and his status as a West Banker keeps him from being allowed to live with them. The film begins with a depiction of the family's nightly ritual, where Mostafa shines a light from his balcony to wish his children goodnight. Then, one day, Mostafa receives a call from his wife that his son is in the hospital, and the next 90 minutes are the series of difficulties he faces just trying to get across these 200 meters into Israel to see his son. The film debuted in Turkey in 2021, and was screened in Toronto as part of special event held by TPFF in 2022. It is written in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, and weaves together various complex characters and relationships, from Israeli Jewish smugglers who help Mostafa and people like him to cross checkpoints, to a German girl of Palestinian decent trying to make a film on the difficulties that people face in the West Bank.

The second film, entitled *It Must Be Heaven*, written and directed by Elia Suleiman, follows the story of a Palestinian man who leaves the homeland only to face similar problems he did at home, abroad. Elia Suleiman is often referred to as the Palestinian Buster Keaton, as his films generally have little to no narration, and are always tragicomic. In this film, the protagonist

(played by Suleiman) travels from Nazareth to Paris to New York to promote his films. He has a number of interesting interactions, from one scene with a taxi driver who is fascinated when he learns that Suleiman is from the town as Jesus, to another where a friend of his in New York tells him that his films are "not Palestinian enough", making the central question of the film not only, "what is Palestinian?" but more so, "is Palestine and what is considered Palestinian now inherently connected to struggle and suffering?" Suleiman's films are "not Palestinian enough" because they're funny, because he's Christian, not Muslim, and because they don't depict the struggle in the same way as a film like *200 Meters*, but does that mean there is no Palestinian experience outside the struggle?

Finally, the third film is a short documentary entitled *The Wall*, written and directed by Mira Sidawi. Released in 2020 and taking place in the Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon, the name of the film is an allusion to the 1982 Pink Floyd film of the same name. It revolves around four Palestinian teenagers living in the Shatila camp who are on a mission to make a film that will get the attention of Roger Waters and encourage him to have a concert in their camp to help shine a light on their living situation. It involves moments that vary from funny to frightening, and reveals the complexity of refugee life that is often lost to its signifier.

While the three films are all of different style and tone, and take place in three different places, they all capture, in one way or another, the problem of representation and the struggle for agency intrinsic to the Palestinian experience that permeates Palestinian hip-hop as well. In *200 Meters*, it is an issue with his papers at the checkpoint; in *It Must Be Heaven*, it is an issue of ascribing to what the world has deemed "Palestinian"; and in *The Wall*, it is the youth's mission to show Roger Waters who they are, that they are music and movie lovers with rich, full lives

that get lost under the banner of "refugee". All three films also underscore this in their use of the *mise en abyme*, film within a film technique in one way or another

I recently had the opportunity to act and work on a number of films produced in collaboration with the Canadian Arab Institute that deal with both the Palestinian and general Arab experience. In one of the films, I played a queer Palestinian activist who had emigrated to Canada and was applying for a job. The film, *In Her Shoes*, co-written by Mariam Momani and Rodrigue Hammal and directed by Momani, depicts the struggles that Arab women face when attempting to launch careers abroad, particularly here in Canada. On set, I met and collaborated with several Palestinian artists and actors, one of whom was the film's main character, and who gave me a very interesting insight into her perspective of Palestine and the idea of Palestinian national determination as a Palestinian born in Canada to immigrant parents. She said, "I don't think Palestine, the one we think of, exists anymore. Even if we got the *balad* back, and I don't think we ever will, but even if we did, it would not be what we imagine it to be. Palestine now is a dream, and everyone's dream is different".

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