

Ahlam Shibli

Phantom Home

Essays by
T.J. Demos and Esmail Nashif

**HATJE
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Contents

*While I was concluding the new work
reproduced on the following pages,
my father, Abed Hasan Shibli, passed away.
I dedicate this book to his memory.*

Ahlam Shibli

- 8 **Assembly of the Absent**
Carles Guerra, Marta Gili, João Fernandes,
and Isabel Sousa Braga
- 11 **Disappearance and Precarity:
On the Photography of Ahlam Shibli**
T.J. Demos
- 29 **Death, 2011-12**
Ahlam Shibli
- 163 **The Palestinian's Death**
Esmail Nashif
- 187 **Selected Exhibitions**
- 188 **Selected Bibliography**

Assembly of the Absent

Since the mid-nineties, Ahlam Shibli's photographs have depicted the conditions of living under oppression. The documentary aesthetics forged in territories occupied by Israel to address the traumas implicit in the discrimination, expulsion, and violent death of the Palestinian population has been transposed to other places where the idea of home is just as problematic. Like the celebrations to commemorate French war victims and the contradictions involved in the revelation that the same people can be victims of horrifying violence and then agents of an equally unjust colonial regime, or the desperate decision of individuals who are obliged to emigrate to reconcile their bodies with the desire for a gender of their own choice. The work of Ahlam Shibli uncovers states of dislocation and occupation that are not limited to the Palestinian condition, but extend to other states and situations that harbor injustice and paradox.

Phantom Home brings together the major series of photographs produced so far by Ahlam Shibli. The generosity of the artist and the efforts of three institutions (the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, the Jeu de Paume in Paris, and the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves in Porto) have enabled the co-production of the exhibition and the publication that accompanies it.

Death, the photographer's most recent series, is the product of a collaborative project to present one of this artist's most emblematic works. The sixty-eight color images accompanied by often exhaustive legends occupy the main body of this publication. Photographs, posters, graves, and graffiti summon up Palestinian fighters who died during armed resistance to Israeli occupation, or in various different circumstances (*Shaheed, Shaheeda*), martyrdom operators (*Istishhadi, Istishhadiya*), and prisoners who, in general, are considered failed martyrs. Together, they constitute an assembly of the absent.

Once again, with this series Ahlam Shibli takes documentary praxis to the limits of the visible. The martyr brings into play an aesthetics and a politics of disappearance that aims, as Esmail Nashif writes in his essay, to regain control of the Palestinian death. According to Nashif, the Palestinians, after being exposed to various forms of violence, have had the authority over their own death commandeered. In this case, photography is faced with an unusual task: showing collective annihilation. It is not the death of a body that it is required to show, but the destruction of everything that could uphold and prove the existence of a civil society. As is usual in the way she works, Ahlam Shibli approached this kind of material reality by engaging in conversation with friends and families of the martyrs. In the course of these encounters, other photographs appeared, reminding us of the impossibility of gaining direct access to past events. A vast visual production in remembrance of the martyrs takes center stage in *Death*. Coexistence with these images, some of them worn by exposure to the elements, others venerated in the homes of close relatives, suggests that the Palestinian public domain has given way to the absent.

In his essay, T.J. Demos asks what has happened to critical distance toward an environment that celebrates death by creating a space saturated with images of martyrs. What is certain is that Ahlam Shibli's photographs represent an immersion from which it is difficult to break free. At the same time, however, they do not

subscribe to any of the most common interpretative models in the colonization, either in *Death* or in other works. Rather than taking the causality of the events represented as its basis, the narrative of her series lies in the dynamic of representation. The apparent lack of critical stance is drowned out by the devotional attitude called for by the representations of the martyrs. These are photographs that disable the characteristic mobilization of the humanistic register and save the victims from further victimization, this time by photography itself. Ahlam Shibli uses a concept of photography in which the medium refuses to accept indiscriminately all the objects and subjects that pass before it.

The documentary practice of Ahlam Shibli negates the premise underlying a strain of photography that has set itself up as an essential ingredient of global public opinion and provides every event for debate with an image. So many things happen in this hyper-visual regime, which allow us to see and to know everything without guaranteeing the occasion to act on it; precisely what the artist Hito Steyerl has called "idle reflexivity"—information with no right to action or possibility of intervention. The photography of Ahlam Shibli calls for textuality to suspend the autonomy of the image and to introduce it into a regime that no longer uses photography for information purposes. The reflexivity of Shibli's images lies in the relationship with the subject that speaks to us while remaining suspended within the photograph itself. Furthermore, a single image cannot be detached from the series to which it belongs, as each of her photographs finds its meaning in that of a sequence. Therein lies a rich, complex multitude of signs that represents the only vestige of community in situations of precarious life.

Carles Guerra
Marta Gili
João Fernandes
Isabel Sousa Braga
Curators of the exhibition

Disappearance and Precarity: On the Photography of Ahlam Shibli

T.J. Demos

In one photograph from Ahlam Shibli's recent series *Death* (2011–12), a grandmother and three of her grandchildren appear in a sitting room. Amid the decorative golden curtains, beige sofa, and wooden coffee table, set with a pot of tea and an arrangement of flowers, an enormous painting looms over them in the corner depicting a young man holding a machine gun. He wears a black leather jacket with upturned collar and gazes out at the viewer with a look of defiance. At the top of the canvas, an Arabic inscription reads: "The panther of Kata'ib Shuhada' al-Aqsa, Mikere" (Mikere, of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades). The young boy on the couch peers up at the portrait of his now-dead father, his admiring gaze alerting us to the social function of such imagery beyond the death of its sitter, exemplifying a repeated comment during the height of the Second Intifada: "For every activist killed, ten more would become involved as a result."¹ Though dead, the absent Mikere remains a presence in life, transmitting a message perhaps more surely that he ever could have while living.

Death explores the visual culture of Palestinian martyrdom found in public and private spaces. It shows the posters found on walls all over the territories occupied in 1967, in which martyrs (mostly men, but also some women and children) are positioned in front of Palestinian national symbols like the Dome of the Rock, alongside verses from the Quran, or the messages of a militant group. Photographs of the deceased are also carried in the hands of mourners, placed on necklaces, displayed on mobile phones and in family living rooms. For anthropologists of such commemorative practices, "the everyday emphasis on the celebration of martyrdom might be understood as a collective self-defense against the absurdity of everyday devastation, backed by every possible mythical, religious and historical value in order to make this daily dose of death not only meaningful but absolutely inevitable."² As such, the mythification of martyrs exemplifies how "resistance and sacrifice have been equated as an inevitable price to pay for a present sense of life alienated and lived in the promise of a better future."³

Yet while these omnipresent images of death in Palestinian communities testify to the disappearance of sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, they exemplify, at the same time, the refusal of that disappearance. What remains is the ghostly presence of those now dead, who ceased living for multiple reasons, but whose uncanny appearance is now made to serve various political and religious causes in support of the Palestinian struggle for decolonization and independence. Still, the images document a phenomenon that is by no means simple in cultural or representational terms. What of the controversial meaning of martyrdom, for instance, for the families who may have lost their houses to Israeli bulldozers owing to the actions of their relatives? What about those who question the legitimacy and effect of such martyrdom operations? How do the living feel about the militarization of Palestinian society as a result of the armed resistance against the colonizer? What of the "polyvalent politics"—in the words of Lori A. Allen—of such commemorative practices in which those who died as innocent bystanders (especially children) are instrumentalized by competing militias?⁴ Regarding the answers to these questions, the photographs are silent. Yet they do open up these very considerations, searching without easy conclusion, creating a certain awareness of, and relation to, non-knowledge. Confronting the photographic truth of such non-knowledge is one consistent aspect of Shibli's work.

Her recent series of martyr images thus builds on her long-standing photographic project dedicated to recording the life (and afterlife) of those living on the boundaries of exclusion, threatened with disappearance, as well as documenting the commemoration of those who have succumbed to absence. Yet the end, as we have seen, is never really the end, at least in the regime of the image. Just as those figures in *Death* represent a refusal of forgetting and a sacrifice for a better life for those who have survived them, an act made in the defiance of disappearance, so too is Shibli's photographic practice pledged to recognize the unrecognized, challenging the visual regimes that would otherwise consign those subjects to erasure.

1. Lori A. Allen, "The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian *Intifada*," in *History & Memory* 18.2 (Fall/Winter 2006), p. 119.

2. Mahmoud Abu Hashhash, "On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine," in *Third Text* 20, no. 3/4 (May–July 2006), p. 400.

3. Abu Hashhash 2006 (see note 2), p. 391.

4. Allen 2006 (see note 1).

Shibli's photography practice began with the recording of the living contexts of Palestinians of Bedouin descent, presenting images of life under the threat of dispossession, and survival within the conditions of enforced displacement, prolonged states of impermanence, and homelessness. They include the series *Unrecognised* (2000), devoted to showing the circumstances of people living in the Galilee in a Palestinian village that appears on no official Israeli map; *Goter* (2002–03), a series that depicts the social and material conditions of Bedouin Palestinians of the Naqab (Negev); *Arab al-Sbaih* (2007), portraying Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan; and *The Valley* (2007–08), representing the village Arab al-Shibli in Lower Galilee (originally named Arab al-Sbaih). In recent years, however, Shibli's engagement has expanded into other geopolitical and social contexts beyond the Palestinian ones, with further photographic cycles. For instance, the series *Eastern LGBT* (2004 / 06) portrays gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people living in Zurich, Barcelona, Tel Aviv, and London, who escaped countries like Pakistan, Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, and Somalia that are intolerant of unconventional sexual orientations. *Dom Dziecka. The house starves when you are away* (2008), shows the inhabitants of several orphanages in Poland where children have movingly established a home for themselves, creating their own family-like relationships, groupings that at the same time differ from conventional social orders and thus indicate possibilities for belonging beyond the traditional family unit. Finally, *Trauma* (2008–09) presents a cycle of pictures including images of former fighters of the French resistance from the south central region of Corrèze. Some of these subjects who suffered under Nazi persecution went on to participate in colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria a few years later, fighting against people who, like their former selves, were fighting for independence.⁵

These diverse photographic series are linked by Shibli's long-standing commitment to investigating the

experiences of social exclusion, as found in the spaces of political non-recognition and dispossession, as well as the expatriate spaces of rejection and non-belonging. As such, her work resonates with like-minded approaches to documentary photography situated in zones of conflict, such as the work of David Goldblatt, Guy Tillim, and Santu Mofokeng, who photographed life in and after South African apartheid. Yet what marks Shibli's practice is its consistent investigation of geopolitical and cultural homelessness wherein inhabitants strive to construct places of belonging. Indeed, as Ulrich Loock writes, "all of Ahlam Shibli's work is guided by a fundamental question, 'what does it mean to be at home?' And its inversion, 'what does it mean not to be at home?'"⁶ In Shibli's photo works, this dialectic of being-at-home and homelessness extends in many directions—to national exclusion, colonial dispossession, socio-sexual alienation, familial deprivation, and death. Yet this structural relationality between inclusion and exclusion is also complicated in her work, insofar as the connection between victim and perpetrator, citizen and alien, living and dead, is never secure—at least not in the field of representation. Neither is the act of recognition an uncomplicated gesture or simple political maneuver. For Shibli's practice remains attentive to the competing ideologies of appearance—as with the *Death* series in particular—and questions what it means when recognition is made, showing that recognition never comes without motivations and unstable political effects. As such, her project's ostensible commitment to recognizing the unrecognized—bringing visibility to those whom the hegemonic powers have cast to the margins—is ultimately complicated by her photography's sensitivity to documentary's aesthetics of indeterminacy. As numerous theorists have observed, photographic meaning is nothing but contingent (dependent on context, captions, sites of reception, and modes of institutional interpretation), which means that its significance is at best uncertain.⁷ This complexity—positioned between

5. Shibli points out the following historical dates: the war in Indochina started in 1946; on May 8, 1945, the same day that Nazi Germany surrendered in World War II, the French fired at local protesters demonstrating against colonial rule in Sétif, which led to the events known as the Sétif and Guelma massacres in Algeria; the war between France and Algerian independence movements lasted from 1954 to 1962. (E-mail correspondence with the author, October 18, 2012.)

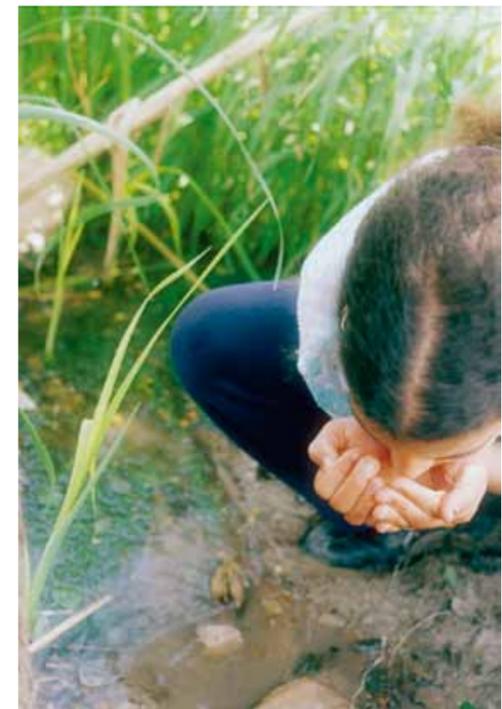
6. Ulrich Loock, "Ahlam Shibli's Critique of the Notion of Home," in *Cura Magazine* 2 (2009).

7. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1993), p. 28: "[T]he photograph is pure contingency and can be nothing else." For Allan Sekula, the meaning of photography is "indeterminate," as he argues in "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," in *Allan Sekula, Dismal Science: Photo Works, 1972-1996* (Normal, 1999), p. 121. More recently, Hito Steyerl has focused on "uncertainty" as the basis of the documentary mode; see "Documentary Uncertainty," in *A Prior* 15 (2007).

Self Portrait

Palestine, 2000
Series of 18 photographs
21.2 × 30 cm; 30 × 21.2 cm
Chromogenic prints

A journey of returning to the places that showed me who I am.



indeterminacy and political recognition—places her work at the forefront of the contemporary reinvention of documentary practice and the exploration of the possibilities of socially engaged photography.

Consider Shibli's *Unrecognised*, a series that focuses on Palestinian Bedouin who have refused to move to officially approved areas, in order not to lose their lands, and, staying defiantly in place, are officially "unrecognized" by the Israeli state. They are consequently condemned to live in temporary structures with no access to running water, electricity, or sanitation.⁸ The photographs depict their corrugated tin buildings held together by rusting chains and locks, located in a harsh, rocky landscape. Barefoot children appear playing in the inhospitable environment, while women engage in domestic labor, hanging clothes to dry on lines outside. Denied health services and education above the primary level, the unrecognized Palestinians suffer frequent abuse from state authorities, including forced removals. Their houses are sometimes bulldozed (with and without advanced notice) and their crops sprayed with herbicide by Israeli helicopters. Relegated to the position of squatters on their traditional lands, they have been denied many rights extended to Israeli citizens (which the Palestinian Bedouin depicted in *Unrecognised* are). For Shibli, this points to a harsh irony for a once-nomadic people, now forced "to become refugees on their own land."⁹ Despite this oppressive context, Shibli includes images of family bonds and playful children, colorfully painted houses, and carefully attended gardens, images that testify to a will to survive and to create a sense of home against the reality of legal homelessness.

It is the same political context of Israel's refusal to recognize Palestinian Bedouin villages—erasing them

from maps and road signs, Hebraizing their traditional Arabic names, rejecting legal claims to real estate ownership—that Shibli confronted with her subsequent series *Goter*. The title derives from local lore recalling the British Mandate era, when Palestinians frequently heard the military order, "go there." The phrase transformed over generations into today's linguistic relic carrying a barely decipherable echo of that earlier confrontation with colonial power.¹⁰ That directive to "go there" was soon reiterated during Israel's consolidation of its state during the early nineteen-sixties, when Israeli military leader and politician Moshe Dayan explained the policy to assimilate the erstwhile itinerant Bedouin into Israeli society by introducing them into the urban workforce in industry, services, construction, and agriculture. "This would be a revolution, but it may be fixed within two generations," he explained. "Without coercion but with government direction . . . this phenomenon of the Bedouins will disappear."¹¹

Dayan's "revolution" amounted to a state-sponsored schedule for the disappearance of a people. It left the Palestinian Bedouin with two alternatives: either remain in "unrecognized" and thus impermanent settlements, which effectively became camp environments that designated a state of exception where subjects would be stripped of their political rights and reduced to a precarious existence,¹² or assimilate into Israeli society and accept the disappearance of "this phenomenon of the Bedouins." Both courses would in fact be continuous with what the late Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling terms "politicide"—"the physical destruction of public institutions and infrastructure, land colonization, starvation, social and political isolation" that targets a specific people.¹³ In this regard the treatment of the

Goter

Al-Naqab, Palestine / Israel, 2002–03
Series of 42 photographs
39.5 × 59 cm; 59 × 39.5 cm
Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

We should transform the Bedouin into an urban proletariat—in industry, services, construction, and agriculture. 88% of the Israeli population are not farmers, let the Bedouin be like them. Indeed, this will be a radical move which means that the Bedouin would not live on his land with his herds, but would become an urban person who comes home in the afternoon and puts his slippers on . . . [The children] will go to school, their hair combed and parted. This will be a revolution, but it can be achieved in two generations. Without coercion but with government direction . . . this phenomenon of the Bedouins will disappear.

Moshe Dayan, July 31, 1963

Since the mid-sixties the Palestinians of Bedouin descent, inhabitants of al-Naqab (Negev), have been subjected to a policy of dispossession of their traditional lands and relocation to seven townships planned by the Israeli government, largely without consulting the people affected. The land they leave behind is then made available for use by Jewish citizens.

In 2003 approximately half of the 110,000 Palestinian Bedouin in al-Naqab were living in these townships. According to official statistics, they were among the poorest of all communities in Israel, lacking sufficient public services, haunted by high rates of unemployment and criminality, and denied viable prospects of development.

The remaining half of the Palestinian Bedouin in al-Naqab refused to move to these townships to avoid losing their lands and being subjected to culturally adverse and socially degrading living conditions. They were living in more than one hundred "unrecognized" villages, where the laws of the Jewish State prohibited them from building permanent structures, where houses were regularly demolished, fields deemed illegal by the authorities and sprayed with toxic chemicals, families evicted from their homes, and where no public access to electricity, running water, or public services such as health care, sanitation, and education beyond primary school level was provided. To date, this situation has not substantially changed.

Goter is a word foreign to the Arabic language, used only by the Palestinians of al-Naqab. According to local people, it is derived from the English "Go there," a command Palestinian Bedouin would hear from the military during the era of the British Mandate (1917–48).

The work addresses the position of the Palestinians of Bedouin descent in the State of Israel: where there is a house there is no home, where there is a home there is no house.



8. See Kamal Boullata, "Cassandra and the Photography of the Invisible," in *Ahlam Shibli: Lost Time* (Birmingham, 2003); and Ulrich Loock, "Goter, Representation of the Unrecognized," in *Ahlam Shibli: Go there, Eat the mountain, Write the past* (Amman, 2011).

9. See Ahlam Shibli's description of *Unrecognised*, posted online at www.ahlamshibli.com/texts/arab.htm (accessed October 26, 2012).

10. See Ahlam Shibli's website and her statement regarding *Goter* at www.ahlamshibli.com/statement/Goter.htm (accessed October 26, 2012).

11. Moshe Dayan, 1963, quoted in Shibli (see note 10).

12. In this regard, the "unrecognized" villages approximate what Giorgio Agamben has described as "the camp," identifying "a space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule." In fact, Israel has maintained a state of emergency since its founding in 1948. "Inasmuch as its inhabitants have been stripped of every political status and reduced completely to naked life," Agamben writes, "the camp is also the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been realized—a space in which power confronts nothing other than pure biological life without any mediation." Giorgio Agamben, "What Is a Camp?" in *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis, 2000), pp. 39 and 41. See also Adi Ophir, Michal Givoni, and Sari Hanafi, eds., *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (New York, 2009).

13. See Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Sharon's War Against the Palestinians* (London, 2003), p. 3.

Palestinian Bedouin bears relation to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in general, characterized by the long-standing project "that covers a wide range of social, political, and military activities whose goal is to destroy the political and national viability of a whole community of people and thus deny it the possibility of genuine self-determination."¹⁴ Such a project corresponds to a view of the Palestinians as possessing "relative humanity," and therefore as "entitled to only a subset of the otherwise inalienable rights that are due to 'full' humans," as explains Omar Barghouti.¹⁵

Given such state policies and biopolitical conditions, it is no wonder that Palestinian writers and activists like Edward Said repeatedly expressed the fear of disappearance during the nineteen-eighties and nineties: "Certainly, the destruction of Palestine in 1948, the years of subsequent anonymity, the painful reconstruction of an exiled Palestinian identity, the efforts of many Palestinian political workers, fighters, poets, artists, and historians to sustain Palestinian identity—all of these have teetered alongside the confounding fear of disappearance, given the grim determination of official Israel to hasten the process to reduce, minimize, and ensure the absence of Palestinians as a political and human presence in the Middle Eastern equation."¹⁶ It is the architectural, geographic, institutional, social, and visual evidence of the policy of bringing about the disappearance of a people that Shibli's *Goter* and *Unrecognised* show—particularly in the obscured figures, fragmented faces, ethereal, silhouetted bodies, and forlornly empty domestic spaces, which characterize and haunt her photographic imagery. It is as if the existential reality of absence already pervades these scenes, glimpsing a future desertion, places of abandonment, and a vanishing people.

Of course absence and disappearance correspond to photography's condition as a medium, which Shibli's project develops by cannily placing medium and geopolitics in relation. As described by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, photography's ontology fundamentally concerns death. Death is the *eidōs* of photography, its ideal form and most distinguished expression.¹⁷ In fact, there can be no photograph that does not render absent what it represents. Eduardo Cadava usefully explicates Barthes's argument, where he writes that "the conjunction of death and the photographed is in fact the very principle of photographic certitude: the photograph is a cemetery. A small funerary monument, the photograph is a grave for the living dead. It tells their history—a history of ghosts and shadows—and it does so because it is this history."¹⁸ It is not surprising, then, that the result of Shibli's joining of photography to political non-recognizability is a haunting aesthetics of hallucination—consider the ghostly presences of martyrs that serve as funerary monuments in the cemetery of public space in *Death*, or the fleeting, obscured, and blurred figures in *Goter*, as well as that series' portrayal of evacuated and uninhabited locales that somehow speak to the striking presence of absence in what are homeless spaces. All express the haunting of that which refuses disappearance. In other words, it is precisely the conjunction of death and the photographed that Shibli explores.

One aspect of this conjunction is that in Shibli's hands the photograph becomes an insistent act of retaining the presence of the disappeared and displaced, the absented and dead, providing evidence of an existence that has otherwise been denied, controlled,

Trackers

Palestine / Israel, 2005
Series of 85 photographs
37 × 55.5 cm; 55.5 × 37 cm; 60 × 90 cm;
90 × 60 cm
Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

Trackers is a series of photographs taken in 2005 depicting Palestinians of Bedouin descent who served or are serving as volunteers in the Israeli Army. The project is concerned with the price a colonized minority is forced to pay to the majority of colonizers, perhaps to be accepted, perhaps to change its identity, perhaps to survive, or perhaps all this and more.



14. Kimmerling 2003 (see note 13), p. 3. For Ilan Pappé and other dissident historians, Israeli policy since 1948 has been consistent in working toward the resettlement of Palestinians outside of Israel (including the territories occupied in 1967), encouraged via economic pressure, land appropriation, settler activity, and military violence—what Pappé terms "ethnic cleansing." See Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford, 2001). Pappé urges his readers to understand "the ethnic cleansing by Israel of the Palestinians," which "started in 1948 but continues, in a variety of means, to today," as a "crime against humanity" (pp. 8 and 5).

15. As Barghouti elaborates, "I define relative humanity as the belief, and relative-humanization as the practice based on that belief, that certain human beings, who share a specific common religious, ethnic, cultural or other similarly substantial identity attributes, lack one or more of the necessary attributes of being human, and are therefore human only in the relative sense, not absolutely, and not unequivocally. Accordingly, such relative humans are entitled to only a subset of the otherwise inalienable rights that are due to 'full' humans." Omar Barghouti, "Relative Humanity: The Fundamental Obstacle to a One-State Solution in Historic Palestine," in *The Electronic Intifada*, January 6, 2004, <http://electronicintifada.net> (accessed October 26, 2012).

16. Edward Said, "Preface," in *The Question of Palestine* (London, 1992). For a more recent approach to the social reality of Palestinian everyday life, see Saree Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation* (New York, 2008).

17. Barthes 1993 (see note 7), p. 15.

18. Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, 1997), p. 10.

walled in, imprisoned, bordered up, exiled. Shibli's is an act of intervening in the organization of appearance so that those normally denied representation—physically, architecturally, spatially, politically, and visually—are brought to light. In this sense, her project resonates with the politicization of the photographic, moving beyond a purely Barthesian meditation on the deathly and uncanny aesthetics of the photographic image. Indeed, her work pushes Barthes's aesthetics of subjective judgment toward an insistence on making a claim for appearance that is also a political subjectivation. That subjectivation is a coming-into-being, a participation in the formation of the visible world, and a claiming of rights for those in that world, rights that extend beyond the repressive nation-state and its colonial project.¹⁹

Against the state's social and political segregations, Shibli's photography constitutes a demand for the universality of rights, equality, and inclusion beyond those regimes that would divide and seclude, produce states of exception and relative humanity, and carry out programs of politicicide.

As such, Shibli's works articulate the hopefulness of a photography that contests the injustice of the situation of the dispossessed, and creates a zone of political participation beyond the state's exclusive governmental politics. The hope is that photography's rearrangement of the visual world will make a difference in social and political reality, which it surely does, though perhaps without the instrumentalized precision and strategic effectiveness some demand. In the meantime, we have the silent witnessing and subtle questioning of Shibli's images, which testify to the diversity and creativity of the life of those subjects consigned to absence and abstraction, or reduced to humanitarian victimhood and the state's statistical calculations (particularly in the Palestinian occupied territories).²⁰

Still, Shibli's practice adds nuance to the politics of recognition by bringing out the impossibility of documentary legibility, as indicated earlier. Given her photographs' exposure of fragmentation and abstraction, they consequently avoid falling into the trap of constituting a second order of victimization by reduplicating in representation the subjection found in reality. In this sense, Shibli's work complicates the urgency of recognizing the unrecognized by acknowledging a simultaneous aesthetic injunction *against* representation, which takes on meaning insofar as such photography is able to elicit the complexity of being human in part by avoiding the totalizing objectification of that being. As Judith Butler points out, "for representation to convey the human . . . representation must not only fail, but it must *show* its failure. There is something unrepresentable that we nevertheless seek to represent, and that paradox must be retained in the representation we give."²¹

In this regard, Shibli's images of the unrecognized, which acknowledge precisely that paradox, cannot be easily redeemed, and cannot fit unproblematically into the model of a documentary photography based on liberal empathy—for injustice is shown in her work without extending a sense of hopefulness or promised redemption to the viewer that some imminent transformation will occur as a result of the photographic intervention.²² This fact in part extends from Shibli's refusal to objectify her subjects for the gaze of the empathic viewer. As Looock explains, "even though her practice takes the form of documentary, the focus of her work is not an inventory of given situations, a record of sociological or ethnological circumstances, let alone the illustration of preconceived cultural knowledge."²³ Rather than offering a source of sociological data or ethnographic information, Shibli's photographs

19. See Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, trans. Reli Melazi and Ruvik Danieli (New York, 2008), p. 118: against restricting citizenship to a "status, either innate or acquired under stringent conditions," photography turns "citizenship into the arena of a constant becoming, together with other (non)citizens," and allows "the citizen and the noncitizen . . . to continue voicing civilian grievances despite the 'natural and unalienable rights of man' continuing to be grasped as the reason and condition for citizenship." Yet one also finds in Barthes the recognition of such a politics—even if underdeveloped—particularly where he writes: "The photographer must then do his utmost to keep the photo from becoming Death"; and against becoming a photographic object: "It is my *political* right to be a subject which I must protect." See Barthes 1993 (see note 7), pp. 14 and 15.

20. On the violence of humanitarianism and the state's calculating machine that reduces life to statistical measurements in the Israeli / Palestinian context, see Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (London, 2011).

21. Judith Butler, "Precarious Life," in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London, 2004), p. 144.

22. For a recent (and problematic) plea for photographic empathy, contra to the critiques of writers such as Susan Sontag and Allan Sekula, see Susie Linfield, "Photojournalism and Human Rights," in *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago, 2010).

23. Looock 2009 (see note 6).

Eastern LGBT

International, 2004 / 06

Series of 37 photographs

37.8 x 57.6 cm; 57.6 x 37.8 cm;

70 x 100 cm; 100 x 70 cm

Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

LGBT is an acronym signifying Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.

The work depicts people from eastern societies such as Pakistan, Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, or Somalia, who left their places of birth because their original societies prevented them from living according to their sexual preferences, or to inhabit the gendered body in which they feel at home. In a foreign place, and sometimes only on weekends in a club, they seek conditions that allow them to be who they want to be.

The pictures of *Eastern LGBT* were taken in 2004 and 2006 in Zurich, Barcelona, Tel Aviv, and London.



highlight the complicated aspects of their aesthetic condition, and elicit the multifaceted nature of lived experience and subjective reality. They do this by bringing out an ambiguity and multivalence in the image that announces the fact that photography can only signal the abundance of meaning that inevitably escapes its grasp, but which any documentary practice with any conceptual ambition will acknowledge, as if “it must *show* its failure” to represent in order “to convey the human.”

Being sensitive to the unrepresentable that she nevertheless seeks to represent—both attempting to show those who are “unrecognized” and to show the ultimate unrepresentability of their being—Shibli has also in recent years sought to extend her practice to other sources of struggle and to other sites of unrepresentability. She has thereby proposed a chain of equivalences that broadens her photographic politics and that challenges oppression and dispossession in different geopolitical contexts, by placing the Palestinian struggle in relation to political struggles elsewhere. As such, the broadening of her photographic view of the world creates possibilities for forms of solidarity with different communities and modes of identity beyond Palestine and Israel.

Take *Eastern LGBT*, which shows those who make gender-bending appearances in public space (LGBT stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, a term commonly used by those who form its community). One photograph from a related series (*LGBT A*, which is part of *LGBT A B C*), shows two figures with shaved heads, one in a pin-striped suit and tie wearing sun glasses, the other with an artificial moustache and a dark dress with a shiny, light vinyl coat. As a couple, they pose in front of two of Shibli’s photographs from *Unrecognised*, making the connection between Palestinians and figures subjected to a different sort of non-recognition owing to their sexual orientation. This form of non-recognition has ended up excluding people from their communities and homeland because of the cultural intolerance of, and discrimination against, whoever deviates from normative sexuality and gender types. Other images in the series show scenes from gay pride parades, various sorts of trannies getting dressed or prowling around housing estates, posing for the camera in generic hallways, or wearing various exotic or

fetishistic costumes. They apply makeup, attending to their appearance in mirrors, and are shown dancing in club environments.

In *LGBT C* one figure appears under spotlights at a nightclub, positioned in front of a banner displaying the rainbow symbol of diversity and advertising the Aswat Group: “We are Palestinian. We are Women. We are Gay.” These are displays of empowerment, wherein participants create a festive atmosphere in which the performance of subjectivity joins expatriatism, queer transgression, and political resistance. These figures thus reject socio-sexual discrimination and geopolitical dispossession in turn, and Shibli shows them reclaiming their sense of agency via their radical politics. Her photographic perspective endows these figures with dignity and affirmation, countering the voyeuristic objectification with which they are sometimes portrayed, adding anti-spectacular images of everyday life as well.

With *Dom Dziecka*. *The house starves when you are away*, Shibli extends further her photographic approach to communities of the dislocated and dispossessed. In this case, the images show various groupings of orphans photographed at eleven children’s homes in Poland. Some of the images evidence a clear stylistic relation to her portrayals of Palestinian contexts, as in *Goter*, *Unrecognised*, or *Arab al-Sbaih*. For instance, the black-and-white depiction of boys and young men appearing in front and on top of concrete buildings, lacking any decoration or embellishment, bears similarity to the Palestinian areas of claustrophobia and deprivation, control and occupation, presented in Shibli’s other works. Her point of view in these images is distanced from her subjects, as if indicating that the photographer stands apart, on the outside, which adds to the melancholy mood and the sense of watching a situation from afar that one has no control over. In other pictures from the same series, figures appear blocking their faces or are shown turning away from the camera, as if they are asserting defiance before the photographer’s intrusions. Or perhaps she included these obscured images to suggest the impossibility of representing the subject, a further recognition of the subjective facets that extends beyond what any single photograph can represent, where representational fragmentation paradoxically counters relative humanization.²⁴ Here too, the photographs alternate between black-and-white and

Arab al-Sbaih

Jordan, 2007
Series of 47 photographs
38 × 57.7 cm; 57.7 × 38 cm
Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

The photographs constituting *Arab al-Sbaih* were taken in four different places: the Irbid Refugee Camp, Irbid City, the al-Baqa’a Refugee Camp, and Amman. Three generations of Palestinian refugees have been living there since the 1948 war that followed the declaration of the Israeli State and resulted in the Palestinian *Nakba*.

The title of the series references the original name of the village Arab al-Shibli in the Lower Galilee of Palestine (currently Israel). A part of the villagers who fought for their lands in 1948 against the Jews were expelled to Syria and Jordan; the other part took shelter at the Mount Tabor Monastery. After several months of hiding in caves on the land of the monastery, at the end of the war, the families who managed to return to their homes had to change the original name of the village, Arab al-Sbaih, to Arab al-Shibli in order to protect themselves from Israeli revenge. The refugees in Syria and Jordan on the other hand are preserving the memory of their homeland by naming their shops after places in Palestine and reproducing the social structure of their original villages.



24. I explore this argument further in T.J. Demos, “Recognizing the Unrecognized: The Photographs of Ahlam Shibli,” in *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (Durham, 2013), pp. 124–43.

color images, a formal approach that emphasizes representational diversity and alludes to subjective diversity, and thus to the necessarily fragmentary character of photography. If necessarily fragmentary, then Shibli's images take on a self-reflexive value in that they acknowledge the impossibility of the total capture or complete portrayal of the subject. But in this case, it is not simply to indicate social or political disenfranchisement or alienating dislocation, but rather to allude to the depth and multiplicity of being that transcends the image and which the image can only indicate.

Part of that depth and multiplicity is expressed via the social connection between these figures, as the photographs reveal the communal bonds between these children without families, these inhabitants of a home for the homeless. The series highlights their common activities: the sleeping of several figures in the same room, the various embraces of intimacy, the situations of familiarity even in contexts of showering and washing, where boys and girls attend to personal hygiene. They sit together, read together, lie on each other's laps. As figures who, in Shibli's images, always appear in plural groupings, they comprise portraits of orphans who have made a kind of home for themselves. The images thus testify to something fundamentally human, even while there is also a social transgression in these groupings that compose relations outside of family connections, and thereby extend the social possibilities of being human. They depict the state of sociability and highlight the desire and need of people to exist in communities. Whether in situations of oppression and colonization (*Unrecognised*), or of exclusion and discrimination (*Eastern LGBT*), or of being without a family (*Dom Dziecka. The house starves when you are away*)—in each case, one discovers the powerful will to being-with-others, the desire for contact, friendship, love and solidarity, and the drive to find or construct a home (if unconventional) against the pressures of being disowned and displaced.²⁵

That said, some of Shibli's most complicated images explore the disturbing instability between victim and perpetrator, freedom fighter and colonizer. For *Trauma*, she photographed veterans in France who experienced the persecution of Nazis as a result of their resisting the German occupation during World War II. The piece's historical point of departure is June 9, 1944, when the Nazi SS publicly executed ninety-nine people in Tulle by hanging them from lamp posts and balconies in the main street, and deported others to concentration camps where death was a likely fate. The city holds annual commemorations of those who suffered this atrocity, and the memory of the history lives on through the plaques, street names, public monuments, inscriptions on graves, commemorative rituals, and a museum that honors the French martyrs. These diverse sites of collective remembrance comprise the subjects of Shibli's photographs. Yet there is more, as the mementos appearing in some of her images also include photographs and maps of North Africa, which have been saved by one French veteran. These records reveal that some of the survivors of the German occupation went on to join the French colonial forces in Indochina and Algeria in the nineteen-fifties and sixties. In focusing on these details, Shibli joins these different histories together without resolution. The photographic series becomes an archive of disjunction and political contradiction, wherein victim and perpetrator inexplicably switch sides at different historical periods. In this sense, the series recalls Shibli's investigation of *Trackers* (2005), her photographs of Palestinians of Bedouin descent who have enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces in order to gain recognition and material benefits, such as a house, but who in doing so court accusations of betraying their community.²⁶ The question conjured in these various images is how those persecuted in one context could go on to visit military violence and occupation on others elsewhere.²⁷ Shibli's photographs don't condemn or draw conclusions, however; rather, they present a visual archive of the material effects,

25. On the fact that being is always "being-in-common," relational yet non-absolute and non-substantial, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis, 1991).

26. See Ulrich Loock. "Ahlam Shibli: Resisting Oppression," in *Camera Austria* 93 (March 2006), pp. 41–52; and *Ahlam Shibli: Trackers*, ed. Adam Szymczyk (Cologne, 2007) (with essays by John Berger, Jean-François Chevrier, Okwui Enwezor, Rhoda Kanaaneh, and Adam Szymczyk).

27. Said, for example, was well aware of this historical irony regarding the troubling uncanniness of the situation whereby many Palestinians have been ejected from Palestine by Israelis banished from Europe: "to have been exiled by exiles." Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Granta* 13 (Autumn 1984), p. 164.

The Valley

Arab al-Shibli, Palestine / Israel, 2007–08
Series of 28 photographs
38 × 57.7 cm; 57.7 × 38 cm
Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

The images of *The Valley* were taken in 2007 in the village Arab al-Shibli and its lands in the Lower Galilee of Palestine / Israel.

On October 28, 1957 twenty-eight honorables of the village Arab al-Shibli wrote a letter to Mr. Elisha Soltz, the Israeli military governor in Nazareth. In this letter three requests were addressed to him. He was asked:

1. to return their lands, build an asphalt road to the village, and supply it with water and electricity;
2. to issue an order for the money that had been collected from the village people to be transferred back to them so they could build a school;
3. to allow the building of houses in the village and to add the name of the village to the map of the country—the "holy homeland map," in their words.

In that letter, the village representatives explained their situation: they had good relations with their Jewish neighbors, the people of Kfar Tavor, and the Jewish district commander before the 1948 war. At that time, the two sides agreed that the people of the Arab village and their Jewish neighbors would keep relations between them brotherly and refrain from ethnic segregation. Both sides would protect the other after the war, whether within an Arab or a Jewish state. The agreement was signed by the representative of the village that at that time was called Arab al-Sbaih, the representative of Kfar Tavor, and the Jewish district commander.

In 1950, two years after the war and the establishment of the State of Israel, however, the men of Arab al-Shibli were requested to meet at the Kadoorie School with the Israeli military governor, the official in charge of so-called absentee property and the headmaster of the school. They were asked to exchange lands for one year: the good lands on the east side of Wadi al-Midy that were officially owned by the people who had stayed in the village, for the fallow lands of the people who had fled the village on the west side of Wadi al-Midy, which had been appropriated by the State of Israel. The village people accepted and an agreement was signed in three copies. Each party received their own copy, but the Israeli district commander asked to have the village's copy in order to keep it safe. Time passed and the other side refused to give back the lands. The Israeli district commander denied the agreement. The village people were asked to keep quiet, and they did.

In 1952 things became worse. People from the village were arrested and others not allowed to leave the village.

In 1954 the state official in charge of absentee property came to the village and



claimed the lands that had belonged to the refugees and were given to the village people in the agreement of 1950.

In 1957, when the village people asked for permission to build houses in their village, their request was rejected with the argument that their village didn't exist on the state map.

Also, the transfer of 3,000 lira that had been collected through the office of the Israeli Ministry of Finance in Nazareth from the village people, in order to build a school instead of renting spaces in the village, was denied and the project was not implemented.

The letter ended by reminding the Israeli military governor that the village had been renamed after one of the seven families that had been living there already during the time of the British Mandate, the Shibli family. The relations between the different families had always been problematic. The Shibli family, they wrote, was the family that had remained in Israel after the war, and they didn't want to keep the original name of the village, Arab al-Sbaih.

mementos, and documentary recordings of sites of public and private remembrance that open up these very difficult questions.

As we have seen, Shibli's recent series *Death* signals a further shift in her practice, insofar as these images focus not so much on actual people, but rather on representations of the disappeared. As such, the photographs constitute a reflexive gesture, investigating the social use of images, inquiring into the aesthetics of commemoration and the politics of recognition in everyday life. The series refers largely to the context of the Second Intifada, the uprising that began in September 2000, sparked by Ariel Sharon's provocative visit, along with 1,000 security men, to al-Haram al-Sharif (literally "the Noble Sanctuary," the location of the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock), known to Jews as the Temple Mount. The protests were further inflamed by the death of Mohammad al-Durrah, the twelve-year-old shot dead in his father's arms on September 30, an event captured photographically and widely seen, reinforcing perceptions of Israel's contempt for Palestinian rights and lives. In the following years, the uprising brought about the militarization of Palestinian society, distinct from the demonstrations and social projects including community gardens and food production cooperatives, which were part of the popular mobilization that characterized the First Intifada (1987–93).²⁸

Since 2000, several thousand Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces, many memorialized with a martyr funeral.²⁹ As we have seen, the commemorations frequently include posters and photographs hung in family sitting rooms, placed in the vicinity of the martyr's home, in restaurants, inside and outside of shops, around schools and hospitals. By focusing on these diverse sites, Shibli shows how the national becomes familiar, and the political intimate, the ubiquity of such images suggesting that anyone could become a martyr at any moment. Despite

the various approaches to martyr imagery as evidenced in Shibli's study, the designs of the posters provide little direction to differentiate between martyrdom operators, armed fighters, youth shot during protests, and innocent bystanders (men, women, children) killed in Israeli attacks, each case turning the represented Palestinian into an icon of the national resistance. As such, the posters affirm the "non-hierarchical unity of the Palestinians' collective national fate."³⁰ By showing the multiplicity of martyr images, *Death* reveals how this social diversity is made to conform to a certain problematic visual homogeneity.

The aestheticization of death is, however, at best ambiguous, as martyr imagery inevitably escapes its instrumentalized purpose. Indeed, studies of martyr commemorations stress the diverse interpretations of their meaning and the sometimes conflictual relations of viewers to such images, with people in everyday life at times questioning or even rejecting the political messages. The militant groups' use of such images as publicity-seeking practices might even be criticized, and the rhetoric derided by some Palestinians fed up with the cult of death, the directions of the militarized and violent response to the occupation, and the banal repetitions and routinizations of the seemingly endless commemorations of the dead.³¹ The aesthetics of martyr memorializations thus form an uncertain oscillation between socio-political compliance and factional conflict, between devotional practices and critical distance. Shibli's portrayal of the diversity of images and their contexts of reception reveals these antinomies, rather than merely extending the ritualistic commemorations themselves. Still, her series remains a testimony to the destruction of Palestinian lives and how death inspires future resistance.

Shibli's work also frequently includes indexes of the photographer's own involvement in the production

28. See Salim Tamami and Reema Hammami, "The Second Uprising: End or New Beginning?" in *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 30.2 (Winter 2001), pp. 5–25.

29. See the statistics on fatalities kept by the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (B'Tselem): <http://www.btselem.org/statistics> (accessed October 26, 2012).

30. Allen 2006 (see note 1), p. 120. As Allen points out, the term "martyr" (*Shaheed*) is the term commonly used by Palestinians to designate anyone considered to have died as a result of the occupation, whether Christians or Muslims, combatants or bystanders. "Martyrs are people who were killed, whether at the hands of soldiers or settlers, or as a result of checkpoints and curfews that have, for instance, prevented access to medical care." Further: "The label 'martyr' is, therefore, itself a form of respect; the term expresses all these sedimented meanings of honor, reverence and distinction accrued from Islamic and nationalist teaching," pp. 130–31, note 2.

31. Allen cites Allen Feldman's observation that "[s]acrificial violence creates generic subjects as raw material vulnerable to facile objectification, for the process of sacrifice requires actors who can assume multiple collective meanings and absorb and reflect back diverse and often contradictory collective fantasies." However, she may overstate the common resistance to martyr commemorations in everyday life. Allen 2006 (see note 1), p. 122.

Dom Dziecka. The house starves when you are away

Poland, 2008
Series of 35 photographs
38 x 57.7 cm; 57.7 x 38 cm
Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

Dom Dziecka (in English "children's home") is a series of photographs taken in 2007 at eleven orphanages in Poland. The work exposes the living conditions of children who haven't grown up in a family home, but in a foster institution.

During the day the children are hardly ever alone; physical relations between the children, even adolescent boys and girls, are often very close, without being necessarily sexual in character. The individual children seem to merge into a collective body, from which they withdraw only when going to sleep; the conventional family unit is turned into a children's society in which typical family relations are not only substituted but actually displaced to form a new and specific constellation.

Where the family home is missing, something else has developed. One boy, Dawid Redes from Dom Dziecka Na Zielonym Wzgórzu in Kisielany-Zmichy, said, "it's not a children's home, it's home."



of her photographs: in some of her images, we can see the photographer's shadow, just as much as the oblique perspectives, various distances, and diverse locations indicating her agency in constructing these images. Similarly, the photographs of graveyards signal the photographer's presence among the graves, as much as the other images from the *Death* series also show young people lingering among places of commemoration, and the posters sometimes being presented by the relatives of the deceased to the photographer. In other words, Shibli's representational aesthetics brings about a certain resuscitation of life, even while the images depict the traces of loss and absence.

If *Death* presents representations of representations, it is in fact not altogether new in Shibli's work—think of the pop-cultural posters and wall decorations in *Dom Dziecka*. *The house starves when you are away*, or the visual archive of historical photographs documented in *Trauma*, which also indicate the social function of photography in various contexts embedded in the web of life. The difference is that *Death* focuses on how the dead figure in the political program of various militant organizations, whether enlisted by voluntary submission, cooperative acts of political participation, or via co-optation by militant groups. Unlike the martyr posters, Shibli's photographs make it impossible to reduce her subjects to single images, to expressions of an agenda, to the manipulated material of a political program. Her series consequently takes on a certain critical relation to its subject.

Could the state of being unrecognized ever become a part of an ethico-political stance? "It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home," Edward Said explained in the late nineteen-nineties, finding a way to articulate the ethical challenges of displacement by invoking the phrasing of Theodor Adorno, who wrote those words himself during his forced exile from Nazi Germany.³² For how can one yearn for belonging to a national culture that is, as in the German Nazi case, ethically and politically abominable? For Said, the question translated into the impossible condition of exile and dislocation for Palestinians, where the condition of statelessness equaled a decisive politics of resistance, a refusal to be at home in a situation of dispossession. Rather than propose anything like a simple analogy to that catastrophic history

of World War II, Said's own sense of homelessness led him nonetheless to consider critically Adorno's ethical imperative in his time, just as Shibli visualizes this paradoxical condition today.

Rather than submit to the recognition of a photographic message and be reduced to communication or propaganda, Shibli's photographs evince a quality of subjective and social liberation in the state of being unrecognized, for that status blocks recognition as a mode of control or essentialization, even while her work also investigates non-recognition as a space of existential exposure. Her work thus defies the production of conventional forms of stereotypical being, according to which normality is produced by its opposition to the excluded and unrecognized. If Shibli's project reclaims non-recognition as an emancipatory project, then it is nonetheless distinct from the function of non-recognition as a politics of control in the hands of an oppressive state or militia. As we have seen, Shibli's work represents a multivalent exploration of the will to community and a shared home—which her photographs situate as a mode of being as much as a political struggle—made in the various circumstances of homelessness today inside and outside of Palestine. In this regard, her photography acknowledges precarity as a source of human community, even while contesting its forms of social exclusion and political-economic inequality, which become the targets of common struggle.³³

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32. In his essay "Between Worlds," in *London Review of Books* 20.9, May 7, 1998, p. 6, Edward Said cites Theodor Adorno's text from *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (New York, 1991), p. 39.

33. Judith Butler, "For and Against Precarity," in *Tidal: Occupy Theory* 1 (2011), pp. 12–13.

Trauma

Corrèze, France, 2008–09
Series of 48 photographs
38 × 57.7 cm; 57.7 × 38 cm
Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

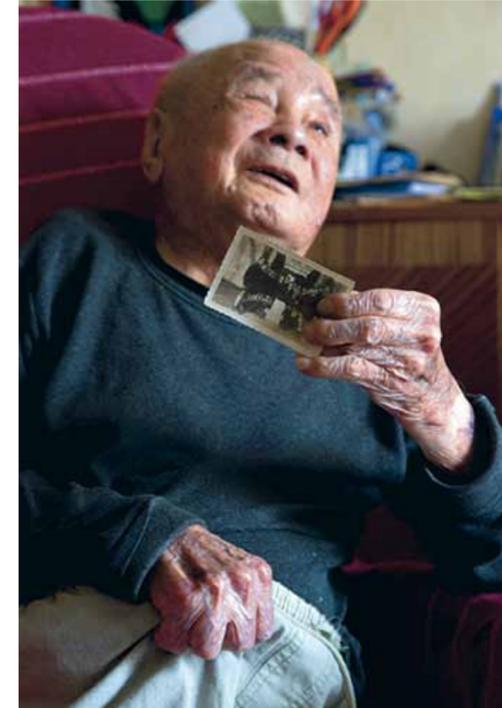
Taking as its starting point commemorations of the *Résistance* uprising against the Nazis in Tulle (Corrèze, France) and the occupation forces' murderous repercussions, events that lasted from June 7 to 9, 1944, *Trauma* is constructed around the fact that one and the same population, in certain cases even the same individuals, who resisted occupation by the Germans and suffered from their atrocities, waged, a few years later, colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria against peoples who, in their turn, claimed independence.

Early on June 9, 1944, the SS rounded up more than two thousand men from Tulle, aged sixteen to sixty, and later that day hanged ninety-nine of them from lamp posts and balconies. Another 149 men were deported to German concentration camps from where 101 never returned.

Memorials and ceremonies honor those who died in the First and Second World Wars: soldiers, fighters of the *Résistance*, and civilian victims of the Nazis, together with members of the French army who lost their lives in the colonial wars in Indochina and North Africa.

The images show various residents of Corrèze: former members of the *Résistance*, descendants of the hanged and deported from June 9, former French fighters in the colonial wars, *Pieds-Noirs*, as well as an Algerian collaborator, a man who was taken to France as a forced laborer from Indochina, a second generation Indochinese, a lady of Algerian descent who considers herself French, and recent immigrants from Algeria.

Trauma has been produced with the support of Peuple et Culture Corrèze.



Death

Palestine, 2011–12

Series of 68 photographs

38 x 57 cm; 57 x 38 cm;

66.7 x 100 cm; 100 x 66.7 cm;

100 x 150 cm

Chromogenic prints

*I shall not return until I plant my paradise on earth or else reap
a paradise from the sky or die or we all die together.*

Ghassan Kanafani

This work is based on the demand for recognition that became apparent with the Second Intifada, the Palestinian uprising against the colonial power in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The Second Intifada lasted from 2000 to 2005 and claimed several thousand deaths on the Palestinian side.

Death exhibits some of the ways in which the ones who are absent become present again—“represented”: Palestinian fighters, who fell in the course of their armed resistance against the Israeli incursions, and victims of the Israeli military killed under different circumstances (*Shaheed* and *Shaheeda*); militants who carried out attacks which they knew would lead to their death, among them the men and women who detonated explosives on their own bodies to assassinate Israelis (*Istishhadi* and *Istishhadiya*), and the prisoners. The former are dead, the latter are alive, jailed for a large part if not the rest of their lives.

The representations designate any person who lost his or her life as a result of the Israeli occupation of Palestine: a martyr.

Death focuses on a limited range of means representing the martyrs and the prisoners in the closed environment of Nablus, its region, and its refugee camps: posters and occasionally graffiti in the streets; paintings, photos, posters, and other memorabilia in the homes of the martyrs' families; the graves that bear inscriptions and are sometimes ornate with pictures and items of the deceased. One supplementary element representing the prisoners are their letters and diaries—personal if one ignores the prison authority's censorship. All of these are forms of representation originated by the families, friends, and the fighters' associations.

*The question of death does not belong to the dead, but to those
who remain alive.*

Ghassan Kanafani

This work has been co-produced by the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), the Jeu de Paume in Paris, and the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves in Porto.



1

1. 'Ala'in Refugee Camp west of the city center, Nablus, October 26, 2011

During the Second Intifada, Nablus was a center of Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation forces. The city includes four refugee camps administrated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA): Balata, Old Askar, New Askar, and 'Ala'in. The UNRWA gave the latter the name Camp No. 1. Locals, however, call it 'Ala'in referring to a water spring that served the refugees in the early days of the camp. 'Ala'in is known for its support of the Marxist-Leninist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), founded by George Habash in 1967. During the Second Intifada, the Israeli occupation forces killed more than five hundred residents of Nablus and its refugee camps and injured more than three thousand. Some sixty houses were destroyed.



2

2. Al-Dahiya neighborhood and the Balata Refugee Camp, Nablus, February 28, 2012

Inhabited by approximately 25,000 people on a quarter-square kilometer, Balata is one of the most densely populated areas in the world and the largest refugee camp in the West Bank. It is known as a stronghold of the Fateh, co-founded by Yasser Arafat (also known as Abu 'Amar) in 1959.



3



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11

3. Rafediya neighborhood, Street 15, Nablus, February 22, 2012

A demonstration in front of the Nablus Red Cross offices, organized by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in support of the hunger strike of Palestinians in Israeli administrative detention protesting their confinement. On April 17, a general hunger strike was announced which terminated on May 14 when the Israeli government agreed to remove solitary confinement, to allow family visits from the Gaza Strip, and to suspend administrative detention.

4. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, March 10, 2012

The diary of the prisoner Diyaa al-Lidawi from Nablus, who wrote his address as “the central Majedo prison, the department of the glory making men.” Al-Lidawi’s diary expresses his mourning for the absence of freedom and independence of the homeland, and his love for his dear ones who appear as the mother, the father, the beloved woman, or Palestine itself. The pages of the diary articulate his sorrow in the name of his martyr comrades, among them Basim Abu Sariyah, Ameen Labada, Ihab Abu Salha, Jamal Shihada, Ahmad Abu Sharkh, and Fadi Qfeesha. Other pages carry a call to the people to stand up and get rid of the leaders busy with their slogans. “I was filled with longing for my mother, my homeland, my folk, and my neighbors / Together we chanted: Oh leaders of the people! Start off! Enough with condemnations / The captives from your people are killed in front of your eyes / But only slogans were heard from your side / Get up my people, move, to rescue your prisoners from hell / From the leaders we hear only a declaration followed by a slogan / With the excuse of the people’s predicament, caused by the prolonged siege / Our leaders will keep appeasing our folk with explanations / Promise that after me, you will keep the commandments of the *khityar*.” (“*Khityar*” signifies “the old man,” meaning Yasser Arafat.) The pages of the diary were written during the year 2008.

5. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 8, 2012

Two cards of commiseration sent by prisoners in the Israeli Gilboa prison to the family of the martyr Naif Abu Sharkh, who was their leader. One of them reads, “In the name of God the Merciful / We have written with light on our pages / So time has not forgotten, nor did we forget the covenant / Naif / 26. 6.” The other reads, “[Eternity] is the heritage of men proceeding into history / The best of judges / Is when you get praise from the world’s mouth / When your words resonate in the world’s ears.” The verses are from “Eternity,” a poem by Ahmad Shawqi. The latter card is dated February 28, 2005, and signed by Ibrahim Hubaysh, Kheri Salamah, Qasem ‘Awad, ‘Amar Samhan, Tariq Dola, Abu ‘Abd Khaddich, and Basil al-Bizreh.

6. The Old City, al-Qarioun neighborhood, Nablus, February 4, 2012

Letters by ‘Ala’ ‘Akoubeh, sent from the central Majedo prison to his mother and his brother Hisham. The letters exhibit different kinds of handwriting and are always signed in Hebrew, which indicates that ‘Akoubeh doesn’t know how to write. In a letter dated December 21, 2010, he inquires about his brother’s son Muhannad, guessing that he must be like himself, emotional and passionate. He asks his brother to send his wife with his son to the court, because ‘Akoubeh would love to see his nephew. In another letter, dated July 17, 2010, ‘Akoubeh writes, “My dear brother Hisham, the best brother in the world . . . since I am in prison I made you suffer, because the army came to your house. Please forgive me. And forget what you are busy with, at the end nothing helps you, neither girls nor alcohol.”

7. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, August 11, 2012

Letters and cards from prisoners to their supporter, the “mother of the resistance.” During the Second Intifada, she put her work, her house, and her supplies at the disposition of any member of the resistance who knocked at her door. A greeting card reads, “I don’t know where the comrades meet. Is it in the prison or in the grave or in the shadow of a State?” One letter to the “mother of the resistance” is written by the prisoners Nader and Mawjoud. They alternate lines—one writes in black, the other in blue.

8. Balata Refugee Camp, March 6, 2012

Photo of the prisoner Bashar ‘Einab on the wall of his brother’s bedroom. Once a month the political prisoners in the Israeli jails are photographed. They can buy these pictures and send them to their families.

9. Madama, region of Nablus, December 22, 2011

Posters of the imprisoned General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Ahmad Sa’adat, in the village of Madama. Sa’adat was arrested after the PFLP had assassinated the Israeli Minister of Tourism, Rehavam Ze’evi, on October 17, 2001. The PFLP stated that the assassination was a revenge for the killing of their General Secretary Abu Ali Mustafa in August of the same year. Sa’adat was sentenced by an Israeli military court to thirty years in prison.

10. Balata Refugee Camp, March 8, 2012

Frame containing a map made from metal and painted in the Palestinian colors, “presented by the Fateh Youth Organization, region of Nablus, and the Student Youth Movement, Nablus schools, to the family of the hero prisoner Ibrahim Abu Zour, on the occasion of the Festival of the Covenant and the Fulfillment.” Abu Zour was imprisoned for five years.

11. New Askar Refugee Camp, January 26, 2012

The entrance of the house of the Shalabi family with a wall painting from 2004 by one of the sons, Nour, who painted it after his brother ‘Anan was arrested and sentenced for life. Nour was in Israeli prisons from February 5, 2006 for five years. Thirteen members altogether of the Shalabi family have been in Israeli prisons or are currently still serving their sentences.



12

12. Balata Refugee Camp, Old Graveyard, February 12, 2012

The entrance to the Old Graveyard. The graveyard is the only green area in the camp. It is used by the locals as a meeting place and a shortcut to the main road. The writing on the right side above the entrance reads, "Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people. Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades." On the left side it reads, "I am leaving, leaving with you my songs / And a wound that didn't touch my glory / And a lover's gaze and a child's cry and olives / Breathing in my blood and I will give you my share in the world and leave." The posters represent martyred key figures from the Balata Refugee Camp branch of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.



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13. Western Graveyard, Nablus, January 20, 2012

Grave of Basim Abu Sariyah, known as al-Gaddafi. The Israelis tried seven times to assassinate him before he met his death. On his grave it reads that he was a leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in the West Bank and founder of the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups in the Old City of Nablus, martyred in an armed fight with the Zionist enemy on October 16, 2007.



14

14. Madama, region of Nablus, December 13, 2011

The village graveyard with the tomb of Yamen Faraj, commander of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades in Palestine, the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). He was killed on July 6, 2004 during an Israeli incursion into Nablus, together with his comrade Amjad Mulaitat from Beit Furik, a deputy commander of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades. As a punishment, the Israeli authorities demolished homes of the Faraj family and Mulaitat's house.

15. Western Graveyard, Nablus, January 20, 2012

In Nablus, the families of the deceased visit the graveyards on Thursday evening or Friday morning to take care of the tombs and sit next to them in commemoration. Usually members of the same family are buried close to each other, whether they died a martyr's death or of natural causes.

16. Western Graveyard, Nablus, December 11, 2011

The tomb of Amjad al-Hinnawi, a leader of the Ezzedein al-Qassam Brigades in the Northern West Bank, killed on November 14, 2005. Al-Hinnawi was one of the first explosives experts in the West Bank, and on the Israeli wanted list since 1996. The Ezzedein al-Qassam Brigades are the military wing of Hamas.



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17. Western Graveyard, Nablus, January 20, 2012

Tomb of Amjad al-Qotob, killed on May 13, 2002 during an attack on the Israeli military in the Jordan Valley. In the letter he left behind, he stated that his attack was in revenge of the "ugly Israeli massacres at the Jenin Refugee Camp and in Nablus."

18. Western Graveyard, Nablus, December 11, 2011

Tomb of 'Ala' al-Din al-Dawaya, member of the Jihad al-Islami (Palestinian Islamic Jihad), shot on December 18, 2003 in downtown Nablus. On the stone in the shape of Palestine it reads, "My martyrdom is her dowry."



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19. Balata Refugee Camp, February 16, 2012

The family of the martyr converted their guest room into a memorial space for their son, the militant of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Khalil Marshoud, who was killed on June 14, 2004, together with his resistance comrade 'Awad Abu Zeid, by an Israeli air strike targeting the car they were traveling in that night. On the light box poster with Marshoud's image it reads, "Cursed be the time lacking the honorable ones and ruled by cowards." Since he cooperated with fighters from groups other than his own, the room also contains photos of his with the emblems of various movements that were presented to the family. Additional photographs show different members of the resistance, his comrades.

20. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, November 27, 2011

Photo of the martyr Amjad al-Hinnawi of the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades at the house of the "mother of the resistance." On the same table, a photo of Nader Sadaka from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) at a demonstration as well as a family photo of the "mother of the resistance" with her husband and grandchildren.

21. Balata Refugee Camp, March 6, 2012

In the family living room, a poster with the image of Ahmad Rashid 'Einab and his brother Rami. Rami 'Einab was a fighter and specialist in explosives, killed on December 19, 2006. Ahmad was a paramedic who was accidentally killed on July 21, 2006 in front of his house when the Israeli army destroyed the neighboring offices of the Palestinian Authority in Nablus.

22. Al-Am'ari Refugee Camp, region of Ramallah, October 18, 2011

Picture of Wafa Idris in her family's living room. The picture hangs underneath a framed piece of embroidery reading, "Trust in God," which is surrounded by a photo of Idris graduating as a paramedic and a photo of her brother Khalil, an activist against the occupation who spent eight years in Israeli prisons. Wafa Idris was the first woman to carry out a martyrdom operation in Israel. The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack, but subsequently different explanations for Idris's action were circulated.

23. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 8, 2012

Memorabilia that commemorates Naif Abu Sharkh, killed on June 26, 2004, alongside memorabilia of his martyred brother, his imprisoned two sons, and several cousins, in the guest room of Abu Sharkh's mother. Abu Sharkh was the leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Nablus who didn't agree to a truce with the Israelis to end the Second Intifada. The Israelis made him responsible for an attack in Tel Aviv in 2003, put him on the top of their wanted list, destroyed his house, and arrested his wife and sons. Abu Sharkh was killed together with members of different resistance groups after hiding for three weeks in the underground tunnels of Nablus. As a consequence, his mother's guest room contains memorial items not only from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

24. 'Asira al-Shamaliya, north of Nablus, December 23, 2011

Buffet in the house of the Jara'arah family, where a photo of the son Mu'awiya and his comrade Yusif Showley is displayed together with family photos. The men took the photo before each of them participated in a martyrdom operation in Israel. Both operations were carried out in the name of the group "Martyrs for Prisoners." They were planned by the number one on the Israeli wanted list, Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, a commander of the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades in the West Bank, the military wing of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement. Abu Hanoud was assassinated on November 24, 2001 by an Israeli Apache helicopter while traveling in his car north of Nablus. The two martyrdom operations were carried out with a difference of one month at the same location in West Jerusalem. Mu'awiya Jara'arah accomplished the first operation on July 30, 1997 together with Tawfiq Yassin. As a consequence of the attack, the occupation forces filled several floors of the house of the Jara'arah family with concrete to make them unusable, and destroyed the house of the Yassin family. The second martyrdom operation was carried out on September 4, 1997 by Yusif Showley, Bashar Sawalha, and Khalil Sharif. As a punishment for the attack, the occupation forces destroyed their family houses. The bodies of Showley, Sawalha, Sharif, Yassin, and Jara'arah were buried in an Israeli "Cemetery of Numbers" and returned to their families together with the bodies of other Palestinian militants on May 31, 2012. After Mu'awiya Jara'arah's martyrdom operation, Israel, on July 30, 1997, made the decision to carry out assassinations of the leaders of Hamas.

25. Al-Dahiya neighborhood, Nablus, February 27, 2012

Memorial items in the family guest room commemorating Sami 'Antar who died on January 19, 2006 during a martyrdom operation in Tel Aviv. He was a student in his second year of physical education studies at An-Najah National University in Nablus. His body was buried in an Israeli "Cemetery of Numbers" and returned to his family together with the bodies of other Palestinian militants on May 31, 2012.

26. Balata Refugee Camp, March 6, 2012

Room of Morad, the brother of Ahmad, Rami, and Bashar 'Einab, with photos of himself and his brothers. For four years Morad has been on the Israeli wanted list and therefore cannot leave the house.

27. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 8, 2012

A photo of the martyr Naif Abu Sharkh on the alarm clock in his mother's bedroom. The poster in the back pictures his brother, Rassan Abu Sharkh, with Ra'ed al-Sarakji and 'Anan Sobh who were assassinated together on December 26, 2009 by the Israelis to avenge previous attacks. The poster also includes a picture of Naif Abu Sharkh, their leader.



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28. Balata Refugee Camp, March 6, 2012

The brother of Nasser 'Auwais, holding the latter's photo. Nasser 'Auwais was wanted by the Israelis, because he was one of the founders of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and later their General Secretary in Palestine. He is considered responsible for several attacks and martyrdom operations. 'Auwais was arrested on April 13, 2002 and given thirteen life sentences plus fifty years in prison. He is currently being subjected to solitary confinement without the right of family visits.

29. The Old City, al-Yasmina neighborhood, Nablus, February 28, 2012

Living room with the martyr's mother showing a poster of her son Sa'ed 'Awada, while her daughter is taking care of the youngest sister who suffers from Down syndrome. 'Awada was a member of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and carried out a martyrdom operation on June 18, 2002 in Jerusalem. Before leaving Nablus he had a photo taken which was used for the poster. The house of the family was destroyed during an Israeli incursion even before 'Awada's attack.

30. 'Ala'in Refugee Camp, February 28, 2012

Mohammad Khalid, a recently freed prisoner, showing the photo of his friend from the resistance, the martyr Firas Abu al-Rish. Abu al-Rish was assassinated, together with his brother 'Adel, in his car by Israeli special forces on October 17, 2006.

31. Old Askar Refugee Camp, February 15, 2012

The family guest room with the picture of Zeinab Abu Salem who carried out a martyrdom operation in Jerusalem on September 22, 2004. Abu Salem had just passed high school graduation exams. She was the eighth woman to carry out such an attack. The Israeli army destroyed the family house as a punishment. Her body was returned to the family on May 31, 2012.

32. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, December 1, 2011

The "mother of the resistance" holding a newspaper cut-out with a picture of the dead Jebriil 'Awad from the town Awarta, southeast of Nablus, known for its support of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). 'Awad was an explosives specialist and had to leave university for the fact that he had been on the Israeli wanted list for three years. Five members of his family were killed by the occupation forces. 'Awad was killed in a clash with the Israeli army on December 18, 2003 in a park in the Old City of Nablus where he had been hiding together with other resistance fighters.

33. Balata Refugee Camp, February 16, 2012

Photos of the martyr Khalil Marshoud in the family living room being dusted by his sister. On the poster, a gift from the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, he is called the General Secretary of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades of Balata.

34. Balata Refugee Camp, February 12, 2012

A photo of Kayed Abu Mustafa, called Mikere, presented by his daughter. Abu Mustafa was killed on February 28, 2002.

35. Balata Refugee Camp, March 8, 2012

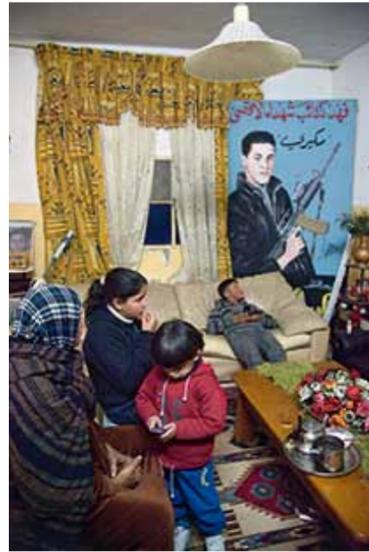
The mother of a prisoner who was recently freed after three years of administrative detention, Mohammad Abu Zour. She is also the mother of Mohannad Abu Zour, who carried out a martyrdom operation on May 31, 2002 at the settlement Shavei Shomron west of Nablus, avenging the killing of Mahmoud al-Titi, a resistance leader of the Balata Refugee Camp. Abu Zour arrived at the settlement, but was detected and shot dead before he could carry out his attack. The Israelis destroyed the house of the family as a punishment. The martyr's mother is showing a poster with images of martyrs who are missing or being kept by the Israeli occupation state. At the top of the poster it reads, "We have names and we have a homeland."



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36. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 8, 2012

The room of the mother of the martyrs Naif and Rassan Abu Sharkh, with the former on the larger and the latter on the smaller poster. The depicted woman is a visitor.



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37. Balata Refugee Camp, February 12, 2012

A canvas in the guest room of the family of Kayed Abu Mustafa, depicting the martyr. It reads, "The panther of Kata'ib Shuhada' al-Aqsa, Mikere" (Mikere, of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades). The people in the room are Mikere's mother, his little nephew, and his two children.



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38. New Askar Refugee Camp, June 28, 2012

The guest room of the family of Osama Bushkar with his brother and his nephew. Bushkar carried out a martyrdom operation on May 19, 2002 in Natanya. He approached different resistance organizations, which refused to equip him for the operation because he was too young. Finally the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades accepted him. His body is still in the hands of the Israeli authorities. The army destroyed his family's house as punishment.



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39. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 4, 2012

The living room of the grandmother of the martyr Shadi Kelani with his father. On the wall are pictures of her sons and her grandson, the martyr. Kelani was the goalkeeper of the Sport Union Club of Nablus and a member of the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups. He was killed in a clash with the occupation forces on July 19, 2006 in Nablus.



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40. The Old City, al-Qarioun neighborhood, Nablus, February 14, 2012

The room of the family of the martyr 'Ala' Ghaleed. His sister from Tulkarm gave birth in Nablus and is staying for three days with their mother. She named her newborn after her martyred brother. Ghaleed was a member of the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups. He was the first to plant bombs against the Israeli army, in his own and al-Yasmina neighborhoods. He was killed in a clash with the Israeli army on March 27, 2007.



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41. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 5, 2012

A fruit and vegetable shop in front of the house of the mother of Naif Abu Sharkh, with different calendars exhibiting martyrs' images. The calendars are distributed to keep the memory of the martyrs alive. The poster shows the martyr Muzen Freitakh and in the background the commander of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Naif Abu Sharkh. Freitakh was a commander of the Martyrdom Unit and an explosives specialist. He prepared Sa'ed 'Awada for his martyrdom operation in Jerusalem on June 18, 2002. When the Israeli army invaded Nablus in 2002 they blew up his house killing two of his aunts and injuring two of his brothers as well as his sister, while he himself was able to escape. The poster has been published to commemorate the second anniversary of Freitakh's death. It reads, "The head of the Martyrdom Unit, Muzen Freitakh / The brain managing many military operations deep in the Zionist heart / The one responsible for killing many Zionist soldiers / Who was martyred in an armed clash with the Zionist occupation forces on April 15, 2003. // Be generous, Brigades, with the blood and bring light to the earth with your martyr heroism / Muzen, the heroism, the challenge, the sacrifice, the Sheikh of the resistance, the lion of the martyrs / With your fire you burn the enemy hordes, the roar of your bullet bends their pride / You will stay a castle of glory and disdain and you will stay the fighter refusing to bow."

42. Nablus, December 12, 2011

In a sewing workshop, a poster commemorating the death of Basim Abu Sariyah, known as al-Gaddafi, with Naif Abu Sharkh in the background.

43. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 5, 2012

In a vegetable shop, posters of different martyrs. A poster joining Yasser Arafat, Naif Abu Sharkh, Muzen Abu Sharkh, and Ra'ed al-Sarakji has been published to commemorate one year since the death of Muzen and Ra'ed. A second poster shows three martyrs from the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups.

44. Nablus, January 28, 2012

Posters commemorating 'Amar al-'Anabousi, a member of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades who was shot dead on October 10, 2007 in the Old City of Nablus by Israeli special forces dressed in the uniform of Palestinian National Security officers.

45. Balata Refugee Camp, Old Graveyard, February 5, 2012

Posters commemorating Ahmad Sanakra, killed in a confrontation with the Israeli army on January 18, 2008. The poster reads, "A man who made history and made of his biography a lighthouse of the resistance: a man who loved the homeland, and God loves him, a martyr."

46. Al-Yasmina neighborhood, Nablus, November 1, 2011

Hisham, a police officer and brother of the prisoner 'Ala' 'Akoubeh, sits in a coffee shop. The posters depict Basim Abu Sariyah, known as al-Gaddafi.

47. Balata Refugee Camp, March 7, 2012

Attached to the house of the family, a memorial for the martyr Hamouda Shtewei. On the wall, a painting of the martyr in his grave, enshrouded in the Palestinian colors, with olive trees growing from it; above the painting, a portrait of him. Often such memorials are adorned with plants and trees to sym-

bolize the continuation of life. At Shtewei's memorial, it is a fig tree. Up above, the family has hung a poster of Shtewei from their balcony, saying, "Many carry a weapon, but few bring it to the chest of the enemy." Shtewei was a fighter and on the Israeli wanted list. He escaped several assassination attempts and was killed in a clash with the Israeli army in the refugee camp on February 22, 2006.

48. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 5, 2012

In a vegetable shop, a poster showing the martyrs 'Abd al-Rahman Shinnawi, 'Amar al-'Anabousi and Basim Abu Sariyah from the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups which belong to al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. On the margins of the poster, a picture of the head of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Nablus, Naif Abu Sharkh. The poster carries a sticker showing a raised fist with the Palestinian colors and reading, "We want the occupation to lose. Boycott Tapuzina [an Israeli soft drink]. Palestinian National Initiative."

49. The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 5, 2012

Banners spanning an alleyway entering the Old City that leads to the house of the family of Naif Abu Sharkh. The larger banner shows Abu Sharkh surrounded by his comrades and reads, "In the name of God, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. (And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy.) // The hero leaders of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades / The military wing // No place for retreat, all leaders to the front / No place for weakness, victory is our guide / No place for humiliation, far from me the occupier / Far from me disgrace, far from me humiliation."



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50. Beit Furik, southeast of Nablus, January 21, 2012

Graffiti on the exterior wall of a house reading, "The martyr hero 'Anan Hanani / Martyrdom is the point of the confrontation bayonet / PFLP." Hanani was killed together with Ahmad Hamad from the village Tal in the region of Nablus in the course of an attack on the Israeli military on Jarzeem Mountain on February 5, 2003. His body was returned to the family on May 31, 2012 together with the bodies of his relatives, the resistance fighters Sa'er, Zeid, and Azhar.

51. The Old City, Nablus, November 23, 2011

On a wall in the market, three commemoration panels surrounded by posters. One panel commemorates the first anniversary of the martyrdom of Mohammad Mar'ei from the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups, who was martyred on September 15, 2004. The other one reads, "Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades / The martyr castle / Amin Labada / (The founder of the groups of the Panther Brigades) / If you live, live as a free person, or die standing like the trees." Labada was an explosives expert and started to participate in the resistance at the age of fourteen. The Israeli army arrested his mother several times to pressure him to surrender, and destroyed the house of his family. On April 22, 2007, his hiding place was discovered with the help of a traitor, and Labada was killed with a rocket.

52. New Askar Refugee Camp, January 26, 2012

Poster light box devoted to 'Anan Shalabi in the street leading to the house of his family. "Freedom for the hero prisoner 'Anan Shalabi / Life sentence (for life)." The second light box commemorates the two martyrs Yasser Shawish and Kamal Mallah.

53. Balata Refugee Camp, November 22, 2011

In the center of the camp, on a street that is used as a market during the day, a poster supporting the prisoners Darwish Shaf'ei, Khalid Abu Hilal, and Mahmoud Mohor. In the upper left-hand corner of the poster, an image of Yasser Arafat and in its right-hand corner an image of the political prisoner Marwan Barghouti, the head of Tanzim, an armed offshoot of Fateh. Next to it, another poster supporting Ahmad Abu Salim, Ahmad Khalil, and Amjad Shaf'ei that has been published on the occasion of the fifth year of their imprisonment by the occupier.

54. Balata Refugee Camp, January 28, 2012

In the upper neighborhood of the Balata Refugee Camp, a memorial for Khalil Marshoud, a martyr from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, graced with a tree to symbolize the continuation of life. On the wall a painted portrait of the martyr, surrounded with the Palestinian colors and adorned with the writing, "The martyr leader, Khalil Marshoud, martyred on June 14, 2004". On the right-hand side of the memorial a graffiti saying, "Cursed be the time lacking the honorable ones and ruled by cowards."

55. Balata Refugee Camp, January 28, 2012

On the upper half of the house, countless random Israeli bullet marks; on the lower left, graffiti commemorating "the hero martyrs Ahmad, 'Ala', Murad and Khalil Marshoud, Ra'ed Abu al-'Adas, Mahmoud al-Titi, Wael 'Araishi, Hamouda Shtewei and all the martyrs." At the lower right, graffiti reading, "Neither prison nor guards terrorize me / I am the son of Fateh / and everyone knows me. . ." followed by the writing, "Love you till death," on the iron gate next to the house.

56. City center, Nablus, March 9, 2012

A memorial for the resistance leader, the martyr Naif Abu Sharkh, in the shape of the Palestinian map carrying text in the Palestinian colors that enumerates his positions. Attached to electricity poles behind the light box are posters commemorating the martyrs Rami Tofaha and Osaid Qadoos, who were killed as defenders of the lands of the village Iraq Burin on March 21, 2010. In front of Abu Sharkh's memorial stands, together with a friend, Abu Sharkh's son Fathi who was recently released after passing nine years in Israeli prisons.

57. Balata Refugee Camp, February 16, 2012

Attached to the house of the family, a memorial for the martyr Khalil Marshoud, a militant from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, with plants to symbolize the continuation of life. On the wall, light boxes with the martyr's portraits and writing describing his beliefs. Most of the children of the family, the sons of Marshoud's various brothers, are named after him.

58. Balata Refugee Camp, November 22, 2011

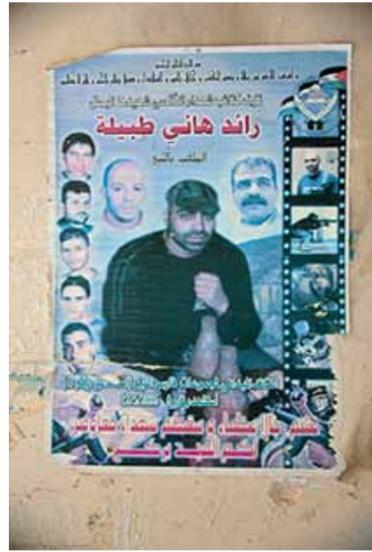
On the wall of the house, a poster reading, "Neither prison nor guard terrorize me / the prisoner Haitham Ka'abi / the son of the Balata Refugee Camp's resistance / arrested on August 2, 2006." Next to it, the lower part of the wall is full of graffiti supporting the prisoners. On the front of the wall are the words, "Thousands of greetings to the valiant prisoners in the Zionist prisons, and freedom is coming soon."



59

59. Balata Refugee Camp, March 6, 2012

Posters covering the iron gate of a shop, among them a poster exhibiting the picture of Yasser Arafat and the writing, "Palestinian National Liberation Movement / Nablus region / We are following your way." A second poster is devoted to the martyr Ahmad Hleylah from Fateh, in the Jericho region, who fell in defense of Jerusalem on May 29, 2001, in 'Aqbat Jaber. The walls of the adjacent shop are covered with pictures and posters of Arafat and different posters of martyrs.



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60. The Old City, Nablus, November 25, 2011

The poster is devoted to the martyr Ra'ed Tbilah. It reads, "In the name of God, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful / And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the record [of deeds] will be placed, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought, and it will be judged between them in truth, and they will not be wronged. / Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades wedding their hero martyr / Ra'ed Hani Tbilah / the field commander of the Faris al-Leil groups (engineer number three), martyred on May 12, 2006 / You lived as a great man and you fell as a resistance martyr / Before you the glory kneels." Tbilah was shot in the head in a clash with the Israeli army in the Old City of Nablus. When the ambulance drove him to a hospital he was arrested at the Hawara Israeli military checkpoint south of Nablus, where he bled to death. The portrait of Tbilah shows him preparing an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and surrounded by portraits of fellow resistance fighters.



61

61. The Old City, Nablus, November 23, 2011

The first poster shows a portrait of Naif Abu Sharkh, the General Secretary of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Nablus, martyred on June 26, 2004. He is surrounded by portraits of martyred comrades, among them the number one engineer of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades for Nablus, Usama Jawabra, martyred on June 24, 2001; the commander Basim Abu Sariyah (al-Gaddafi), martyred on October 16, 2007; the commander Fadi Qfeesha, martyred in the al-Qarioun neighborhood of the Old City of Nablus in a clash with the Israeli forces on August 31, 2006; and Sheikh Mazen Freitakh, martyred on April 15, 2003. The second poster shows the emblem of al-Asifah, an armed offshoot of Fateh, and the portrait of 'Anan Sobh who was assassinated together with his resistance comrades Rassan Abu Sharkh and Ra'ed al-Sarakji on December 26, 2009.



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62. Balata Refugee Camp, November 22, 2011

A poster supporting the prisoners Darwish Shaf'ei, Khalid Abu Hilal, and Mahmoud Mohor. In the upper left-hand corner of the poster an image of Yasser Arafat and in its right-hand corner an image of the political prisoner Marwan Barghouti, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and a General Secretary of the Fateh movement in the West Bank.



63

63. The Old City, Nablus, February 4, 2012

The poster, devoted to the martyr Hani al-Akkad reads, "The National Resistance Brigades / State of Palestine / Wedding to our people one of its prominent commanders / The martyr the hero / Hani al-Akkad / Covenant / We are following your way / Who became a martyr in defense of the homeland on September 15, 2004." In Nablus, al-Akkad was a leading figure of the Palestinian National Resistance Brigades, the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). He was in charge of building remote-controlled Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and responsible for preparing different martyr operations against the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, carried out by Mahmoud Hanani, Zaid Hanani, and Ahmad Saleh. He was martyred in an armed clash with Israeli forces in the al-Qarioun neighborhood of the Old City of Nablus.



64

64. The Old City, Nablus, February 4, 2012

The poster is devoted to the martyr Amir Kalbonah. He was a fighter, a member of the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups, and was martyred in a clash with the Israeli forces at the Khan al-Tujjar in the Old City of Nablus on February 1, 2007 together with his comrade Wa'el 'Awad. Kalbonah's portrait is surrounded by his resistance comrades, among them the martyrs Fadi Qfeesha, Hisham al-Hawah, 'Amar Kalbonah, and Samir al-Sayeh.



65

65. Beit Furik, southeast of Nablus, January 21, 2012

Two posters on the exterior wall of a house. One exhibits, together with two other martyrs, the portrait of Sa'ed Hanani of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the military arm of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Hanani's photo was taken on the same day he carried out a martyrdom operation in Israel on December 25, 2003. The Israeli army destroyed the family house as punishment. The second poster is devoted to the lieutenant colonel Mahmoud Nasr-Allah who spent fifteen years in Israeli jails. In 1983 he was exiled to Jordan where he worked in the care of the families of prisoners and martyrs. In 1997 he returned to his village Beit Furik, where he died on August 14, 1998.



66

66. New Askar Refugee Camp, January 25, 2012

Posters on a house wall. One poster, bearing the portrait of Mahmoud Abbas reads, "His Excellence the President / Mahmoud Abbas 'Abu Mazen' / President of the State of Palestine / People's choice . . . Maker and protector of the democracy." The poster was made on the occasion of Abbas's formal request, in the name of the Palestinian people, for full membership of Palestine in the United Nations. The poster appearing three times and carrying several portraits of martyrs from al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades of the Balata Refugee Camp describes three of the men, each with a different epithet: 'Ala' al-Terawi, "The Conscience"; Wa'el Rayahi, martyred by Israeli special forces on December 17, 2004, "The Panther"; and Mohammad Ishtiw, Commander at the Central Command, "The Prince." The latter was killed together with another two resistance comrades, Mohammad 'Amar and Hosni Hajaj, on February 23, 2006 by the Israeli army, when their hiding place was discovered with the help of Jaffal Srou, a local traitor.



67

67. Balata Refugee Camp, January 28, 2012

Next to the house of the al-Lahwani family, a memorial for their three martyrs: the two sons, Mahmoud and Salah, and, in the middle, their father Saleh. Salah was killed on June 15, 2004 on the occasion of the funeral of the martyrs Khalil Marshoud and 'Awad Abu Zeid by the Israeli army that also attacked Salah's own funeral, increasing the number of people from Balata who were injured that day, in addition to dozens of other citizens who suffered suffocation from tear gas, which was flooded out by the army during the martyr's funeral. On July 3, 2004, eighteen days after the death of his brother Salah, Mahmoud was shot by the Israeli army during one of their successive incursions at the same place where Salah died, the southern entrance of the camp. Years earlier a mysterious accident claimed the life of their father in Israel.



68

68. Balata Refugee Camp, March 6, 2012

A poster on the wall facing the entrance of the family house of the martyrdom operator Ahmad Khatib reads, "On the second anniversary / The martyr Ahmad Khatib's mother wedding her son and all Palestine's martyrs / The hero prisoner Mohammad Khatib / The hero martyr Ahmad Khatib, 'Abu Bilal', martyred on April 24, 2003 / The hero martyr Majdi Khaloos, 'Abo Anas', martyred on April 5, 2002 / Who honors the martyr follows his steps / And we are faithful to the covenant." Ahmad Khatib was sixteen years old when he carried out a martyrdom operation inside Israel, where he died. Mohammad Khatib, his oldest brother, was on the Israeli wanted list until they kidnapped him.

The Palestinian's Death

Esmail Nashif

1.

Death is a single ending. Death is all beginnings.

The human being doesn't die in a manner that suits her or his fancy; rather, the manner of death is contingent, to a great extent, on the characteristics of the social order in which the person lives. For the manner of death, whether it be illness or killing or natural causes, is, like any other form of social practice, a behavioral pattern that derives from the general social order and finds realization within the context of the individual facing death. On this basis, we may pose two questions: one concerns the possibility of studying and comprehending society by examining the dominant and marginal types of death to be found in it; the other concerns the possibility of studying death by examining the disparities between its typical manifestations, thus accounting for the diversity of societies across time and space. Following this logic, I would like to pursue these two questions within a highly specific context: victimhood, martyrdom, and martyrdom operation—all regarded as different modes of death—and the Palestinian society that mandates them.¹

It isn't easy, by any means, to designate the essential features of Palestinian society and its modes of operation as a self-sustaining system. Since it first began to assume a form based on the modern type, this society has been undergoing intensive processes of dismantlement and re-formation, the likes of which have rarely been witnessed in the modern age. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Palestinian society—separately and as part of the larger Arab-Islamic world—has been subjected to continual operations of dismantlement by the Western colonial system in all its variants, the latest of which is represented by Zionism. On the other hand, the Palestinians have been striving to produce themselves as a collectivity through different forms of socio-economic existence. Until 1948, Palestinian society had preserved a central spatio-temporal structure that was, with regard to the interrelations between society and the political entity, a particular variation on the model of the nation-state. This may be seen in the fact that, until 1948, we were able to examine the principal features of that structure by following conventional methods adopted in the research of other societies. However, since the dispersal and expulsion of Palestinian society and the destruction of its central

spatio-temporal and material structure, we have not been able to make use of the same concepts that are current in the study of other societies. This, in spite of the fundamental understanding that the 1948 *Nakba* is the culmination of several socio-historical processes and not an isolated event, a coincidence, or anything of the sort.² There is no doubt that what started as a war evolved, through a concealed intention, into a genocide that destroyed the Palestinian totality in the form in which it existed prior to the war. Palestinian society has splintered into many groups, each of which lives on the margins of another society, clinging to this other while being excluded from its center. In spite of the consequences of the 1948 *Nakba* for Palestinian society, the colonial Zionist regime executes the 1948 scenario on a periodical basis against one or another of the Palestinian groups that emerged from the *Nakba*: namely, the diaspora, the territories occupied in 1948, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Specifically, the Zionist regime targets all endeavors to form a Palestinian collectivity that would possess historical agency and strive to re-inscribe Palestinian agency outside the relational parameters determined by subordination to the dominant regime. In this regard, we may be justified in proposing the following: that the Palestinians, in all the different forms of their social existence, haven't actually emerged from the shadow of the pivotal event in their recent history, the *Nakba* of 1948. After all, the systematic destruction of the Palestinian entity on the material plane is still the primary manifestation of the colonial regime in Palestine. If this condition lingers at the core of the colonial construct, how are we to understand Palestinian society at the moment of its death, considering this moment to be its very definition?

Before going into the details of the Palestinian moment of death, a methodical observation needs to be made concerning the practical manner in which this death may be read and written, as this observation may cast epistemic light on death in general. In the first place, there is now a common understanding that what is read carries the reader along with its logic. Therefore, when reading death, the reader must dismount his or her priority in the reading process and connect as an equal to that which is death, i.e. not as a life that reads death. In the second place, the detachment from the

1. The terms "victim," "martyr," and "martyrdom operator" are the English equivalents of the following Arabic terms, respectively: *Dahiya*, *Shaheed*, and *Istishhadi*.
2. The *Nakba* is the term for the mass expulsion and dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel over the land of historic Palestine.

priority of the reader results in the abandonment of the episteme that constituted this priority. This double move starts with the reader occupying a position of humility in relation to the world being read, in our case that of Palestinian death, so that she or he may refrain from the systematic imposition of her or his own world on it. Here language becomes the primary space in which the method or system, superior by necessity, gets transformed into a procedure that leads to the position of humility and the temporary occupation of this position. Here we aren't asking death about its language; rather, we're searching with death for the means it offers for building life. Reducing the method to a procedure doesn't merely lead to the reader's humility toward what is read, but also brings what is read down from the holy and mythical realms to the banal realm of the human and historical. In this regard, the humble reading of death reveals the banality of the life on which the holy and mythical curtain of death descends; death here becomes one of the banalities of life. So let us return to death, in humility.

Death serves as a platform for surveying life, one that reveals to the viewer life's different forms and modes of operation. In this capacity death gains its meaning and, being consummated, dies, endowing life with the size, depth, and myriad dimensions of form and meaning on which it thrives. Therefore, it may be said that the dominant Palestinian variation, where Palestinian society signifies and is signified only at the moment of its destruction and death, does not negate or break with the history of death in life, but is rather the concretely practiced paradigm of this history. However, consciousness of this paradigm is absent from the systematic spaces of modern Arab-Islamic thought, where Palestinian society is perceived as the victim, and from modern Western thought as well, where it is read as a secondary form of death opposed to life, or not recognized in the first place. The fundamental aporia in systematic thought as such lies in the fact that every systematic act of killing is a form that reaches completion or realization only through a non-systematic actualization of the essence of life, i.e. birth. In effect, the systematic condition practices killing repeatedly and unceasingly according to its own criteria as well as the terms of killing itself, both of which decree that killing must fail to accomplish that which seems to be death.

For birth is half of the sphere comprising the totality of life, which sits on, among other things, the eggs of death. And birth is, by nature, iterative in form and meaning. Accordingly, in order to extricate Palestinian society from the condition of systematic killing practiced against it, it may be necessary to cling to what might be termed the iterative, and therefore continually re-inscribable, trajectories of birth. We cannot understand the Palestinian paradigm of death through the presence of the system in it; rather, completely to the contrary, we must walk alongside the essence of life—birth—by opening it forcibly onto the particulars of the act of killing that takes place within it. This initial attempt at explication, which follows the forms and types of death that have distinguished Palestinian society, points to the fact that the stage represented by death is not fixed, but shifting. Moreover, this stage has created its own history, and we shall attempt in this article to determine the principle at work in the historical map of the Palestinian stage of death, hoping to reach thereby another understanding of what the Palestinian form of life is.

This approach to understanding death and life does not merely switch our vantage point, but surpasses it by substituting its own tools for the tools in place. Here we are not looking with the eyes of the individual; rather, we are starting from the exteriority of the boundaries of the collective, and not stopping there at the edge of a schematic totality, but going beyond these boundaries to their decisive event. We are not asking here who died, got killed, or was martyred among the Palestinians in a literal sense, for their Palestinian name assumes a form through the procedure of death which brings them to life, in name, in the archive, that registry which never ceases to grind the wheat of death into life. A massacre is a particular catastrophic procedure, and in the trajectory of its occurrence lies that non-systematic knowledge.³ In this sense death by killing is birth, and stands in contrast to the dominant perception that killing leads to death. Strictly speaking, an assassination is that technique which, when performed, records the birth of what follows from bodies and actions and events that become eligible for the next assassination. Consequently, by pursuing the logic of assassination as a technique, we may understand the situation of a son who desires to win the assassination of his father in order to possess all fathers eligible for assassination.

In the still open dictionary of Palestinian luminaries, a literary genre has evolved from the following textual conclusion: "the manner of a luminary's death = the manner of his life in the present." And the current debate concerning the circumstances of Yasser Arafat's death may be the visible shadow of the essential question: how should Arafat live? That is the definitive question of the stage of death.

The 1948 *Nakba* is a pivotal moment in the history of the management of Palestinian death, the latter being also the management of Palestinian life. For the colonial Zionist regime succeeded in establishing a monopoly over the practice of the Palestinian's death and its administration, so much so that this became the fundamental, and foundational, code in the systematic Zionist procedure. And for reasons related to its history and nature—reasons which we will elaborate below—the Zionist procedure follows an extremely totalitarian operative logic. Accordingly, the practice of the Palestinian's death by the Zionist procedure, at the historical moment of 1948, left no Palestinian, whether literally or metaphorically, untouched, killing the Palestinian materially at the level of the productive body, and socially by dissolving, thoroughly, the nexus of his or her time and space. At the structural level, this moment—in its Palestinian half—became established as a generative loss, i.e. the existence of the colonial regime necessitates the death of Palestinian collectivity. Hence, it was imperative for the Zionist regime to monopolize the management and technical maintenance of loss and its circulation. This general relational structure was entrenched through the regular—i.e. schematic—practice of different forms of collective death against the Palestinians, in a manner that suits the formative contexts in which this collectivity is continually reproduced. From this perspective, the return becomes that constellation of different historical births which Palestinians have been practicing ever since the structure of generative loss was consolidated. In this sense, the return carries within it the procedural steps of the struggle to free the administration of Palestinian death from the iron grip of the Zionist monopoly. The question that arises at this juncture concerns the operative mode of the return and the formal principle of reproduction as they appear at the level of concrete historical reality.

Those studies—and the knowledge resulting from them—that examine the relationship between the form of socio-economic relations within a specific segment of Palestinian society, on the one hand, and the modes

in which this segment expresses its collective self—ranging from resistance and relapse to stagnation and dependency—fail to fathom the structure determining the shape of this collective. For these studies, across the spectrum, don't recognize the structure of generative loss as a primary formative element in the reproduction of Palestinian collectivity—also known, in the idiom adopted in this article, as the configuration of Palestinian births. Hence, these studies regard the Palestinian collective through the theater of life, remaining oblivious to the agency exercised by the platform of death within this collective, their jaws dropping upon encountering the formative half represented by death in Palestinian life. When asking the Palestinian whether she or he desires to return, these studies may ask: where to, how, and what is the price one is willing to pay for it? This systematic question fails to recognize—deliberately or not, depending on whom you ask—that the return is what defines the Palestinian as both a social and economic being. The wandering of the Palestinian, subsequent to the destruction of her or his individual and social, productive body, led, both causally and structurally, to her or his accession to the margins of different socio-economic configurations, beginning with the colonial regime in Palestinian and neighboring Arab societies and continuing to those areas lying beyond them.

What's more important in this regard is that the return operates as a pole and pivot around which diverse mechanisms of semantic production revolve, collectively forming that which is Palestinian, and doing so by deriving historical births of return which get practiced by Palestinians everywhere in a manner that suits the different locales and trajectories of their compulsory and voluntary wanderings and migrations. Resistance is a particular historical instance of the many forms of return, and there is no doubt that it managed to carve, and continues to carve, a configuration of Palestinian births with distinct manifestations and features. From one aspect, resistance strives to free the administration of Palestinian death from the Zionist grip monopolizing it, and does so, from another perspective, in order to dismantle the structure of generative loss and create an alternative order of death and life. In this sense we may understand resistance as a transformative form of return, i.e. we are facing a form and practice of reproduction that shifts Palestinian collectivity from the structural moment of generative loss to another state that goes beyond that structure to reach what is borne by its necessarily non-systematic form, i.e. the dissolution

3. The word translated here as "catastrophic"—*nakbawi*—literally means "of or relating to the *Nakba*." Hence, it links the specific catastrophe represented by the *Nakba* to the general catastrophic state of the Palestinian collective since then.

of the regime's monopoly over the administration of Palestinian death. Following this argument, we may observe the particular practices of resistance as concrete mechanisms for the Palestinian's production of her or his collective self, along trajectories that spring from the moment of the 1948 *Nakba*, which continues in the Palestinian here and now. Armed resistance is a concrete mechanism for the Palestinian's production of a collective self, and this mechanism springs from the violent structure of the moment of the *Nakba*, meaning that there exists, in the event of the *Nakba* as well as the structure that got authorized in its wake, a formative logic of violence that is a foundation in the edifice where Palestinian death is administered by the Zionist regime. The inevitability of armed resistance, then, issues from the process of return that seeks to collapse the regime's administration of Palestinian death, an administration operating according to the formative logic of violence.

In what follows, we will observe three forms of resistance distinguished by the kind of death resulting from them, the subject of this death being the individual Palestinian seeking his or her collectivity: the victim, the martyr, and the martyrdom operator. Following the trajectories of these forms, seen as particular variations on the possible forms of return, will enable us to read the structure of the Palestinian return at a level of interpretive detail. This may surpass the knowledge currently circulated concerning death as an ending, thus holding in check the tendency to regard death as an ending; death here seen as synonymous with return.

Among the most significant fruits of this approach in terms of epistemological practice is the question of death as the end of language, of every language as such. The significance of the Palestinian condition derives from the fact that it represents a concrete realization of the death of language and a continually renewed emergence of non-systematic fragments that never cease to recall their absence within the systematic arena. The stage during which these relations took form was print capitalism, of which the commodity represented the paradigm, given that the form of printed language was the hegemonic form that cast aside other linguistic forms, the most important of which was probably the visual form of language. In this regard, it may be said that the return of the Palestinian non-systematically transpired on the bridge of visual language, until the point when the circumstances of the hegemonic order changed, giving rise to commodity visuality as well as the visual commodity, which now lie at the forefront of the capitalist system. How was the form of the victim

fashioned? What are the visuals of the martyr? And where does the end of vision lie, that end which yields to us the martyrdom operator as (in)sight itself?

2.

The chart we drew in the previous section of this essay indicates that expulsion and refugeehood have created a structure that can only be complete with the return, which means that the historical practice of collective death itself bears a configuration of different Palestinian births. The source of these births lies in the structural failure of collective killing, wherein the practice of killing against the collective is repeated by the regime with the aim of achieving the collective's end, but leads instead to the repetition of the collective's births and the creation of a concrete configuration of births that coheres at the pole or pivot of the return. From this it may be seen that re-reading the events that followed the 1948 *Nakba* through the dialectic between the different types of collective killing practiced by the regime, and the types of birth initiated by the Palestinian collective, enables us to elucidate what was heretofore incomprehensible because it drew on conventional methods to study Palestinian society.

There can be no doubt that one of the most important decades epistemically absent in the Palestinian context is that which followed the *Nakba*. The historical and epistemic record concerning the decade of the nineteen-fifties appears to be extremely thin, almost as if it had never been inhabited by the Palestinians. The absence of any attempt to give birth to a collective Palestinian configuration is quite striking here, and several explanations may be proposed for it. From one perspective, it appears that organized killing continued in the mode of massacres; although the most prominent instances occurred in Qibya and Kafr Qasim, these were links in an extended chain. Massacres are a process of formation that works through collective killing, eliminating the corporeal aspect of collective existence so that the collective fails to survive as a collective or, at least, fails to retain its prior form. Alongside these massacres hasty attempts were made to form a collective identity that would be subject to frameworks that eroded the Palestinianness of the collective, such as the refugee camps created for the diaspora by international organizations responsible for managing refugee affairs, the Jordanian and Egyptian identities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively, and the Israeli identity in the areas occupied in 1948. These processes of formation and refashioning were attended, in the same

period, by collective frameworks remaining from the former era, such as the All-Palestine Government, as well as the early beginnings of a few small groups that appeared toward the end of the decade, the most prominent, perhaps, being the groups in the Gaza Strip, who managed to obtain official status.

In light of the dominant conditions of loss and dispersion, at both the socio-material and existential-human levels, it is somewhat difficult to determine, in this period, the types and means of recognition with which the Palestinian collective experienced the *Nakba* and its aftermath. The expressive, literary, and documentary works produced in this period, in various parts of the Palestinian collective, indicate that some attempts were made to search for different tools with which this collective may be observed and framed. Ismail Shammout, for example, tries to develop a visual semiotics for Palestinian refugeehood as experienced by the Arab diaspora and beyond, while Abed Abdi, in the second half of the nineteen-fifties, questions in a visual medium the tangent points that exist between the Palestinian refugee and the collective identities available to her or him in the framework of the colonial system. The literature of this period was more diverse than the plastic arts; many different currents clung to the pre-*Nakba* moment as if the *Nakba* had never happened, converging in the literature of social morality in its patriarchal form, while other currents engaged the *Nakba* and its repercussions through serious attempts to document it with literary and linguistic tools that were in circulation prior to the *Nakba*. In spite of the efforts made by some to render the visual and literary text in a manner adequate to the gravity of the historical event, a distinguished aesthetic literary language remained to be formulated. Naturally, these general currents had the occasional rare exception: Emile Toma represents such an exception in the fields of documentary and criticism.

This period, then, is distinguished by a particular dialectic between the massacre, a collective death that befalls a certain segment of society, and the action of leaning on the past via documentary and testimonial, as well as an initial search for the shape of the future collective. What the *Nakba* and the two following decades produced—a searching, circular motion through the conditions of killing, expulsion, and refugeehood, as well as the refashioning of the collective subject, in all its fluctuating variations—wasn't present in the collective Palestinian scene, then splintered into many pieces. The Palestinians were unable to administer their deaths, and, consequently, their lives as well; instead, all their affairs were administered by several different parties,

the most important, perhaps, being the colonial system in its local version and its global foundations. In retrospect, we may safely say that it took almost two decades for a particular segment of Palestinians to form frameworks of collective Palestinian labor, i.e. to establish a productive body that works, fundamentally, to reproduce the Palestinian collective in itself and for itself, if we may use this evanescent expression. Consequently, it was in the mid-sixties that an influential attempt was first made to recover control over the administration of Palestinian death, and this attempt may be considered to have succeeded in freeing a portion of this administration for the first time since 1948.

The most conspicuous feature of the first Palestinian national awakening since 1948 is the institutional process of gathering and refining what may be termed the collective Palestinian state of affairs. The transformation of this state of affairs into an institutional system modeled after socially, politically, and militarily effective organizations, and its subsequent concentration in the hands of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) at the end of the nineteen-sixties, helped to lay down an infrastructure aimed, fundamentally, at seizing control of the administration of Palestinian death and investing the latter in a political economy of national liberation. The national political economy of Palestinian collective death is, in reality, a kind of translation that turns the structure of the return into a collective birth project that traces trajectories for the voluntary practice of death, through killing or other means, with the ultimate goal of realizing the return. And we may make the following observation concerning this political economy in its full form: the proliferation of death, in both number and modality, leads, in a causal manner, to the proliferation of territorial and social liberation. This means, among other things, that the Palestinian must invest all that she has in her death to be able to liberate all the land and history and present inside her: in other words, to be able to achieve the complete return to Palestine, as well as Palestine's complete return to her.

Examining the structure of this national political economy takes us back to the structural form of the *Nakba* and its function as a primary foundation of the Zionist colonial regime in Palestine; this in light of the fact that the *Nakba*'s structure is based on the complete and irrevocable denial of what is in place at the moment of its formation. This denial may be seen in the *Nakba*'s complete dismantlement of the infrastructures of Palestinian society—material and relational as well as linguistic—and its reduction

of Palestinian society to the above mentioned parts, through the mechanisms by which the Palestinian is refashioned as the non-Palestinian; in effect, this action amounts to the relational murder of one who hasn't physically died. At first sight, it appears that the return, in the context of the national political economy of collective Palestinian death, has followed the same trajectory that was necessitated by the *Nakba's* structural form, albeit in a contradictory direction. In order for us to unveil what appears to be a colonial prison, i.e. the possibility that resistance to the colonial event is a slippery slope that returns the Palestinian to the same event rather than liberate her or him from it, let us pause at the details concerning the operative logic of this political economy of collective death.

In the historical dimension of the chain of events unfolding on the Palestinian stage, death, in all its variants, assumes the primary role in fashioning the collective. This role has its origin in the nature of the colonial regime as a machine that operates on the violence of dismantlement and dissolution, and this nature springs directly from the regime's status as a derivative and extension of the parent capitalist system. For this system pursues a continual process of expansion based on the violent dismantlement of earlier forms of labor and their use values, which it appropriates and reconstructs as exchangeable commodities. The manufacture of death is at the core of the manufacture of the commodity, not external to it or its logic; quite to the contrary, the manufacture of death is the point of departure for the capitalist structure which we see being realized via the commodity. And it is apparent that what transpires at the level of the commodity, the paradigm according to which all other social spheres are re-formed, translates to the sphere of colonial relations between the Euro-American center and its geo-political peripheries. In this context, the Palestinian stage doesn't comprise a concrete commodity as such, or some pre-commodity state, but for several reasons this stage became, during the nationalist period of the Palestinian tragedy from 1967 to 1990, a crossroads in the capitalist network of commodity and death exchange. Accordingly, the logic regulating the nationalist stage in this period of its history is a spectacular one that moves from the location of the administration of death to the space of death itself: Mandatory Palestine.

The 1967 setback represented, to both the colonial regime and the extended Palestinian collective across the

Arab and Islamic worlds, the second peak in the series of events beginning with 1948. On the one hand, the regime achieved full control over Mandatory Palestine, firmly establishing direct regulatory power over the territories occupied in 1948 and 1967, and creating, to this end, relations of disparity between the two territorial divisions by enforcing separate and specific mechanisms of control and management in each. On the other hand, the now complete loss of Palestine and the direct subjection of two-thirds of the society to the Israeli regime caused the structure of loss to be entrenched in the depths of the Palestinian collective; this, in turn, intensified the sharp contradiction experienced by the Palestinians, caught as they are between the pole of expulsion and refugeehood on one side, and the pole of return on the other. The forms of earlier relations that upheld the Palestinian state of affairs between its *Nakba* and its *Naksa*⁴ have been shattered, and their shattering was nothing less than the depletion of their store of a material and social insularity, i.e. nothing less than the spread of the system of the individual nation-state in the Arab world. The incorporation of the Arab-Islamic world into the new system that emerged out of the Second World War reinforced the historical remapping of this world as national entities possessing a sovereignty that can only be described as extremely frail; in this light, the process of incorporation is the proper framework within which the Palestinian *Nakba* should be situated. Hence, albeit in a reactionary sense, the 1967 *Naksa* may be understood as the crowning achievement of this process, due to which nothing remained for the Palestinians, as individuals and as a collective, besides a Palestinianness afflicted by its absence. The nature of the structural separation from the body of the Arab-Islamic totality, i.e. the fragmentation of this body into "nationalisms," fashioned Palestinian "nationalism" in its likeness. A certain form of institutional Palestinian relations has begun to carry the Palestinian state of affairs along the paths and routes of struggle in order to seize the administration of Palestinian death, and the first stage of those relations was marked by the declaration of its own presence, a declaration made with the aim of constituting a pole in the struggle, opposite to the colonial system as well as the Arab-Islamic world, and the world in general.

Throughout the period of Palestinian nationalism, the primary preoccupation of those working within it

and on it has been the acceptance of their declaration that they have not died, but are rather striving to recover control of their own affairs. A look at the broad range of collective Palestinian actions of self-expression will indicate that the act of declaring who I am, and publicizing this I to all, comprised the primary collective mechanism that moved the return, through struggle, in the direction of reaffirming the presence of those presumed to have died. The shift from absence to the action of presence encompassed most of the different Palestinian segments, as well as several fields that work to produce these segments as separate and as a dispersed social totality. And so we see Ghassan Kanafani in his literature carrying a scattered diaspora to the edge of a collectivity that rises in history through its action, while Emile Habibi rearticulates the range of possible relations between the segments of Palestinian society living in the territories occupied in 1948, on the one hand, and the regime and the remaining segments of Palestinian society on the other; in a sense, Habibi renders these relations as an acrobatics of collusion with the status quo, one that nevertheless defines the Palestinians as a collective of presence. As for poetry, we see Mahmoud Darwish, the soothsayer of Palestinian culture, securing his place and singing to us the psalms of a mischievous, quarrelsome presence whose joy pours out of death and absence. In the plastic arts we see men standing, women giving birth, a village being woven, as if we are delighted by the bountiful experience of pain from the prison chains planted in arms and bare chests and backs flayed by the painful joy of encountering the land again. Moving to the field of research, we see an example in Marie Sayigh's work on the transition process that led groups of peasant refugees to organized *Fida'i*⁵ action; we also find the research of Sabri Jureis and Elia Zuraik on the Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1948, as well as a good deal of research on the West Bank and Gaza. Against this institutional and performative background, the *Fida'i* rose from the corpse of the victim bearing the wings of the political economy of collective death, as if the trajectory of the return renders the death of those returning a necessary condition for creating the space where newborns may emerge.

And in spite of the diversity of the forms of collective death practiced by the regime against the Palestinian collective in this period, the massacre remained the dividing line that returns the co-ordinates regulating the

relation between the regime and the Palestinians to their origins in the *Nakba*; Sabra and Shatila may be the most prominent of these massacres, but they aren't the only ones of their sort. This period also saw the rise of the policy of targeting the vanguard and leading elites—among them the literati, intellectuals, politicians, military personnel, and resistance fighters—using all sorts of methods and technologies, ranging from assassination and diverse forms of physical elimination to political imprisonment as a practice of social death against the individual and her or his group. One may compare the relationship between targeting the elites and committing massacres to a kind of dancer who moves in circles between two moments or events: targeting the elites through assassination and imprisonment leads to a state of confrontation that facilitates the construction of the massacre as the result of a succession of events in some war or a sweeping Intifada. It is therefore possible to trace the history of collective death against the Palestinians by examining the concrete relationship between assassination, imprisonment, and massacre. The Land Day incident that occurred on March 30, 1976 was, in spite of its more problematic aspects, the crowning effort of a collective movement that tried to delineate the contours of the relationship between the regime and the Palestinians living in the territories occupied in 1948. It was therefore imperative for the regime to kill the collectivity of this movement, and it didn't spare any efforts toward this goal. It may also be seen that the successive assaults on the Palestinian institutional and military assemblage—starting with Jordan, continuing in Lebanon, and concluding always with an immense assault that leaves nothing in its wake—became standard practice during the nationalist period and continued up to the assault on Gaza in 2009. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 led to the almost complete elimination of the institutional and military apparatuses of the PLO, at which point the collective Palestinian action of resistance made a gradual shift to Gaza and the West Bank. Within the experience of the West Bank and Gaza, and what results from it later on, we can find many of the threads that got woven into the topography of the map of Palestinian collective death. And given that this experience marked the conclusion, literally and metaphorically, of the nationalist period, we shall draw on it here as a transitional platform for what follows.

4. The *Naksa* is the Arabic term for the war of 1967 and its consequences for Palestinians and Arabs.

5. *Fida'i* is the Arabic term for "armed struggler."

The colonial Zionist regime has practiced many mechanisms in order to achieve the material and social dismantlement of the infrastructures in place in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, beginning with assassinations and physical eliminations and continuing with collective arrests. Moreover, the regime didn't stop at annexing the land and forcing the Palestinians to work in its facilities. These mechanisms have been, and continue to be, practiced in synchrony, meaning that the massacre doesn't displace the prison, and neither does it spoil the relations of wage labor that profit the regime. To the contrary, it is possible to unveil different aspects of this regime by reinforcing the link between the manufacture of death and the manufacture of the commodity. From the beginning of their occupation, the West Bank and Gaza seemed like storehouses with immense portions of land and labor; this made the regime's mouth water and led it to link the two resources in its calculations. In addition to annexing the land, the regime opened the door to those who had been the land's original owners and farmers to work at the bottom of the Israeli market, thus enabling the regime to profit through four channels: land, labor, new consumers, and the dismantlement of the infrastructure of this segment of Palestinian society.

One of the main focal points in the endeavor to re-fashion the socio-economic structure of the West Bank and Gaza as a component of the colonial structure in Palestine is the administration of collective death in those particular areas. This focal point operates, as part of a whole, according to the same logic of dismantlement dominating the status quo, a logic that aims to re-fashion and to reverse collective death to its original, material condition as a consummated physical death. Here we may propose that the experience of political arrest is among the most important junctures between death and the commodity, given its role in the dismantlement of the Palestinian subject and her or his subsequent reconstruction in a form that speaks the colonial language fluently. And it is not by coincidence that the critical juncture, as a clear boundary between the colonial language and the possible scenarios of Palestinian freedom, is represented by the hunger strikes taking place in prisons. This type of strike—at least in one aspect—is a direct attempt to wrest control from the regime over the administration of Palestinian collective death.

The cumulative Palestinian experience in wresting control over the administration of collective death, and the gradual process whereby the arena of struggle

between the regime and the Palestinian collective shifted to the territories occupied in 1967, ultimately led to the collective movement known as the First Intifada. The fundamental scenario unfolding during the First Intifada consisted, prior to its commodification by politics, of serious and continual attempts to open trajectories of death that bear within them the potential of birth and return, and this scenario eventually developed into a concentrated effort to administer those trajectories. Ranging from the daily management of the neighborhood to popular demonstrations and *Fida'i* military action, and even going as far as the practice of economic self-sufficiency, these different trajectories all rely in principle on the preparation for a direct, material confrontation with the military and economic nodes of the colonial regime. The purpose of these mechanisms of confrontation has been to make room for the construction of potential trajectories of death and return.

It came as a surprise to all that those trajectories got carved through the death of the commodity and its supplantation, however temporary, by the commodity of death in the mode of use value. Like all secondary capitalist systems, the regime exhausted all the procedural technologies at its disposal to recover the commodity and, through the latter, the administration of collective death; in addition, the advanced technologies of the capitalist market enabled the regime to devise ways of practicing a different, symbolic type of massacre. What need is there to kill thousands of inhabitants physically, when one can profit more by transforming them into a human laboratory for testing new methods of collective killing? With time, the regime came to separate the army from the economy and to practice material, physical eliminations against those individuals and institutions involved in armed struggle. It also furnished a new set of technologies aimed at profiting from the socio-economic confrontation, and another geared toward prisons in their role as a state of continual confrontation. More specifically, the First Intifada presented to the regime a good opportunity to maintain the procedures and technologies of collective death available to it, and to construct new ones that facilitate the administration of collective death on a larger scale—in terms of both quantity and modality—as required by new developments in the movement of capital. The new procedures and technologies have played a foundational role in the development of a new infrastructure for the administration of Palestinian collective death, one based essentially on unraveling

the modernist Palestinian nexus of time, space, and the socio-material motion deriving from them, thus resulting in the restriction of the Palestinians' historical agency as a modernist collective. The house arrests, curfews, checkpoints, physical inspections; the open and spectacular assaults against bodies and the breaking of bones; the confiscation and destruction of houses, as well as the arrest of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians; all this is simply a network of practice that works to unravel the nexus between the nodes of the Palestinian social totality in the West Bank and Gaza.

This infrastructure became the ground on which the second stage developed, in Oslo and what followed, a series of agreements that were nothing more than a file in the administration of Palestinian collective death, aiming ultimately to remove this collectivity from the stage of historical action. The new colonial practices of Israel led to the emergence of a collective and keen Palestinian awareness that managed to uncover the crude reality that Oslo was merely a procedure and technology deployed in the practice of collective death against the Palestinians. What many fail to realize in this regard is that the colonial regime adopted the identical logic in its actions against all the different segments of Palestinian society under its control: specifically, I have in mind here the segment that lives in the territories occupied in 1948, although in its case the explicit manifestations of this logic assumed a different shape.

The naturalization of the Palestinians in the lands occupied in 1948 was never a matter of coincidence or a spoil of war; rather, it expresses the resolve of the regime's white colonialism, which cannot cohere without a Palestinian "black" collectivity whose status is reworked as local and authentic. This indicates that citizenship is an apparatus in the colonial regime, and that it isn't a mechanism through which the Palestinian can tear down the status quo in Palestine. Israeli citizenship contains procedures and technologies deployed toward severing the bonds of time, space, and the Palestinian body from the larger Palestinian-Arab Islamic bonds of time, space, and the body. In the case of time, this severance proceeded through the complete economic dependence on the regime and its quotidian realities; in the case of space, it proceeded through the containment of Palestinians in cattle pens called villages; as for the physical aspect of this severance, many different methods were deployed, the most prominent of which is the prevention of movement between Palestinian bodies and between them and other Arab bodies, a process that isolated this group of Palestinians

in the slot prepared for them by the regime. By following the map of Palestinian collective death we can see that this severance of bonds is indeed an assassination carried out against the collective in its capacity as a historical agent. And it may be the case that what we are facing here is a type of variation on the *Nakba*, given that collective death doesn't have a single form, and may be realized through several practical means, procedures, and technologies, although a single principle governs these diverse modalities of collective death. This is the imperative to sever the bonds between the essential elements of a collective—specifically, a collective that exhibits a modernist nationalist character—and these elements may be summarized as the body, space, and time.

The naturalization of this process of severance (i.e. the ideological maneuver that transforms the historical into the natural), in the case of the Palestinians residing in the lands occupied in 1948, succeeded to a great degree. We may even go further to suggest that the collective's sense of its own Palestinianness gained its form through accumulated practices of severance that were later translated as Palestinian in the collective narrative circulated in this segment of Palestinian society, a case in point being the adoption of the regime's glass ceiling, such as the one enforced on the Palestinian architectural scene, as an expression of some Palestinianness. The end of the nineteen-eighties and the beginning of the nineteen-nineties represented an important turning point, as the regime no longer felt threatened in its relations with this particular group of Palestinians, but developed instead a self-aggrandizing sense of power toward them; consequently, it refashioned the rhythm of the process of severance so that the latter would seem less concentrated and intense, and slower than it had been in the past. These changes coincided with two others: the development of new procedures and technologies for the administration of death that rely on the experience gained by the regime in the West Bank and Gaza, and the beginning of a qualitative leap in the technologies of censorship, control, and punishment. In tandem with these changes, or perhaps as part of a wider course concerning the Palestinian state of affairs, the features and details of the Oslo Accords began to crystallize as a procedure in the administration of collective death.

The circumstances of this result concern not only the Palestinians, but more generally the beginning of an age of digital technologies developed in the service of censorship, control, and corporeal punishment of

the soft, spectacular kind, in the Arab-Islamic world and perhaps farther regions as well. This is well-demonstrated in the case of the Palestinian consultants hired by the Americans to assist the Iraqis in setting up election processes under the occupation, not to mention the cement walls and the behavior of the whole groups imprisoned within them, as was visible to anyone flying over Baghdad. One may characterize the final, i.e. current, stage of the Palestinian map of death as replete and saturated with the many categories and spectra of death; indeed, this stage is so sated with death that it either dies the concentrated death of the martyrdom operator or abstains from death through a life that may be described, at the very least, as a game played half-heartedly in the slave-pen.

There is an osmotic juncture between information technology and the infiltration it enables into the most intimate details of the Palestinian's life, and the regime's colonial craving to control the Palestinian and the administration of his collective death. This juncture may be compared to the movement of the registry of Palestinian names from a handwritten state to storage in a digital information bank that contains the most minute details, with their interrelations, concerning the Palestinians, the living among them along with the dead. It may be said, albeit with some reservation, that the process of severance—as a procedure and technology that assassinates the collective by breaking the nexus of its body, space, and time—came to fruition in this period in its conventional modernist and colonialist form. This state of fruition interacted with the new political-technological context whose overt political half was the Oslo Accords; as a result, an altered version of the severance process emerged. The new element in this type of severance was the regime's realization that it could fundamentally transform the nature of the relations between each of its coordinates, turning them into a single unit as opposed to parts of a whole, and in this way facilitating the creation of a numerical inventory optimized for totalitarian control. In their modernist phase, these relations operated on the basis that they were solid and somewhat permanent; hence, collective killing would proceed by targeting a specific area of a material, bodily totality seated in the juncture between the body, space, and time. In the new phase of the mechanism of severance, this bodily totality was no longer perceived as a function of tri-polar relations; instead, it was cast in numerical terms and categorized anew on this basis. So now, when the regime practices its administration of collective death, it targets and

destroys a whole, and not a part of the whole, as was the case in the former phase of the severance process. In this light, one may say that the severance process transformed into the severance of life itself as a comprehensive unit. Life, the life of the Palestinian collective, got shelved as a file in the administration of collective death, after this administration had been part of the procedure for maintaining and consolidating the life of the colonial regime. Here we are facing a process with two intermeshed levels, even though it is possible to distinguish between them analytically.

On the one hand, the colonial regime, as an extension of the capitalist regime, is continually driven to improve the tools, technologies, and procedures by which it administers Palestinian collective death, and progress in the parent system enables it to develop improved solutions to the contradictions that limit its ability to maintain complete control over the administration of Palestinian death. On the other hand, the new phase in the administration returns the Palestinian collective to a national modernism that is deficient in terms of its structural inability to move from one phase to another in response to new technological, economic, and social developments, not to mention developments in the political sphere. In other words, we have here a colonial form of inequality—if we accept this variation of Samir Amin's classic concept—that remains in place and active in spite of changes in the same capitalist, colonial structure. This inequality is nothing new in the general Palestinian context, but in the current period, i.e. from the early nineties up to our present day, it became one of the main pillars in the regime's structure. In an age distinguished most by the practical ability to regulate the speed of transformation and movement from one form of productive technology to another, the loss of this ability leads in effect to the annulment of collective agency, and this may be considered a variation of collective death.

The totalitarian principle that regulates the colonial apparatuses' administration of Palestinian collective death hasn't yet broken with what preceded it; rather, it has developed a specialty in the administrative process based on the historical accumulation of divisions between the different Palestinian groups. As a result, the collective inhabiting the territories occupied in 1948 appears to be different from those inhabiting the West Bank and Gaza, as each of the latter differs from the other. The creation of difference is a regulatory mechanism in the administrative process; in the past it was centralized, and now it is subject to the dominant

totalitarian principle. Once we leave behind the language which the regime offers for thinking about difference, we see that the totalitarian form of administration is being practiced against most of these groups according to a single logic. The main processes currently involved in the administration of Palestinian death, processes that continue at an intense pace, aim for the literal, i.e. material, dismantlement of what remains of the social infrastructures in the territories occupied in 1948, as well as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This can be inferred from the relations existing between Expressway No. 6 and the Separation Wall around the West Bank, as well as that around Gaza, relations that come into view once we regard Mandate Palestine as a single unit. This literal form of dismantlement accomplishes a return to a (hypothetical) pre-social material state, one that doesn't engage the subject as an owner who mediates between the material state of life and its socio-economic manifestations. Hence, it may be said that the regime's practices aim principally to reverse the material architectural structure in place to a non-functional state, so that the subject loses the footing it needs in order to exercise its agency. So if we take the biological body as the basic requirement for the subject to function, then we can say that this body gets eliminated in the process of dismantling the material architectonics of the will to resist. In this framework, we may propose a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the assassinations that targeted many of the Palestinian leaders and cadres during the al-Aqsa Intifada, and also link them to the processes of dismantlement that targeted the material, architectonic expansion of the different levels of the Palestinian collective.

The material architectonic series, as understood by the regime, is as follows: the individual biological body; buildings; the street; the neighborhood; the camp / village / city, including its environs; residential complexes and their infrastructures, including roads, agricultural lands, and factories; urban-administrative and other centers, along with the infrastructures grounding and linking them; borders and crossings. For the past two decades, the regime has been gnawing continuously at this series by destroying its individual elements, severing the bonds between them, and reestablishing these bonds in the framework of a non-functional material architectonics. From the regime's perspective, all these processes lead to an affective structure wherein the Palestinian collective becomes superfluous, a legacy from the past that no one needs anymore; more specifically, it is a structure that turns Palestinians into

individuals who no longer need their collective in order to survive. This schema authored by the administration of Palestinian death applies to the three parts of the Palestinian collective that are directly subject to the colonial regime. For example, in the areas occupied in 1948, the dwelling used to be the legitimate refuge accepted by the regime as an antithesis to the general material architectonic of the collective, and following this the family was accepted as the arena of effective agency. Now, however, the dwelling is being dismantled and reduced to a cattle-pen of production and consumption with a primitive character, engaged only in basic bodily functions such as eating and copulation, and working on the margins of the regime's market—the purpose of this dismantlement being the destruction of the biological familial body as a frame of reference for the world. In the case of the Gaza Strip, the war of 2009 represents an exemplary crowning effort on the part of the totalitarian mechanism to reduce the material architectonic to a non-functional state, as it facilitated a great extent and variety of methodical destruction in a time period that is rather short from the perspective of the main process at work in the administration of collective Palestinian death.

This totalitarianism, as the main technology involved in the administration of collective death, has been one of the essential features in the operation of the Zionist colonial regime since it first took shape as a historical project, occupying different positions within the regime according to the particular phase of its development. In the earlier stages of the colonial project in Palestine, these features gave rise to un-resolvable contradictions, as the regime didn't have at its disposal any clean technological mechanisms that would enable it to practice the type of totalitarian hegemony that it strives for. This situation forced the regime to search for alternative solutions such as building its own totalitarian ideological structure, reducing Palestinian society to its primary biological elements, completely neutralizing the influence of time's progression on the Palestinians, and so forth. Now that the mechanisms of digital technology have enabled the regime to put its totalitarianism into practice, we can see it clearly managed to resolve the remaining contradictions by legislating them into purely technological solutions. The dependence of the totalitarian mechanism on solutions provided by digital technology intensified its totalitarianism, as digital technology itself has a totalitarian operative logic. This may be seen from the fact that the regime's adoption of digital technology led it to a gradual process of digital self-transformation,

so that totalitarianism eventually became a function of the regime's technological structure itself.

So far, the totalitarian technology of death, by reducing the material architectonic series to a non-functional state, has led to two intertwined phases of collective Palestinian work. These two phases derive directly from the same structural shift made by the regime toward totalitarianism and the regression to the basic material architectonic; the activation of totalitarianism reduced the collective to its basic material architectonic, and while the collective first sought around for an exit and salvation *from* this space, it now seeks these, and even its liberation, *within* it. If collective consciousness was the primary arena of struggle during the earlier period, we may argue that now the space of the material architectonic has become the new primary arena, and that the Palestinians had no choice but to join it. The act of joining this arena necessitates adopting its operative logic, given that the location of any struggle determines the shape of the agents struggling in it. In its non-functional state, the material architectonic requires an intensive circular motion within an immediate sensory materialism that lacks an architectural structure, i.e. that lacks the ability to reach a higher vantage point from which it could survey the general order. This circular motion is totalitarian, meaning that immersion in it precludes the emergence of an event or an action with a different operative logic. In terms of its function, this materialism operates on a logic of depletion, i.e. the materialism of the material necessitates its transformation, through usage, into another state that appears in the capitalist shape of consumption, although the latter is not the only possible permutation and certainly not the best.

The Palestinian collective has created its material event, in a synchronous fashion, within the arena of struggle, either through the complete immersion in consumption or through the complete negation of the material architectonic at the functional level. A type of radical consumption now characterizes the systematic Palestinian condition, so much so that every Palestinian Authority, in order to maintain its sovereign existence, has no choice but to adopt this radical consumption as its operative logic. This logic situates the Palestinian authority as a secondary link in the regime, working as a service intermediary between the regime and a particular group of Palestinians. What is striking is that this type of work is no longer tied to a particular material architectonic; having been thoroughly dominated by the regime, modernist space has become superfluous to

the totalitarian functioning of digital technology. The Palestinian Authority renders material services that are pre-architectural in nature, in the sense that the limit of their functions is their movement along a straight channel between the two poles of the struggle, the regime and the Palestinian collective. Hence, the ones supposed to represent the Palestinian collective became procedural employees within the regime, and this in turn transformed those represented and served into one of the regime's own population groups. Through this scenario the regime successfully annulled the Palestinian collective that had formed during the previous national period, and incorporated it as a procedural functionality within the current phase of the administration of Palestinian collective death. And there is a great deal of irony and mockery of fate here, given that the Palestinians' attempt to recover control over the administration of their own collective death ultimately led them, as both professionals and laborers, along the trajectories of collective death drawn for them by the regime.

The total negation of the material architectonic at the functional level is the second phase of Palestinian participation in the totalitarian arena of struggle. Before going into the details of this phase, it is worth noting that it coincides with radical consumption: the former and latter are two aspects of the same structure, and upon the realization of each the door is opened for the other to be realized as well. Total negation characterizes the unorganized state of Palestinian resistance, which adheres to the materiality of the collective without the architectonic intermediary proper to it. Total negation, where the regime strives to reduce its target to a primary materiality, involves a complete, a priori annulment of the target's architectonic frame, the purpose being to reshape the arena of struggle itself. It wasn't by coincidence that this phase of Palestinian participation came to be focused in the Palestinians' individual and collective body, given that each of these bodies lies at the heart of the colonial struggle and represents the final refuge for the Palestinian at this stage. And the complete, a priori annulment of the material architectonic proceeds, on the part of the Palestinians, through their complete acceptance of the colonial order, i.e. through the acceptance of the importance and centrality of the object of the struggle, and the subsequent ejection of this object, essentially by its destruction, from the arena of the struggle. The working assumption here is that the regime's ability to practice totalitarianism, by reducing the material architectonics of things to a non-functional state, will be lost, since now this reduction occurs at the

hands of the Palestinians. In the colonial context of Palestine, this reversion to non-functional materialism was attended by the rise of an absolute structure of consciousness that operated as a procedure of resistance aiming to regain control over the administration of Palestinian collective death; this new structure of consciousness eclipsed the historical, as the latter no longer had any utilitarian dimension.

The attempt we made above to chart the map of the Palestinian platform of death, from the *Nakba* to our present day, identifies three phases, both successive and synchronous: the phase of shock and seeking; the phase of nationalism; and the phase of the totalitarian principle. These three phases point to a fundamental structure that was authorized with the *Nakba* of 1948, a structure that still regulates the fundamental relations of the Zionist colonial regime in Mandate Palestine. We have attempted to illuminate the features of each phase in terms of its structural aspects as well as its concrete historical context, and we found that some of these features extend from the *Nakba*, while others derive from new historical and technological developments. The dialectical relation that emerged between the regime's administration of Palestinian collective death and the transformations undergone in the shape of this administration, on the one hand, and the configurations of the Palestinian collective that issued from the regime, on the other, came to determine the shape of the Palestinian collective's life since the *Nakba*. Each phase in the life of the Palestinian collective gave rise to a particular personality of death as a structural solution to its dominant contradictions, such that this personality became a distinguishing mark in the life of whoever practiced it. And so we can see that the phase of shock and seeking gave birth to the personality of the victim, while the nationalist phase produced the personality of the martyr, and the martyrdom operator was yielded by the totalitarian phase. These personalities and subjectivities are signposts on the platform of Palestinian collective death, and we see them at every Palestinian moment and in the ongoing sequence of Palestinian events. In their status as structural configurations that develop dialectically from the different forms of the regime's administration of Palestinian death, these personalities are also Palestinian collective configurations that embark on the potential trajectories of return and birth. The series represented by victim, martyr, and martyrdom operator is a collection of phases in the productive labor of death, a labor that seeks to regain ownership of the

administration of Palestinian collective death as a step on the path of the return to Palestine. Against the background of the processes discussed above, we will now demonstrate in detail how these phases and subjectivities operate as forms of productive labor, hoping thereby to expand our understanding of how Palestinian life is built through its death.

3.

In every Palestinian there are three defining and intertwined forms or phases of death, namely, the victim, the martyr, and the martyrdom operator. Each of these forms may be described as an active socio-historical form of presence with its own particular mode of action. And the action practiced by these forms derives from their status as materially and semantically productive mechanisms of labor, mechanisms that regulate the relations of the Palestinian collective with itself, with its immediate environment in all its different facets, and with the world in general. The accumulated material and semantic production of these three forms comprised a type of colonial production specific to the Palestinian collective; this type of production works through the three forms as simultaneously horizontal and vertical layers that together shape the operative modes of each particular segment of the Palestinian collective, as well as the collective in its entirety. Hence, it may be said that there is a general Palestinian language with local dialects that differ according to the historical context specific to each. At first, we will attempt to specify each of these three forms separately, so that we may relate them to each other as a particular type of production with a specific language. The challenge that follows these steps lies in the question: is there, in these forms of death, an aesthetic sensibility that defines the world from a Palestinian perspective?

At first sight, it is clear that the victim is that form in which the architectonic is successfully reduced to a non-functional state, the victim being caught in a circular motion within the space of an immediate, utilitarian non-functionality. For the victim lives the process of dismantlement as a labor mechanism essential to its self-production; instead of trying to replace or alter the state that resulted from the destruction of what was, the victim announces the event of its own destruction as its defining condition. Hence, the most essential aspect of the victim is the act of announcing its victimhood, and announcing it to the entire world. The admission and announcement of this victimhood lead to the initiation of an ethical-material order comprised of aid, donations,

grants, temporary legal status, and residence in interstitial spaces, all of which function as materially and semantically productive labor mechanisms through which the victim comes to understand itself, its environment, and the world as a whole. The process whereby the structure of the Palestinian victim was formed culminated in the sequence of events that unfolded in the *Nakba* of 1948; in this context, I would like to pause and examine what resulted from these events in order to shed light on the contours of the Palestinian victim, along with the mechanisms of productive labor attending them.

Among other things, the 1948 *Nakba* led to disparities, in both method and scope, in the process whereby the material architectonic was reduced to a non-functional state among different groups and aggregates of Palestinian society. So far, we have addressed the victim as a general form of presence; now we will specify the different approaches, and the disparities in scope and method, involved in the reduction process. In one paradigm of victimhood, we can observe the complete dismantlement of the Palestinian material architectonic series, from the biological body to the borders and crossings at which the collective meets the outside world. In the other paradigm, however, the biological body is preserved, while all or some of the other links in the series are destroyed; this allows the biological body to function alongside whatever functionality remains from the other links. These two paradigms can be distinguished according to whether or not the Palestinian's biological body is dismantled in them, and in this regard they work as a continuum, along which concrete historical conditions may be situated with a view to categorizing them and determining the concrete shape in which the victim manifests itself. The choice to emphasize, as a categorical schema, the dismantlement of the biological body—over its preservation on the level of function—reflects the depth and totality of the catastrophic event that befell the Palestinian collective, where the form of death came to define the form of life. It is not a coincidence that the Palestinians, since then, have been constituted as a socio-economic collective by the continual reproduction of the Palestinian biological body; through this reproductive process new types of collective Palestinian bodies are being constructed.

On first examination, it appears that reducing the material architectonic of the biological body leads inevitably to the demolition of the architectonic series as a whole. The dismantlement of the individual biological

body forces its owner to exit absolutely from the stage of socio-historical events, but this absolute exit is individual, i.e. it concerns the owner of the biological body and not those untouched by the process of dismantlement. However, this absolute exit of agency contributes to the accumulation of agency by the colonial regime itself, or, at the very least, the regime operates on the basis of this equation. The form that arises from this paradigm of Palestinian victimhood operates through its own absolute exit, the latter determining the structure of absence par excellence. The analytical treatment of absence is problematic due to the latter's unrepresentable nature; any attempt to conjure it through language is fundamentally at odds with its presumed operative logic. Therefore absence, as one form of the victim, is made possible by other forms of presence that would have emerged were it not for the absolute exit; in other words, death may be articulated as a constructed part of human life. However, the structure of the *Nakba* would not allow this mechanism of potential scenarios, wherein memory is constructed on the basis of what might have occurred had it not become absent. This is in view of the fact that the demise of the biological body was attended by—or, more precisely, coincided with—the reduction of the rest of the links in the material architectonic series to a non-functional state, one in which the infrastructure of memory, and consequently memory as such, is bound to perish. The figure of the absence of individual Palestinians, as concrete victims, within the structure of the *Nakba* is distinguished by its status as an inextricable absence, the latter being due to the destruction of all the collective material mechanisms available for sensory, symbolic, and semiotic documentation.

The continuing and intensified dismantlement of Palestinian individuals' biological bodies, beginning with the *Nakba*, makes it imperative for us to think about the Palestinian collective biological body and those mechanisms of the colonial regime that seek its absolute exit from the stage of history. We may describe the absolute collective exit as a paradigmatic mechanism for preventing the Palestinian return on two intertwined levels: the actual collective return of Mandate Palestine and the return as a potent, refashioned form of the Palestinian collective. Following this interpretation, we may adopt an analytical approach that views the collective figure of the victim, in its biologically dismantled state, as the dismantlement of all the links in the material architectonic series, and their reduction to a non-functional state. What is striking in this regard

is that the Palestinian collective figure of absence only emerged from its state of absence with the rise of a new form of the Palestinian collective in the mid-sixties. In the two decades following the *Nakba*, we did not witness any schism or differentiation between the absence of the individual figure of the victim's absence and the absence of the collective figure of this absence; one may say that the former, to a great extent, required the latter. The refashioning of the Palestinian collective as a once-again potent power furnished the infrastructure for collective memory, which was finally able to extricate the figure of its collective absence in a definite manner. And so the Palestinian collective figure of absence, as opposed to the individual figure, began to have a potent presence, principally within the record of the utopian return, which is expressed in all spheres of life, the daily and the exceptional alike. The collective figure of absence operates through the different configurations of Palestinian collectivity, a system of relations that conjures the presence of what might have been present, if not for the dismantlement of its biological body and its subsequent absolute exit from the stage of life. And it is possible to follow the presence of the figure of absence by moving from individual dreams to political programs and, finally, literature and art. We can find, in all these different platforms of the record of the utopian return, trajectories of birth and realization that are constructed from what might have been, but which, because of the absence, became itself absent and impossible. In this sense, the first paradigm of the Palestinian victim, whose biological body is being dismantled, approaches the second paradigm; this becomes clear once we move to the accumulation and intensification of the biological, corporeal killing of Palestinian individuals.

While the biological body survives in a non-functional, material, architectonic environment, the body returns, through consciousness, to the primary functions that link it to the world outside it. Hence, the body's functionality gets focused in the entirety of its sensory-cognitive system, as both matter and consciousness. Sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste become the key elements on all levels of this body's existence. And so the second paradigm of the Palestinian victim is represented by the survival of the biological body—i.e. by its not being reduced to a biologically non-functional state—while the other links in the material architectonic series get reduced to varying degrees of non-functionality. The reversion of the Palestinian victim to its own sensory-cognitive system, which is a mechanism that registers the victim in life,

helped to affirm the victim's victimhood, preventing its transition from the state of functional collective death to the process of re-constructing the collective. The essential figure of this type of victim operates through the sensory-cognitive system, in particular the material, corporeal presence that gets announced through the audio-visual scene. This system manifests itself socially in the form of the Palestinian standing before recording mechanisms she does not possess, announcing that she is a victim, i.e. that she will not emerge from the condition she is in except by admitting her victimhood; the moment of affirming this admission has extended to this very day. This means, among other things, that the annunciatory figure implicitly accepts the adherence to the body as a frame of reference for the world, the body here being not an agent, but rather a body reduced to its sensory-cognitive system. What is striking in the Palestinian context is the presence of local and international institutions that maintain this type of victim by pigeonholing the Palestinian's existence in a list of essential requisites such as food, water, temporary housing, and vocational education.

Most Palestinians, across their different locations, have lived the victim's condition in the two decades that followed the *Nakba*. Two paths have played a fundamental role in shaping the Palestinians since then: seeking to gain recognition for the crime committed against them and seeking to be recognized as victims. And the colonial regime has concealed the apparatus most essential to its own formation: this is its structural need for victims who would enable it to construct itself as a regime and reproduce itself as such along the axis of time. Hence, the maintenance of the victim and its continual reproduction became one of the main functional nodes in the colonial system; to this end, new victims were provided and current victims were structurally secured in their relational position. Since the *Nakba*, the experiences of the refugees, the diaspora, and those living in the areas occupied in 1948 have epitomized this type of relation between the victim and the aggressor. On the one hand, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established in an international framework to administer the affairs of the refugees and to maintain their victim status; on the other hand, the colonial regime established military rule to administer the affairs of those who remained under its sovereignty, effectively leading to a continual state of war where the victim's biological body is preserved while her or his victimhood is maintained as the basis for reproducing the aggressor and its regime.

With the Palestinian collective undergoing this type of death, a many-branched, material-bureaucratic apparatus was established that works to maintain this death as a part of the administrations of Palestinian collective death. What is striking in this context is that the collective forms of Palestinian labor that developed subsequently didn't work to negate this apparatus in itself, but attempted rather to appropriate it and manage it in a manner congruent to the inherent awareness of their collective status as the victim with sovereignty over the Palestinian state of affairs. Thus, the annunciatory figure developed into an apparatus that reproduces the collective self as a sovereign victim, one whose sovereignty is focused not in the creation of a mechanism that negates the relation between victim and aggressor, but rather in the elevation of the victim to a victim who possesses the material-bureaucratic apparatus maintaining its victimhood.

The Palestinians' endeavor wasn't limited to the possession of the many-branched, material-bureaucratic system that governs the maintenance of the victim and its continuity, but went further to the establishment of a collective understanding of the self as victim. The economic, social, and cultural presence of this form of the victim wasn't a given; while they lacked a prior socio-material infrastructure, the Palestinians had no schematic conception of the victim. The annunciatory figure effectively became the literal and metaphorical rule that necessitated the reproduction of mechanisms that restage the Palestinian as a sovereign victim, and due to the barrenness on the socio-material level, these mechanisms got focused in cultural fields such as literature, poetry, music, and art, and, to an extent, in journalism as well. In the two decades after the *Nakba*, Palestinian artists and intellectuals have worked diligently to develop a semantic schema for the sovereign victim's mode of operation in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres. How does the victim smile? How does it experience sadness? Does it walk with the head down, or does it hold its head up high to proclaim itself? Is the head held high, or are the shoulders slumping? Can the refugee transform into a laborer? Where is the peasant? These and other questions were posed concerning the mode in which the victim's annunciatory sovereignty gets practiced. The primary problematic facing the annunciatory figure and its results lay in the relationality between its implicit recognition of the regime, on the one hand, and, on the other, the dependence of its annunciatory modality on the absent figure of absence, the latter being the condition of the former's presence.

In spite of the changes undergone in the form of the Palestinian collective's death, the relational system that was established between the colonial regime, the figure of absence, and the figure of annunciation still regulates a core component of Palestinian collective labor, in all the latter's different variations. The colonial regime, as such, is based on the consolidation of the Palestinian figure of absence, but since the latter is inarticulable, it does not recognize the regime when it recognizes its own absence. The regime requires recognition from its victims, which makes the emergence of the annunciatory figure necessary for its existence. As we clarified above, absence and annunciation are two figures that, while having different operative logics, nevertheless act on the same axis of continuity belonging to the material architectonic series in its non-functional state. The recognition on the part of the figure of annunciation eventually produced a collective voluntary action systematically oriented toward the recovery of the administration of Palestinian collective death. From here the return, and the trajectories of return that issued from the figure of annunciation, acquired a systematic character: the return became something to be performed, i.e. its logic was no longer guided by an event, but became a purely semiotic and symbolic logic, one that accords with the return's development as a structure of recognition that recognizes the criminal regime. It would seem—and this is a painfully reactionary result—that the martyr who uses annunciation has, upon returning, announced the death of the actual return; this made inevitable the rise of the figure of absence that lurks in the inarticulable background and conceals in its absence the colonial regime's denial. The rise of the figure of absence has been marked by the latter's transformation from a compulsory absolute exit to a voluntary absolute exit, and the latter has been borne by the martyr on the paths of the actual return, considered as an event. Now let us examine, firstly, the martyr.

The sovereign victim, in its capacity as an annunciatory figure, has many means through which it could form a Palestinian collective distinguished by its own productive mechanisms of labor. The socio-historical context in which the Palestinian sovereign victim was planted—the rise of the solitary nation-state in the Arab-Islamic world post-World War II—came to determine the forms of collective labor at the Palestinian collective's disposal. This juncture between the Palestinian sovereign victim and the modernist apparatuses for organizing national collectives produced Palestinian organizations that seek

to administer Palestinian collective death as a means toward the actual return of Mandate Palestine and the reconstruction of the original collective in it. These modernist apparatuses for articulating the collective, and constructing it at the same time, operate according to a monopolistic logic of representation. In the first place, they are based on a relation of ownership in which the collective is monopolized; in the second place, ownership, in its regular function, encompasses matter, event, and representation as well.

In the Palestinian context, the PLO was founded by the Arab states, and it was only after several years that the Palestinians themselves controlled it. And the PLO's slogan—"the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people"—was clear evidence of the monopolistic aspect and the struggle over the ownership of the Palestinian collective. What is significant in this regard is that the PLO never managed to impose the total, traditional type of ownership encompassing matter, event, and representation; this type of ownership presupposes the existence of some land that is owned by society and, in turn, marked for ownership by society's owners: the apparatuses that regularly take the form of the state. Nevertheless, the PLO, in all the different factions comprising it, laid the foundations for a Palestinian material-bureaucratic apparatus that works on administering Palestinian collective death. This apparatus works essentially in two parts: the material and symbolic reproduction of Palestinian society in the form of a national collective, and the development of the trajectories of return through armed struggle. There is no doubt that one of the most important axes along which Palestinian existence, in all its different components, was given shape, is the axis of the Palestinian's biological, social, and cultural reproduction; after the *Nakba*, there was nothing left for the Palestinian but her or his bodily self, in which she or he resides as in a house or homeland. It is in this context that Palestinian organizations undertook to maintain this reproductive process and planted roots for a particular type of socio-cultural self that coincides with biological reproduction. The pseudo-state which the PLO landed in Lebanon is probably good evidence of the centralization of the most important Palestinian production process, the reproduction of the self. This preoccupation with the reproduction and maintenance of life, on the part of the PLO and its different factions, was a crucial part of the administration of Palestinian collective death, which could no longer be satisfied with annunciation as its main figure of operation—notwithstanding the status of the

latter as its first launching point. The reproduction of the Palestinian collective was bound to its role as one of the trajectories of the actual act of return, this act being an antithesis to the different forms of Palestinian collective death.

Armed struggle springs from the representational structure of the modernist bureaucratic apparatuses which the Palestinians formed in order to articulate their national collective. This can be explained by the fact that the continual reproduction of the Palestinian collective requires the actual return of the collective, but the latter, as such, only exists through its representation, and it is the PLO that monopolizes the means for reproducing the Palestinian state of affairs, including liberation violence, i.e. the different forms of armed struggle and organized *Fida'i* action. From this juncture, at which the actual return of every single Palestinian was rendered impossible, sprang the order of the *Fida'i* and her or his potential form of death: the martyr.

To choose to die as a martyr is to wrest control from the regime over the administration of Palestinian collective death, even if only in a symbolic and partial sense. The martyr wrests control over his own death to represent the possibility of a collective act of wresting without the latter necessarily occurring as a consequence. The symbolic and partial status of this act of wresting goes back to the material-bureaucratic nature of the apparatus of Palestinian *Fida'i* action, which, as we mentioned, arose out of the conjuncture between the sovereign victim and its annunciatory figure, on the one hand, and the modern nation-state systems, on the other. But the main problematic concerning the martyr is not limited to its representational, symbolic function and the partial status of the collective Palestinian return that occurs through it; to the contrary, these aspects may act as the cornerstones for the path of the actual return. The martyr is a form of death that determines a form of life for the Palestinian, i.e. the life of the return, but it was imperative for the material-bureaucratic apparatuses that administer Palestinian collective death to translate the trajectory of return into their own language. The use value produced by the martyr, specifically, the trajectory of actual return which negates the colonial regime, is structurally unusable by these apparatuses that enabled the martyr's rise as a *Fida'i* who bears witness to himself. For these apparatuses speak according to the logic of exchange value in its commodity stage; they were originally founded to regulate the movement of goods, individuals, and ideas in the Fordist capitalist stage. Moreover, they were fused with the patriarchal structure

of Palestinian culture, which gave them a particular stamp. The political economy of martyrdom operates according to the logic of private ownership, in which the martyr, as a laborer, produces the trajectory of actual return, which then gets translated to exchange values in the shape of symbolic capital, namely the representation of the Palestinian people.

Thus the Palestinian circle of production gets completed in this period of our history: the collective gets reproduced in a biological, corporeal manner and is subsequently represented through the institutions governing this process of reproduction, which join the material-bureaucratic apparatuses administering Palestinian collective death to the Palestinian individuals who shoulder and execute the *Fida'i* labor that includes martyrdom. And in the case when this act gets realized and translated to exchange values in the shape of symbolic capital intended for representation, the value of the institution investing in armed struggle rises, and the martyr disappears. The figure of the martyr's absence is the essential contradiction that cannot be resolved by the Palestinian material-bureaucratic apparatuses, as it continues to circle around the same process of translation, unsettling it and exposing the gaps in its manifestations where the form of Palestinian life and death are concerned.

The martyr doesn't return, but becomes completely absent as is the case with the first paradigm of the victim, the figure of absence. The martyr doesn't operate on the basis of the absolute, compulsory exit; rather, she or he chooses to be the price for establishing the path of return that denies the colonial regime. The collective will to choose, which stands at the core of the order of the martyr, in itself symbolically denies the authority of the colonial regime over the administration of Palestinian collective death; thus the form of the martyr's death determines, through representation, the form of a collective life, in this case a national collective life. However, this process of representation doesn't resolve all the contradictions borne by the martyr: specifically, absence and the complete, actual return inherent in it.

Since the *Fida'i* bore her or his military ammunition and personal weaponry in the middle of the nineteen-sixties, they have been an arena in which all Palestinian social contradictions meet and get transformed into the state of the Palestinian glorious and sublime. And for three decades, until the end of the First Intifada, the martyr didn't inquire about her or his absence; rather, the material-bureaucratic institutions absented this absence through a sharp separation between

the actual martyr—as an event of return—and her or his glorious, sublime presence, circulated within the limits of the Palestinian cycle of production. The material-bureaucratic Palestinian cycle of production triggered its semantic motion via the relationality that exists between the act of martyrdom, as a form of actual return, the representation of martyrdom as the production cycle's own symbolic capital, and the establishment of a dividing line between the two, through the transformation of the martyr into a glorious and sublime apparatus.

This ideal image of the figure of the martyr opened the door for many variations on the figure; the martyr became a circulated form of death that could be attributed to people who haven't worked as a *Fida'i*. In the beginning, this figure was attributed to anyone killed in a confrontation with the colonial regime, e.g. in demonstrations, prisons, etc. Subsequently, the figure was circulated as forms of death that didn't transpire in a confrontation with the regime, such as death during work or in traffic accidents. This mass circulation of the martyr's value is due, on the one hand, to the latter's role in constituting symbolic capital, and, on the other hand, to what may be seen as the development of a false direction in *Fida'i* labor, especially as compared to other forms of collective Palestinian labor.

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the martyr's plight is the wide gap that formed between the martyr as an actual event of return and the bureaucratic processes of representation and circulation that took her or him as their object. This gap came into sharp focus after the colonial regime's invasion of Lebanon, which resulted in the collective exit of the Palestinian material-bureaucratic apparatuses from Lebanon, and the Sabra and Shatila massacres that followed. The frequency and manner in which martyrdom was repeated—literally thousands getting martyred with the unbearable ease of programmatic killing—exposed the material-bureaucratic apparatuses to the light of day, particularly as concerns the contradiction posed by absence, which these representational apparatuses cannot extricate and resolve. In this context, the experience of the First Intifada played a contrasting role in the beginning, as it witnessed the process of killing the commodity and its circulation by returning to the Palestinian collective and constituting it anew, with a view to furnishing the trajectories of an actual collective return. The moment at which the juncture with the material-bureaucratic apparatuses of the PLO occurred gave rise to the process whereby nascent Palestinian collective labor got translated into circulatable exchange values: perhaps the most

prominent evidence of this is the stormy debate that took place between the different leaderships of the Intifada, over whether the goal of the Intifada should be liberation or statehood. For several reasons the debate was resolved in favor of statehood, and Palestinian independence was announced in Algeria in 1988. With this, the actual return got supplanted by the symbolic, partial return, and the order of the martyr, as the bridge of return over the abyss of absence began to collapse. The figure of absence returned at the moment when martyrdom collapsed as a possibility of actual return, and this figure manifested at many social, political, and cultural junctures until it crystallized as the figure of the martyrdom operation, the latter being a labor mechanism that produces the trajectories of actual return. These transformations would not have occurred without the rise of new material-bureaucratic apparatuses in place of those developed by the PLO during the prior phase of Palestinian collective labor.

The dialectic that arose out of the structure of the *Nakba*, in which the colonial regime strives for the compulsory, absolute exit of the Palestinian collective as a means of establishing its own total and final presence, reached one of its climaxes in the beginning of the nineteen-nineties. After the First Intifada, and in contradiction of its spirit, we witness the annulment of Palestinian collective action, the action that was represented by the material-bureaucratic apparatuses of the PLO. This process, to a great degree, extended from the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the early stages of the project of fragmenting the regional Arab nation-state, a project demonstrated by the US-led alliance's invasion of Iraq. In a striking synchrony, the internal Palestinian, regional Arab, and international contexts all interacted to consolidate the Oslo Accords as a set of procedures and technologies developed to administer Palestinian collective death, and relying for this purpose on the demolition of the Palestinian apparatuses of national representation, the latter being limited to the partial administration of Palestinian collective death by the Palestinian national collective. This demolition process relied essentially on the acceptance of the regime as a legitimate agent in the administration of Palestinian collective death, and the gradual diminishment, as a result, of the legitimacy of the new bureaucratic apparatuses represented by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and of their ability to even participate with the regime in the administration of Palestinian collective death.

This turn of events made the time ripe for the regime to attempt to rid itself, once and for all, of the Palestinian

collective, by reducing it to residential aggregates placed under its sovereignty and managed by new employees working for the regime as per the Oslo Accords. Among the most important, initial manifestations of this new context is the legitimization of the re-severance of the body, both imaginary and actual, of the Palestinian collective, its parceling into new parts within what has remained in a dismembered state since the *Nakba*.

The second manifestation is the fact that this re-severance made it possible to target the individual Palestinian body, on the immediate biological level, as a means of targeting the collective Palestinian body. Initially, this proceeded through the elimination of these bodies via the technique of assassination, which became the main weapon in the regime's arsenal. Secondly, these bodies were targeted through the re-construction of the daily living space they occupy, a space constituted through such activities as reproduction, drinking, eating, and motion through time and space. The operative logic of this re-construction was the reduction of the Palestinian collective to small groups preoccupied with their immediate material environments, i.e. their biological bodies. After all these organized processes—the formation of the PNA as the end to the possibility of representing the entire Palestinian collective, assassinations, the reorganization of daily living space according to a logic of reduction—a binary structure was produced for the administration of Palestinian collective death. On one hand, there is an actual figure of absence for the Palestinian collective, in its national and other forms; on the other hand, there is a celebratory, hollow figure of presence that celebrates absence in the guise of presence. These processes forced the Palestinian collective on all levels to go back to the individual body, and subsequently the collective body, as a final refuge from its confrontation with its old, yet constantly renewed, fundamental aporia: an absence that never ceases to be present in many forms since the collective's initial catastrophe, the *Nakba*.

Martyrdom operation explicates the figure of absence that lurks at the foundation of the collective Palestinian experience, and in doing so it recovers for the Palestinian collective the crucial element in its existence, or non-existence, or to be more precise, the element crucial to the administration of the collective according to the logic of its actual return. The figure of martyrdom operation comes out of the figure of the martyr, i.e. the former contains the latter, attempting thus to resolve its fundamental aporia as a self-representation that denies

its founding absence. The martyr who carried his or her military ammunition and personal weaponry, intending to establish the trajectories of actual return through *Fida'i* labor, situated his body as the price paid in advance for the realization of this goal. In this manner the martyr separated his or her body from the fighting tools they bore, shaping this body into a value that bears within it an active will striving to establish the path of return, and aspiring to return and lead those whom it represents on the path of return. For the most part, the *Fida'i* didn't return, although the wait for him or her was charged with the hope of this return, and of the collective return as well. The absence of the *Fida'i* in the very act of his or her martyrdom precipitated a crisis in the order of representation and circulation, which in turn necessitated the rise of the absent in the guise of the glorious and noble martyr.

A solution to the crisis presented itself in the form of the martyrdom operator, who was composed a priori from the stuff and figure of absence itself, and chose his or her own biological body as fighting tool in place of ammunitions and weapons, this body essentially expending itself as a means of combat. The martyrdom operator joined together material, tool, and mechanism, thus rendering the absolute exit and absence inevitable on the road to actual return. The resolution, in this manner, of the martyr's problematic via the figure of the martyrdom operator, necessarily altered the systematic junctures representing its target. Thus, the martyrdom operator didn't target the military and economic representatives of the colonial regime; instead, she or he sought to return the arena of struggle to the biological colonial bodies, the latter being the concrete bearers of the regime. The martyrdom operator exits, literally and figuratively, as the body of his or her collective—a body always eligible for the compulsory, absolute exit—to enter the colonial body, removing both his or her own body and the colonial biological body from the stage of historical action, absolutely and voluntarily in the former case, and forcibly in the latter.

The act of recovering agency for the figure of absence, by voluntarily applying this absence to the self and the regime, inheres the grammar of the *Nakba's* fundamental structure and the exercise of volition within this grammar for the purpose of negating it. This process of negation proceeds through the practice of the same grammar and the concomitant exhaustion of its logic, namely the administration of the antithetical collective's death. The martyrdom operator does not only seek to control the administration of Palestinian

collective death; what distinguishes him or her is that she or he seeks, in addition, and as a means toward the former goal, to control the circumstances of the colonial collective's death, and the system regulating these circumstances. Thus, by exhausting the logic of the colonial regime in Palestine, the martyrdom operator actually bears the possibility of negating the regime and of transitioning to another phase of the Palestinian collective's death and life. It is safe to say that the primary concern for most of those involved in the colonial project in Palestine is the fact that the colonial regime's demise has become, due to the structure of the *Nakba* itself, a real historical possibility.

The absolute, voluntary exit from the structure of the colonial regime, a step that attempts to transcend the regime by resolving its fundamental contradictions, manifested in the figure of the martyrdom operator a socio-historical constituency with distinct features that succeeded at codifying the structural interactions into apparatuses of resistance with executive dimensions. From the beginning, this constituency took the form of new Palestinian Islamic organizations that became the actual social incubator, after inheriting the organizational-political legacy of the PLO and its factions. The Islamic organizations furnished the foundations for the third phase of organized Palestinian collective action to develop since the *Nakba*, and buttressed it with the construct of the sacred, adopting the latter as a general perspective on the world and translating it into a particular organizational procedure that serves as a working principle in the general, quotidian, historical sphere. This enabled the development of a practical ability to engage the absolute, specifically through the voluntary exit from the regime's structure, i.e. the absolute occupies the organizational structure of the sacred as a crucial complex within its function as a socio-historical apparatus. Importantly, these transformations during the third organizational phase of Palestinian collective action cannot be isolated from the processes that reduced the Palestinian collective to its body. In addition to understanding these transformations through a logic of continuity, we need to see them as a moment of structural transformation in the colonial regime and the apparatuses by which it administers Palestinian collective death, for this moment bears within it the decline of Palestinian national action and the rise of Islamic action. The depth of these transformations, virtually a critical climax in the historical development of the regime, returned the collective to the sacred as a leaning

post that helps it cope with its continual fracture as a collective. By thus understanding the different mechanisms and processes that determine the structure of the martyrdom operator's figure, we may claim that the absolute exit involves a historical variation in the figure of the martyrdom operator. However, as an approach to collective Palestinian resistance action, the absolute exit may assume other figures in the future, figures that both contain the martyrdom operator within them and surpass it in the direction of emancipation, doing so by resolving the fundamental contradictions of the colonial regime in Palestine.

The victim, the martyr, and the martyrdom operator, as figures of Palestinian collective work, still represent this work in all its various manifestations across the many locations of the different Palestinian groups. The nature of the relationship between these three poles has changed, so that, for example, the figure of the victim appears at times and dominates with its presence the other figures of collective work. However, as we have seen, the rise of a certain figure also entails its inclusion of the other two figures in a particular form, one that fashions the rising figure and what may emerge subsequently from it.

If we can agree that the victim operates by accepting the non-functional reality to which it has been reduced, that it demands to be recognized as a victim, and further to have this recognition announced, and that it does all this in order to obtain demands by means of which it can maintain itself as a victim, then at first sight it would seem that the victim accepts the regime's ownership of the administration of Palestinian collective death. And yet the victim that demands to have its victimhood announced has transformed, due to the accumulation of victims and the evolution of demands, into a sovereign victim. And the sovereign victim is the one that gains possession of itself after it dies, i.e. it does not enter the arena in which the administration of death is contested, but rather lingers in the moment of death and invests in it, without having a real horizon of possibility in terms of confronting the regime.

At the moment when the collective organizes itself into material-bureaucratic apparatuses such as organizations, parties, and institutions, the sovereign victim transforms into a national collective that operates through representation and assumes the form of the martyr, the latter being a form of death that gives shape to the life of the national collective. The main problematic lies in the fact that the national collective operates by means of the mechanisms of representation,

so that the figure of the martyr becomes symbolic and partial, incapable of subsuming the colonial contradictions in their entirety, particularly the figure of absence of those who got scattered in the thick of the struggle—and many Palestinians still walk on the path of this figure of absence.

The individual martyr disappears, thereby throwing into crisis the collective one, and creating a movement within the latter in the direction of explicating absence, a movement that coincides with transformations in the Arab regional and international contexts; this leads to the literal and metaphorical collapse of the material-bureaucratic apparatuses bearing the martyr. The severance of the actual and imaginary Palestinian body into many parts, the re-organization of daily living space for each of these parts, and the assassinations amplifying in quantity and quality—all these inevitably called into presence the figure of absence. In the beginning, the socio-historical constituency of the figure of the martyrdom operator took the form of Islamic organizations that had inherited the PLO's organizational structure and buttressed it with the axis of the sacred. This axis enabled the translation of the voluntary, absolute exit into an organizational, procedural operation that could be implemented on the ground. These operations cannot proceed without first taking shape through a particular language, taste, and aesthetic perspective, and so we would like to summarize this article by posing the question of how the contours and working methods of these operations may be delineated.

4.

The basis of Palestinian collective productive labor, in its three figures, lies in the Palestinian reproducing him or herself—materially and biologically, socially and culturally—and wagering this reproduction on the struggle to recover control over the administration of Palestinian collective death from the colonial regime. These figures have produced a general Palestinian language with local dialects: the dialects of the victim, the martyr, and the martyrdom operator. It should now be apparent that this language rests fundamentally on the reproduction of the relation between the body of the Palestinian tragedy and the means available for reproducing the trajectories of the return. And this language works on constructing collective meanings as well as behavioral and emotional codes that bridge the gap between the actual event—the 1948 *Nakba* and its repeated occurrence since then—and the attempt

to establish a figure of collective labor that seeks to negate what resulted from the *Nakba*, as well as to realize the return by wresting control over the administration of Palestinian collective death from the colonial regime in all its different institutional manifestations. These material-bureaucratic and linguistic means of formation bear within them, as a matter of course and in comparison with similar historical experiences, a sensory palate and aesthetic perspective. So the question becomes, how can we delineate the contours of the sensory palate and aesthetic perspective of Palestinian death? And would this delineation help us understand the mechanisms by which the Palestinian expresses death as his or her defining condition, determining his or her identity through this expression?

It might seem at first sight that the figures of absence and the victim do not possess a sensory palate or aesthetic perspective, as the latter depends on a type of reflexive consciousness that settles in, or issues from, certain material-bureaucratic apparatuses. For the figure of absence is a non-reflexive condition par excellence, one that draws on the event as an antithesis to the material-bureaucratic apparatus. As for the figure of the victim, its consciousness is limited, even when reflexive, to the sensory order of cognition which helps it in its struggle to survive and to keep from slipping into what it perceives as its absence. On the opposite end to this systematic relation between reflexive consciousness and the material-bureaucratic apparatus, many literary, artistic, and other expressions can be found that yield a sensory palate and aesthetic perspective; it appears that reflexive consciousness and the apparatus attending it are merely one variation of the possibility of constructing a palate and perspective. Thus we see that absence is present in the incompleteness of the collective form, its presence floating as if it had no socio-material ground beneath it, due to its random, constantly shifting, anxious motion. The victim, on the other hand, relies on the senses, which function in a state of immediate, embryonic presence, so that concrete vision and orality become the foundations of the victim's sensory palate. These two mechanisms of sensory labor—random, anxious motion and the reliance on vision and orality—together fashion an aesthetic perspective that determines the shape of the world, searching for a material, formal solidity that is immediate and complete, and in principle brimming with content derived from the ground. This form of return isn't temporally limited to the two decades that followed the *Nakba*; it can be seen in diverse cultural configurations up to the present time.

The refashioning of the Palestinian collective in the shape of a modern, representative national collective, complete with material-bureaucratic apparatuses that stand at the heart of *Fida'i* labor and the figure of the martyr, necessitated the centrality of the printed text. Hence the development of a particular sensory palate that shapes the figure of the martyr draws on the collective imaginary primarily through the textual connection, encompassing narrative, visual, and auditory texts alike. This type of connection joins the discursive, representational level to the concrete whole perceived in an immediate sensory fashion. The Palestinian collective doesn't see the *Fida'i* martyr, and this is contrary to the case of the victim, for whom it was imperative to see and hear the self; rather, the collective imagines the martyr and reconstructs itself by observing his or her imaginary, auditory, and narrative features. As a result, the aesthetic perspective became transformative, one that negates the victim's former mode of being in order to set the collective up as a self-sustaining entity. And so you see men and women working in the fields, and observe the sun emerging, a hand breaking its chain, beautiful girls growing toward fertility, a young man carrying his rifle and leaving his hovel in the camp to work on the paths leading to the return, and so forth. The aesthetics of negation-transformation is modernist par excellence, and its translation into a Palestinian context always suffered from the stable patriarchal structure, on the one hand, and the random, shifting, anxious motion arising from the figure of absence at the core of the Palestinian experience, on the other.

It may be said that this aesthetics of negation and transformation did not engage the stable patriarchal structure thoroughly and in depth, but rather worked through it, and at times—to an extent—the patriarchal structure deployed this aesthetic perspective in a manner suggesting that the stability of patriarchy is itself an act of negation and transformation. As far as absence is concerned, the perspective of negation and transformation relies on presence as perceived through the logic of the patriarchal national collective and the commodity; the national nightmare of the Palestinian is to become absent. Hence, absence continued to shape the Palestinian context through its very absence and, once perceived, its status as an absence would be automatically absented from consciousness.

The absolute, voluntary exit lying at the foundation of the figure of the martyrdom operator entails a certain vacillation between total sensory presence and the total absence of this presence. On several levels, the

martyrdom operator recovers immediate, sensory presence for collective labor after this presence had been absented through the representative function of national labor. This act of recovery adopts the socio-material body as a frame of reference for emancipatory Palestinian collective labor, using the body as its material according to the latter's logic of dissipation, so that it may resolve the regime's fundamental contradictions and thereby dismantle it, yielding presence in return for absence. The aesthetic perspective arising out of this figure contains the aesthetics of negation and transformation, and the transformation of the regime remains until now an essential axis around which martyrdom operation revolves. However, this transformation moves from total presence to total absence in an attempt to reach an absolute presence that negates the regime in its entirety. In this sense the martyrdom operator takes us from the banal and relative to the exceptional and absolute, and the aesthetics of complete, absolute negation treats the world as a passage, given that if the world transforms it would break with what it currently is and become a completely new, different condition. The martyrdom operator hasn't yet managed to disseminate his or her logic, since the absolute, voluntary exit remains on the immediate level of the body without having reached other social and cultural spheres. And it may be the case that the absence of a socio-historical constituency for this kind of aesthetic perspective is what obstructs the latter's dissemination, since dissemination contradicts the logic of the figure of absence itself.

We have chosen to summarize this essay via what we termed the language, sensory palate, and aesthetic perspective of the different forms of Palestinian death, the latter serving to determine the forms of Palestinian life. This form of summary doesn't seek to welcome or celebrate death by praising its different languages, sensory palates, and aesthetic perspectives, but seeks rather to call attention to the profound entrenchment of death—as a formative, structural principle—in Palestinian life. The totalized nature of death, in its function as a standard for the definition of life, has prompted us to erect it as a platform for surveying life; by examining the nature and history of the platform of Palestinian death, we specified the primary characteristics of the colonial regime in Palestine: the administration of Palestinian collective death in the direction of the Palestinians' absence, i.e. their collective exit from the stage of modern history. We have distinguished between three fundamental

stages or phases through which the Palestinians work to establish the figure of a historically present collective, notwithstanding any differences that may arise from phase to phase in the form of this presence. Through this continuous history, the accumulation of events of death and their spectacular effects, and the consolidation of structural working mechanisms in the form of systematic apparatuses that yield the diverse types of killing, the structure of the *Nakba* has been deeply engraved, even biologically, into the socio-material body of the Palestinians.

This process of engraving is diverse and multi-layered, and we have attempted here to illuminate its primary nodes and the ways in which the Palestinian collective has dealt with it, i.e. the different ways in which control over the administration of Palestinian collective death was wrested from the regime; following this, we attempted to engage the Palestinian role in the engraving process. This process and related processes lie at the foundation of the Palestinian social system, in that this system is essentially based on the Palestinians' reproduction of themselves; to this day, the fundamental contradictions—those related to death and life—haven't been codified as a method of production and a value system that can transcend the dialectic of life and death that developed in the colonial context. The language of the Palestinian social system characteristically bridges the gap between the dead body of the tragedy and the trajectories of return potentially available for reviving this body; thus, this language is a crucial element in the Palestinian collective's reproduction of itself. Considering the sensory palate and the aesthetic perspective, it may be said that they propose possible solutions, or indicate the impossible in order to translate its form and subsequently establish trajectories of return; this return may lead back to the individual body, in the victim's case, and to the collective body in the cases of the martyr and martyrdom operator. Hence, the Palestinian dies so that she or he may live, and cannot live except through his or her death; the Palestinian's eye / I becomes, in effect, different forms of absence.

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