

Rhetorics of Belonging

Postcolonialism across the Disciplines

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Postcolonialism across the Disciplines showcases alternative directions for postcolonial studies. It is in part an attempt to counteract the dominance in colonial and postcolonial studies of one particular discipline – English literary/ cultural studies – and to make the case for a combination of disciplinary knowledges as the basis for contemporary postcolonial critique. Edited by leading scholars, the series aims to be a seminal contribution to the field, spanning the traditional range of disciplines represented in postcolonial studies but also those less acknowledged. It will also embrace new critical paradigms and examine the relationship between the transnational/cultural, the global and the postcolonial.

Rhetorics of Belonging

Nation, Narration,
and Israel/Palestine

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Note on transliteration

I have generally followed the IJMES system for the transliteration of Arabic and Hebrew. For the names of authors studied in this book, however, and for other well-known proper names and place names, I have relied on the spelling commonly used in English-language publications (hence, Mourid Barghouti rather than Murīd al-Barghūthī).

Introduction

In 1948 the Israelites walked on water to the promised land. The Palestinians walked on water to drown. Shot and counter-shot. Shot and counter-shot. The Jewish people rejoin fiction; the Palestinian people, documentary.

Jean-Luc Godard, *Notre Musique* (2004)

I doubt that any of us has figured out how our particularly trying history interlocks with that of the Jews who dispossessed and now try to rule us. But we know these histories cannot be separated, and that the Western liberal who tries to do so violates, rather than comprehends, both.

– Edward Said, 'Nationalism, Human Rights, and Interpretation' (1993)

This is a book about the cultural representation, transmission, and circulation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It examines the ways in which Palestinian and Israeli writers whose work achieves the status of 'world literature,' in David Damrosch's sense of texts that travel beyond their culture of origin (2003, 4), intervene in the asymmetrically waged local and international contests over the region's political past and future. It is also a book about national narration as a reading and a writing practice, which draws its evidence from a settler-colonial context that is still only controversially recognized as such in North America and Europe. This is true even within metropolitan formations of postcolonial literary studies where, for various reasons – political, institutional, linguistic – the region's literature has often been overlooked. The book sets out to show that an engagement with contemporary Palestinian and Israeli writing can invigorate the common

and yet commonly dismissed question of how writers and their readers conceive of the idea of the nation, within and against colonial forms of rule and thought. It aims to complicate a reader-response understanding of national narration (we want to read Palestinian and Israeli texts as national allegories, for 'cultural information'¹ and because they seem to give us access to a particularly intense kind of national belonging) with an appreciation of how writers anticipate such readings, and how they wrestle with the problem of needing to envision a future territorial and demographic nation-state in a political and cultural context that is saturated with competing ideas of national sovereignty, identity, and citizenship.

Literature is perhaps an idiosyncratic choice of medium for addressing these questions. It is obviously not the most influential or widespread way in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is discursively produced and consumed in the West: news media, film, television, and online discussion forums all reach a larger and more diverse audience.² Outside of the national narration debates which, following Benedict Anderson's lead (1999), have taken the primacy of literature and especially the novel as a given, literature is also probably not the main medium through which members of Israeli, Palestinian, or other national publics 'imagine' their relationship to the nation or the state. As Timothy Brennan observed more than two decades ago, when Anderson's characterization of the novel as the national art form *par excellence* had already begun to assert its influence, the novel's apparently paradigmatic status is belied by its class-based location as an 'elitist and minority form' in most of the world's former colonies, in comparison to performance-based forms such as poetry, music, and film (1990, 56). More recently, Nicholas Brown has pointed out that even among elites, the 'forms of attention required by the literary object in particular' no longer come naturally, which suggests that the 'social configuration that produced literature may already have passed into history' (2005, 174).

Yet in the case of Israel/Palestine, literature, not just individual texts but also the *idea* of literature, retains an authority and influence within and beyond both national cultures.³ Within Israeli Hebrew culture, the wide circulation of literary texts and the public visibility of writers ensure that 'what in another society would be "high" and elite is in Israel popular and public' (Gover, 1994, 2). The privileging of literature over other cultural forms dates to the early days of the Zionist movement, after the revival of Hebrew literature in Central and Eastern Europe during the *Haskalah* (or Jewish Enlightenment) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped Jewish writers and readers to imagine themselves as part of a Jewish nation (Gluzman, 2003, 3). Today, poets from the pre-state and early independence periods, such as Haim Bialik, Natan Alterman, and Yehuda Amichai, are national heroes, and living novelists like Amos Oz and David Grossman are prominent public intellectuals and media figures. Palestinian writing does not enjoy the same conditions of production or circulation as Israeli writing, for obvious reasons. Edward Said, writing after the 1982 Israeli assault on Beirut, put it bluntly: 'I recall

during the siege of Beirut obsessively telling friends and family there, over the phone, that they ought to record, write down their experiences [...] Naturally, they were all far too busy surviving [...] The archive speaks of the depressed condition of the Palestinian narrative at present' (1984, 38).⁴ Despite improved opportunities for international publication for Palestinians in the last several decades, especially for writers living in the 'bourgeois diaspora' (Bowman, 1988, 36) in Europe and North America, the Palestinian literary archive remains diminished, and dominated by a few prominent writers. Still, the drastic material limitations on the production of a national literature have not prevented the work of writers like Mahmoud Darwish and Ghassan Kanafani from attaining an iconic national and regional status, while Palestinian poets, including not only Darwish but also Samih al-Qasim, Tawfiq Sayigh, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, and Fadwa Tuqan, among others, are known across the Arab world. Indeed, the prominence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Arab politics since 1948 has meant that Palestinian writers have had an influence in Arabic literature well beyond what might be expected from the size of the Palestinian population (Tresilian, 2008, 15, 93–110).

Alongside these local and regional forms of validation, Palestinian and Israeli literature in translation also has a special kind of currency for non-national readers. What Joseph Slaughter (2007) and others have called the 'world novel' (or more to the point, the 'third-world' novel)⁵ gets its metropolitan cachet⁶ from literature's status as an elite form: to read Salman Rushdie or Gabriel García Márquez or even Khaled Hosseini is to enhance and confirm one's 'worldly' – non-Euro/US – knowledge, to be better 'informed' than those who stick to news coverage and travel programmes. (The metropolitan music industry's counterpart, 'world music,' is not thought of as offering the same kind of inside information about other countries.) Certainly, as a form of cultural export 'from' Israel/Palestine – bearing in mind that internationally circulated Palestinian writers often are not based in the region – literature travels further and assumes more nationally representative stature than any other medium except film, which is itself marginalized within metropolitan film distribution and consumption, the enthusiastic reception of select films like *5 Broken Cameras* (2011), *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) or *Paradise Now* (2005) notwithstanding.⁷

Though still not very widely known, a reasonable amount of Palestinian and Israeli writing has been translated into English and other European and non-European languages, at different historical moments and for different markets. In the 1980s and '90s, Salma Khadra Jayyusi's Project of Translation from Arabic (PROTA), in cooperation with small independent and university presses, produced many of the English translations of Palestinian writing that we now have, including the monumental *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature* (1992) and novels by Kanafani, Emil Habibi, Sahar Khalifeh, Liana Badr, and Ibrahim Nasrallah (Allen, 1994).⁸ More recently, the London-based literary magazine *Banipal* has become a key engine for the English translation and dissemination of Palestinian and other Arab writing, especially poetry

and short fiction: its fifteenth anniversary issue, published in the autumn of 2012, reaffirmed the magazine's emphasis on Palestinian literature by showcasing the work of twenty-three younger writers from the region. The last decade has also seen an increased interest in Arabic literature in translation among British and American commercial presses, following the destruction of the World Trade Center, the inauguration of the 'war on terror,' and the American invasion of Iraq.⁹ At the same time, the escalation of violence in Israel/Palestine between 2000 and 2004 (which Israeli officials were quick to link to the 'war on terror') increased the international visibility of the conflict, which in turn has strengthened the international Palestine solidarity movement and expanded the metropolitan market for Palestinian cultural production.¹⁰ The Egyptian Anglophone novelist Ahdaf Soueif's translation of Mourid Barghouti's memoir *Ra'aytu Rām Allāh* (1997, Eng. *I Saw Ramallah*, 2000/2003), which I discuss in Chapter 3, is one beneficiary of these publication trends. A significant market has also emerged for Palestinian autobiography written in English, most notably by the lawyer and memoirist Raja Shehadeh, along with memoirs by Jean Said Makdisi, Suad Amiry, Muna Hamzeh, Ghada Karmi, Ramzy Baroud, Sari Nusseibeh, and Izzeldin Abuelaish, among others, all of them published in the last decade and typically promoted and received as a form of Palestinian testimony.¹¹

By contrast, Israeli writing in translation has had a presence in British and American trade publishing since the 1970s, from publishers like Vintage, Chatto & Windus, Farrar Straus Giroux, and Doubleday, though on the basis of their lists readers might be forgiven for thinking that the work of Oz, Grossman, and A. B. Yehoshua makes up the whole of Hebrew literature. In the United States, this work has often been marketed to Jewish readers, but it has also been promoted more widely among European and American readers as evidence of Israeli 'left Zionist' opposition to the occupation of the Palestinian territories: Oz, for instance, is regularly described in the English-language press as the 'conscience of Israel.'¹² Of the generation of Israeli writers born in the 1960s and after, only Etgar Keret has recently achieved a comparable commercial visibility in English, with his titles in English translation now outnumbering his titles in Hebrew (Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 2012b). However, individual works by other younger writers are increasingly becoming available in translation from smaller presses like Dalkey Archive, including two novels by the celebrated satirist Orly Castel-Bloom, which I discuss in Chapter 5.¹³ Among these texts, there is a discernable shift in genre and tone from the kind of work produced by Oz, Grossman, and Yehoshua, who are invested in what we might describe as an epic social or psychological realism, to the black comedy and wry surrealism of Keret and Castel-Bloom, though such differences have little effect on the international reception of all of this writing as authentically representative of contemporary Israeli life.

Taken as a whole, these texts make up a significant, if highly circumscribed, body of writing from Israel/Palestine that is 'entirely discussed in

English while registering as foreign' (Brennan, 1997, 314): it is reviewed in English-language newspapers, taught in departments of English literature, and discussed in English-language book groups. It is this subset of Palestinian and Israeli writing, not the region's literature *in toto*, that concerns me in this book. (To this end, in the case studies that follow, I cite the published English translation of Hebrew and Arabic texts unless otherwise noted.) The well-known writers that I consider – Said, Barghouti, Oz, Khalifeh, Castel-Bloom, and Anton Shammas – occupy a fair range of geographical locations and political standpoints, but the selection is by no means comprehensive. What these writers have in common is that in the absence of a wider field of access to contemporary Palestinian and Israeli culture, their work, like Rushdie's or García Márquez's, is read as an instance of a unitary nation 'finding its voice,' as the jacket copy of *Midnight's Children* famously promises, 'as if one has no voice if one does not speak in English' (Ahmad, 1987, 5). Part of my aim in this book is to reclaim these texts from this globalized and globalizing mode of reception, and to read them as 'worldly' not only in Damrosch's sense, but also in Said's: that is, as texts that undertake specific kinds of political and cultural work within the 'social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted' (1983, 4), a context which includes their metropolitan reception and analysis. I read them, in other words, as texts whose writers actively expect and exploit the reception of their work as a document of the conflict, using their status as 'world' writers to authorize, in the most literal sense of the word, their accounts of the region's history and their visions of its political future.

This approach does not seek to minimize the politics of translation: my intention is not to discount or obscure the interventions that are specific to the original Hebrew or Arabic text, nor to privilege the translated text over the original. However, I am trying to distance myself from approaches to literature in translation that construe the translated text as an inferior or inauthentic product. The texts I examine in this book circulate in English; they have a political and artistic presence in this language, as they do in Arabic, or Hebrew, or the other languages of their translation. Certainly, as Gayatri Spivak points out in a well-known critique of the field of postcolonial studies, a metropolitan programme of comparative literary study that does not require its students to master other languages is both analytically limited and politically problematic, not least because it reinforces the global hegemony of English (2003, 18–19). Yet I am not sure that the right response is to stop reading in translation (and I do not think Spivak, as a translator herself, believes this either). As a student of Arabic and Hebrew rather than a 'native informant,' I am conscious of the limits on my own access to the various *milieux* in which Palestinian and Israeli texts circulate, and of the need to be cautious when making claims about local frames of reference or linguistic nuance (Ball, 2012, 12–14). Yet at the same time, I am convinced that the authors I consider in this book know that their work will reach readers

like me, as well as readers who have not spent as much time studying the region and cannot read either of its languages.

My analysis is in some ways specific to an Anglophone context of reception. The 'worldliness' of Palestinian and Israeli texts might look different in Germanophone or Francophone metropolitan contexts, where specific local dynamics influence their reception, including collective memories of the Nazi and Vichy regimes, domestic tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim populations, and local histories of international solidarity activism and organized left politics. It might look different again in Arabophone contexts, where the circulation of Hebrew writing in translation is seriously limited, but where Palestinian writing is read in relation not just to the Palestinian struggle, but to a much wider field of modern and contemporary writing in Arabic. One key differentiating factor in the Anglophone reception of these texts is the dearth of literature in translation in Anglophone publishing in general, which compels those texts that are translated to take on a disproportionate burden of national representation. This context of reception is further distinguished by the history of British and American imperialism in the region throughout the last century, from the interwar period of British mandatory rule over Palestine to the American alliance with Israel since 1967. It is not simply the hegemony of English, but this particular history of political and military intervention, that accounts both for the enormous body of English-language scholarship on the conflict and for the use of English as the region's 'neutral' *lingua franca* (Cleary, 2002, 10). By the same token, if 'the remarkable global profile of Palestine tells us a great deal about the politics of globalization in general' (Collins, 2011, 1), this is to a very significant extent the result of the role that British and American imperial practices have played in structuring the world we live in today, which in turn influences British and American readers' responses to Palestinian and Israeli literature.

The case studies I focus on are necessarily also limited, though my hope is that readers will be encouraged to test my conclusions against a wider range of texts and other cultural forms, as well as other contexts of reception. The work of Kanafani, Habibi, Darwish, Grossman, and Yehoshua is certainly as widely circulated in English, and in many other languages, as the writers considered in this book.¹⁴ The discussion could also be extended to texts by writers from other ethnic and geographical locations within the Israeli-Palestinian nexus, including Mizrahi writers (literally 'Eastern,' referring to Jewish Israelis of North African and Middle Eastern descent) and writers from Gaza. My selection of texts follows three basic criteria. First, the author must have a high degree of visibility in English, which has unfortunately ruled out most Mizrahi and Gazan writers.¹⁵ I have also tried not to include multiple authors who fulfil similar international roles: thus, Oz stands in as a representative of the 'left Zionist' position that is also occupied by Grossman and Yehoshua. Second, the writers considered have produced most or all of their work after 1980, when the idea of the 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict' as a clash between 'two sides' or 'two narratives'

began to gain popular purchase in Western Europe and North America, in no small part because of international media coverage of the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982. This paradigm continues to determine the conditions of reception for Palestinian and Israeli writing in English and English translation, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 1. This historical boundary excludes Kanafani, who was assassinated in 1972, and Habibi, whose most important novel, *Al-waqā'ī' al-gharībah fī 'ikhtifā' Sa'īd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashā'il* (Eng. *The Secret Life of Sa'eed, The Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*, 1985) was published in Arabic in 1974. Finally, and most importantly, this book focuses on narrative literature, specifically the memoir and the novel, simply because these forms are more likely than poetry or other non-narrative forms to be read, and indeed to present themselves, as 'national narration' or 'national allegory.' The extraordinary portability – and perceived translatability – of narrative literature, its capacity for providing 'information' about a particular place and time, and its ability to link private lives to their public settings make its association with ideas of the nation seem obvious to its readers, and virtually impossible for Palestinian and Israeli writers to avoid. This makes these texts a particularly productive medium for thinking through the problems, and the possibilities, of the idea of national narration.

Nation, narration, and Israel/Palestine

I begin from the position that the nation, in this context, is not just a locus of cultural identity, as the understanding of the conflict as a war of two narratives assumes, but a political structure that can be held responsible for representing the interests of its citizens. The idea of national narration has had something of a troubled history in postcolonial literary studies, where it has nevertheless been extremely influential. It continues to be primarily associated with a few texts from the 1980s and early '90s – Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1999, first published 1983), Fredric Jameson's infamous essay on 'Third-World Literature' (1986), and Homi Bhabha's collection *Nation and Narration* (1990) – which remain obligatory citations on the subject.¹⁶ Subsequent attempts to theorize the representation of the nation in 'postcolonial' and 'third-world' literature more substantively, by attending to the ways in which particular writers and texts have responded to this historical demand and challenge, have vied with scholarship that conceives of nationalism as an inherently dominatory formation, regardless of the specific political character or historical aims of particular national movements, and sees literature as typically subversive of its will to power.¹⁷ This kind of indiscriminate anti-nationalism has been robustly criticized by scholars associated with the 'materialist turn' in postcolonial studies, who have insisted on the continuing relevance of ideas of national sovereignty and national liberation to cultural production in the formerly colonized world.¹⁸ Yet the tendency to bypass the nation by

moving directly from the local to the global remains very much in evidence. In a recent assessment of the legacy of 'postcolonialism' in the journal *Social Text*, for instance, the field is praised for enabling the 'questioning of the national paradigm that informed the formation of many literature departments,' making it 'easier to empathize [with] or understand identities that are formed in nonnational and nonsovereign contexts.' The 'national paradigm' invoked here is unfavourably opposed to the transnational, to border-crossing, to 'our postnational, hybrid, and globalized academic and social world' (Martínez-San Miguel, 2009, 191). This claim is symptomatic of a more pervasive and lasting intellectual climate, in which the postnational is celebrated as a *fait accompli* and imperial and anticolonial nationalisms are rendered indistinguishable, while the effort to discriminate between them is dismissed, in another influential journal, *Modern Fiction Studies*, as 'the easy binary thinking of colonizer versus colonized' (López and Marzec, 2010, 680).¹⁹

A key part of my aim in writing this book is to argue that our understanding of national narration is not exhausted, but rather left seriously incomplete, if we stop with Anglophone responses to mid-twentieth-century decolonization and its aftermath, as postcolonial studies in the US and UK traditionally has (with the exception, of course, of the long-delayed decolonization of apartheid South Africa in 1994). The idea of national narration as a literary strategy, process, and goal is, if anything, even more in need of elaboration after the fall of the Soviet Union, when we are supposed to be well beyond the moment of post-imperial nationalization. This presumption has been repeatedly undermined by post-1989 popular movements, most recently in the Middle East and North Africa: the uprisings of 2011 in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria have all been fought against current regimes, but in the name of diverse ideas of the nation. There is, for some observers, a degree of 'lateness' to these national movements, which appear 'belated' in the sense proposed by Dipesh Chakrabarty: '[i]f something happens that resembles something else within a field that is conceptually structured by before-after relationships, then that which comes after is seen as belated' (2011, 165). Chakrabarty's point is that, because we see certain historical events as originals – in this case, the French and American revolutions, followed by the decolonizations of Latin America in the nineteenth century and Africa and Asia in the twentieth – we are unable to perceive what is new in an event that looks like something we already know. My critique of the idea of belatedness is rather different, however, in that my concern is with our tendency to dismiss what is *not* new. Instead of seeing more recent invocations of the nation as late arrivals, attempting to achieve a form of liberation that has already been proved illusory, we need to be able to recognize the continuing importance of ideas of the nation to contemporary forms of social and political organization. To overlook this fact, '[t]o wish class or nation away, to seek to live sheer irreducible difference *now* in the manner of some contemporary poststructuralist theory, is to play

straight into the hands of the oppressor' (Eagleton, 1990, 23) by making it impossible to imagine any form of popular organization or sovereignty (Brennan, 2006, 232).

Of the current (a more useful descriptor than 'late') national-colonial conflicts, the most visible and urgent, nearly two decades after the end of South African apartheid, is the crisis in Israel/Palestine. This book contributes to the effort to restore the category of the nation to postcolonial literary studies by attending to a context where the idea of the nation is so central a part of everyday experience that writers cannot not address it, and readers cannot help but read for it. Generalizations about the waning influence of the idea of the nation as a means of social transformation ring especially hollow in the case of Israel/Palestine, where the idea of national self-determination, however narrowly or defensively defined, remains the most fundamental desire of political life, and a crucial dimension of how Palestinian and Israeli representatives present their 'narratives' to the world. There are few contemporary heads of state who would begin their addresses to the UN General Assembly by recounting their nation's founding narrative, as the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently did: 'Three thousand years ago, King David reigned over the Jewish state in our eternal capital, Jerusalem [...] We ingathered the exiles, restored our independence and rebuilt our national life. The Jewish people have come home. We will never be uprooted again' (Netanyahu, 2012). The Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, in his speech earlier the same day, used analogous though not identical language to describe the Palestinian position: 'My people will continue their epic steadfastness and eternal survival in their beloved land, every inch of which carries the evidence and landmarks affirming their roots and unique connection throughout ancient history. There is no homeland for us except Palestine, and there is no land for us but Palestine' (Abbas, 2012, 5).

The vocabulary and imagery of these claims corroborate familiar accounts of nationalism as a discourse that invariably defines itself as authentic, autochthonous, and continuous (Smith, 2010, 32). Both use the language of national liberation derived from twentieth-century anticolonial movements – indigeneity, independence, homeland – in tandem with the natural imagery of 'roots' and the genealogical assertion of an ancient lineage, making it difficult for the casual observer to distinguish between them on the basis of rhetoric alone. Yet, while they may draw on overlapping figures and justifications, the region's competing nationalisms are sharply different from one another in their political affiliations. Zionism, as the major modern expression of Jewish nationalism, is a settler-colonial movement as well as a national one: it sought to establish a state in a territory that was already inhabited by another people, in response to the particularly violent and prolonged persecution of the Jews in Europe. The state of Israel was established with the support of European imperial powers, above all Britain, and since the 1960s it has been dependent on American military and diplomatic sponsorship.²⁰ Palestinian nationalism, by contrast, seeks self-determination for a largely stateless

indigenous population displaced by force more than sixty years ago, many of whom have now been living under military occupation for more than four decades, and it explicitly aligns itself with the history of anti-imperial national movements across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

The distinction between these two formations is particularly relevant for a postcolonial studies wary of all forms of nationalism, since it makes the idea of *the* nation as a uniformly hegemonic force of oppression hard to sustain. Indeed, I have sometimes suspected that those thinkers who rely on the opposition between ‘nation’ – homogenous, coercive – and ‘post-nation’ – liberational, diverse – are able to do so only by leaving the question of Palestine out of their purview altogether, or by casting Palestinians as the paradigmatic victims of ‘the nation’s’ exclusions, while ignoring the very real emancipatory value of the idea of national liberation to the Palestinian struggle against Israeli dispossession, under conditions of geographical dispersion, social fragmentation, and the opposition of powerful adversaries. If, as Jennifer Wenzel has argued, South Africa was for decades ‘the quintessential site where unrealized hopes of mid-twentieth-century liberation struggles might be realized’ (2009, 14), for many observers and activists the Palestinian national movement has now taken on that role, making Israel/Palestine an obvious site of interest for postcolonial studies.

At the same time that it insists on the continuing relevance of ideas of the nation to contemporary political struggle and the indispensability of Israel/Palestine as a current focus of study, *Rhetorics of Belonging* also seeks to develop our understanding of the idea of national *narration* by emphasizing the diverse formal and aesthetic strategies that Palestinian and Israeli writers use to promote their visions of the nation to local and international readerships. In postcolonial studies, especially in its curricularized form, the notion of the archetypal ‘national novel’ derives from Anderson’s influential evocation of the ‘old-fashioned novel,’ with its characters engaged in ‘steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity’ across Walter Benjamin’s “‘homogenous, empty time’” within a territorially contiguous nation (Anderson, 1999, 25). By ‘old-fashioned,’ Anderson means a form of narrative address: the narration must be omniscient or at least not limited to any one character (Culler, 1999, 23). However, instead of the novel that Anderson used to make his case – José Rizal’s *Noli me Tangere* (1887), a founding text of Filipino resistance to Spanish rule – today the paradigmatic example of postcolonial ‘national narration’ is Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981). If, as Neil Lazarus has mischievously suggested, ‘there is in a strict sense only one author in the postcolonial canon’ (2011a, 22), this is in no small part because Rushdie’s best-known novel works so well as an exaggerated instance of Jameson’s ‘national allegory’: its narrator’s life literally corresponds to that of the nation.

Yet *Midnight’s Children* is a more peculiar point of reference than is normally acknowledged, since it quite explicitly presents itself as a meta-national narrative: that is, as a commentary on the *idea* of the national novel, which simplifies and idealizes the form in order to satirize it. The idea of the

'national narrative' that has had such a profound influence in postcolonial literary studies is, then, the product of parody – most obviously of García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967, Eng. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1970), which is itself a satiric commentary on the nineteenth-century novels of Latin American independence.²¹ The imaginary ur-text that Rushdie's novel conjures up is a 'huge baggy monster' (Chaudhuri, 2001, xxiv), in Henry James' sense,²² following the fortunes of a family over several generations; it is written in the 'moment of arrival'²³ after independence; its political vision is democratic, its aesthetic epic and realist, as Rushdie's use of magical realism irreverently underscores; and it takes place in a post-partition national territory which is clearly delimited by Saleem Sinai's brief, unhappy sojourn outside of independent India in Karachi and the Sundarbans. Apart from Rushdie's emphasis on the idea of post-independence disappointment, which does not come into Anderson's more benign representation of postcolonial nationalisms (Chrisman, 2004, 193), the model is essentially Anderson's: a 'picaresque *tour d'horison*' within a 'clearly bounded' national territory (Anderson, 1999, 30). The two exemplars are mutually reinforcing.

One could cite any number of texts that challenge this prototype, but Palestinian and Israeli literature, as a body of writing, makes its inadequacies especially clear. Palestinian and Israeli texts are not produced in the 'moment of arrival,' since Israeli independence is more than sixty years old and Palestinian independence has not been achieved. They are hardly necessarily or even typically epic or realist. The only text that might claim the status of the big, baggy Palestinian novel thus far is *Bāb al-Shams* (1998, Eng. *Gate of the Sun*, 2007) by Elias Khoury, which is less an 'old-fashioned novel' than a narrativized compilation of oral histories, and whose author is not Palestinian but Lebanese. Hebrew literature has more contenders, above all in the work of Amos Oz, but the *śafah razah* (lean language) writers, including Castel-Bloom and Keret, whose work is expressly anti-epic and often anti-realist, are just as concerned with the demand for national narratives, as are writers working in other genres. The idea of citizens moving within a bounded space still figures, especially in mainstream Israeli fiction: in David Grossman's recent novel *Ishah borahat mi-beśorah* (2008, Eng. *To the End of the Land*, 2010), for instance, much of the action takes place on a *tiyyul* (hike) through the Galilean countryside, which is clearly opposed to the extra-national space of the Sinai, where one of the protagonists is imprisoned and tortured.²⁴ Yet the lack of internationally agreed borders in the region, and the competing extraterritorial meanings of the physical territory of Israel/Palestine – both religious and diasporic – mean that such journeys signify a staking out of contested territory, not the affirmation of the fixed 'sociological landscape' of a national consensus (Anderson, 1999, 30). Border-crossing takes on a particular salience, not only because of the immense difficulties encountered by Palestinian protagonists who try to traverse them – as shown so vividly in the work of Sahar Khalifeh and Raja Shehadeh, or in an earlier period, in Ghassan Kanafani's seminal novel *Rijāl fī*

al-shams (1963, Eng. *Men in the Sun*, 1978) – but also because of the symbolic meaning of borders as physical markers of the imagined boundaries between communities. Such boundaries include not just the ‘external’ divide between Israelis and Palestinians that is marked by the 1967 borders and now the ‘separation wall,’ and between Palestinian towns and Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, but also the ‘internal’ configurations of space within Israel’s 1967 borders that separate its ‘second-class’ (Mizrahi, Ethiopian) and ‘third-class’ (Palestinian) citizens.²⁵

The point, then, is that just as Rushdie’s text responds to a particular moment in Indian post-independence history, the texts I discuss respond both formally and thematically to specific formations of Palestinian and Israeli national self-definitions and aspirations articulated over the past three decades. This point may seem too obvious to make, and yet the historical specificity of particular narratives of settler-colonial, anticolonial, and postcolonial nationhood has hardly been taken into account in the very broad conclusions that influential theorists in postcolonial studies, above all Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994), have drawn about ‘national narration’ in general, as both a literary and a sociological phenomenon. Like Orientalism, ‘national narration’ and ‘national allegory’ have been seen as transferable concepts which can be ‘applied’ to an almost infinite variety of contexts; this modular understanding is also what enables their contemptuous dismissal, since texts from a particular setting can simply be declared to be ‘predominately about other things’ (Ahmad, 1987, 21). I am suggesting, by contrast, that if we attend to the specific historical conditions in which literary texts are produced, it is possible to acknowledge that a general *tendency* towards national narration (Larsen, 2001, 19) might inhere across a range of geopolitical contexts without our having to decide the form of that narration in advance, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 1.

The idea that Palestinian and Israeli texts share the effort to represent the nation is also suggestive, for it offers a way to conceive of a relational literary history of Israel/Palestine. As Gabriel Piterberg has glossed it, ‘relational history’ – a term coined by Perry Anderson (1986) and first used to analyse Israeli-Palestinian history by Zachary Lockman (1996) – differs from comparative history in its emphasis on the interactions between different groups. The idea of a relational history of Israel/Palestine demands that the region’s history be told not in the form of two parallel but separate narratives, but as a story of ‘settler-native relations’ (Piterberg, 2008, 57).²⁶ Such a history also calls attention to the ‘marginal (or marginalized) possibilities’ that went unrealized, such as, for Lockman, the possibility of class solidarity among Arab and Jewish workers in Mandatory Palestine (Piterberg, 2008, 67–68). The idea of relationality does not exempt us from the need to distinguish between the political genealogies of Zionism, ‘a hothouse flower grown from European nationalism, anti-Semitism, and colonialism,’ and Palestinian nationalism, ‘derived from the great wave of Arab and Islamic anticolonial sentiment [... and] located within the mainstream of secular post-imperialist

thought' (Said, 1984, 31). Instead, it allows for a dialectical understanding of the changing relationship between the two national formations over time, as opposed to the more familiar insistence in metropolitan popular media and culture on a static dialogism or 'balance.'

A relational literary history of Israel/Palestine would situate Palestinian and Israeli literary texts, trends, and techniques in the context of this history of antagonistic interaction. As Said observes in *Culture and Imperialism*, Albert Camus and André Gide write about 'precisely the same Algeria' as Frantz Fanon and Kateb Yacine (1994a, 313). As difficult as the current geopolitical dispensation in Israel/Palestine may make it to imagine, the same might be said for Mourid Barghouti and Amos Oz, or for Sahar Khalifeh and Orly Castel-Bloom. In attempting to read these texts alongside one another, I am indebted to the examples set by Ammiel Alcalay (1993), Joe Cleary (2002), Rachel Feldhay Brenner (2003), Gil Hochberg (2007), Lital Levy (2010), and Jacqueline Rose (2012), who are among a small but dedicated group of scholars who have challenged the disciplinary and political obstacles to relational readings of Palestinian/Arab and Israeli/Jewish writing. Such an approach does not require that literature be perceived as a space of imagined reconciliation, or as a tool for breaking through ideology; relationality, as the discussion above should make clear, can also describe opposition and contest. Indeed, it is properly derived *from* the notion of contest, as Peter Hallward, drawing on Foucault, suggests, 'The relational subject is inevitably partial, inevitably partisan, "necessarily for one side or another, in the thick of battle" [...] It follows that when any particular identity ceases to be configured in a relation that is emancipatory *as a relation*, it can indeed become a prison' (2001, 50–51). The idea of Palestinian-Israeli relationality should therefore be understood as describing the extreme asymmetry of the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis at the present time. But if we think of Palestinian and Israeli writing as intervening in a shared arena of geographical, historical, and discursive reference, then the idea that Palestinian and Israeli texts might partake in a mode of literary expression that overlaps the relational divide between master and slave, or colonizer and colonized, offers a glimpse of a collective imaginary that these texts share in spite of themselves. As Benita Parry reminds us, it is possible to be committed both to the 'immediate activities of a national liberation movement struggling against dispossession, and the farther goal of one secular state for all the inhabitants of the territories of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the returned Palestinian refugees' (2004a, 60). The possibility that recognizing this common frame of literary imagination could help to promote that farther goal, however indirectly, motivates this book.²⁷

The second kind of 'relationality' that this book invokes has to do with the relation between Palestinian and Israeli texts and colonial and postcolonial literature as a field of study. As I noted above, Israel/Palestine has played a minor role within dominant formations of metropolitan postcolonial literary studies, despite the routine use of the Palestinian as an 'object' figure of

oppression (Stein, 2005, 331). Yet there is a very substantial body of research produced by Palestinian, Israeli, and other scholars that demonstrates the role Israel's constitution as a 'pure settlement colony' (Piterberg, 2008, xii) has played in shaping contemporary Israeli society.²⁸ Gershon Shafir has put the argument succinctly: 'what is unique about Israeli society emerged precisely in response to the conflict between the Jewish immigrant-settlers and the Palestinian Arab inhabitants of the land' (1996, 6). The same is true for Palestinian nationalism, a consolidated response to the Israeli assertion of sovereignty over Palestine that, since 1967, has increasingly focused on resisting the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories.²⁹ Yet although the coloniality of the conflict is rarely disputed among scholars working in postcolonial literary studies, the scholarship – apart, of course, from Said's – and the literature remains tangential to this field, the heroic efforts of a number of scholars notwithstanding.³⁰ Rather than simply applying postcolonial theory to the cultural politics of Israel/Palestine, then, this book seeks to emphasize the difference that a greater attention to Palestinian and Israeli literature and culture might make to the wider postcolonial field.

The first chapter develops the argument I have begun in this introduction. I suggest that if the idea of 'national narration' has come to seem like a dead end to scholars working in postcolonial literary studies, this is partly because of a lack of attention to 'world literature' from contexts beyond the traditional remit of the English-speaking former British colonies, including Israel/Palestine. Against this sense of fatigue, I offer a defence and reclamation of the Jamesonian national allegory, making a case for its dual function as a reading and writing practice with particular resonance for Palestinian and Israeli texts in international circulation. Anticipating a reader who might feel that the idea that Israeli and Palestinian texts should be read as national allegories is not particularly novel, I question the tendency in contemporary criticism to dismiss ideas that we think we 'already know,' particularly the idea that the conflict is a confrontation between 'two narratives,' which I see as a form of political shorthand that tells us little about the work of actual literary narratives. I conclude by introducing the idea of the 'demographic imaginary' as a central component of Palestinian and Israeli national narration, arguing that the texts considered in this study offer a sustained and deliberate response to the conflict's most fundamental question: who is a citizen, and of what kind of polity?

Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate the political and literary specificity of even the most closely allied 'national narrations' by addressing two autobiographical narratives that espouse a Palestinian secular nationalist perspective: Edward Said's *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999) and Mourid Barghouti's *Ra'aytu Rām Allāh* (1997, Eng. *I Saw Ramallah*, 2000/3). These widely circulated and cited texts are distinguished from one another by their very different means of conceptualizing a Palestinian demographic imaginary. Instead of attempting to represent the nation as a horizon of social totality, in *Out of*

Place Said takes the opposite tack and focuses on the ways in which the idea of national belonging shapes and motivates the individual subject. Over the course of the memoir, the young Edward's suppressed Palestinian 'origins' are strenuously transformed into 'beginnings' (Said, 1975, 372–73) through which Said strives to offer a more difficult, chosen, and non-automatic expression of a Palestinian national identity. This Bildungsroman trajectory relies on the national-allegorical resonance of the two concepts that are key to so much of Said's theoretical and political work: exile and liberation. The memoir both problematically and provocatively sets up a complex set of correspondences between Said's claim to Palestinian nationality and his refusal of corporate belonging, his representation of exile as individually empowering and collectively disabling, and his figuring of liberation as the exercise of intellectual freedom and the act of collective self-determination.

Conversely, in my reading of *I Saw Ramallah*, an account of the poet Mourid Barghouti's visit to the West Bank in 1996 after a thirty-year absence, I argue that Barghouti counters Said's emphasis on the exilic character of Palestinian national identity, which persists even in his foreword to Barghouti's text. Instead, Barghouti's narrative foregrounds the contrast between his own experience of exile and the experiences of Palestinians who continue to live in the West Bank. In order to represent this localized dimension of contemporary Palestinian experience, Barghouti develops an existential materialist aesthetic which privileges the 'truthfulness' of sensory experience over the idea that all Palestinians share a certain set of experiences and sense of identity. I read this as an attempt to recognize the contemporary fragmentation of the Palestinian collective, and thus to construct new ground on which a coalitional nationalist politics might be built.

In the remaining chapters, I turn from Palestinian memoir (or as Jean-Luc Godard suggests in my epigraph to this chapter, 'documentary') to Israeli and Palestinian fiction. Chapter 4 examines a selection of texts by Amos Oz, the most widely translated and internationally influential Israeli author now writing, and one who is regularly tipped for the Nobel Prize. Oz's novels are exemplary in many ways of Anderson's 'old-fashioned' national novel: they provide realist representations of everyday life in Israeli settings, mapping the conflicts between individual characters onto the political faultlines of Jewish Israeli society. Yet his work anticipates and subverts its reception as national allegory by recasting historical and political forces as psychological and domestic, in keeping with Jameson's 'first-world' literary tradition, which seeks to contain political commitment by locating it in the individual's impulses and desires (1986, 71). Oz's fictions also refute the designation of Israeli society as colonial by associating the haunting figure of the Palestinian with his characters' emotional excesses, in an effort to mitigate this figure's power to disturb the Zionist consensus.

The final two chapters consider narratives by writers occupying a 'minor' or disadvantaged position in Palestinian and Israeli society: the female writers Sahar Khalifeh and Orly Castel-Bloom, and the Palestinian and former Israeli

citizen Anton Shammas. In Chapter 5, I argue that Castel-Bloom's *Doli si'i* (1992, Eng. *Dolly City*, 1997) and *Ḥalaqim 'enoshiyyim* (2002, Eng. *Human Parts*, 2003) and Khalifeh's *Rabī' ḥārr* (Eng. *Hot Spring*, 2004; *The End of Spring*, 2008) embed trenchant critiques of the gender-nationalism nexus in Israeli and Palestinian society within defensive national allegories. Though these novels belong to different genres and take on different subjects – Castel-Bloom's offer a dystopian satire of Israeli life after the first intifada and at the beginning of the second, while Khalifeh's is a documentary-style fiction of Palestinians' efforts to withstand the siege of Jenin in 2002 – both use gender relations as a means of representing the state of the nation, defined in each case by the decisive roles that patriarchy, poverty, and violence play in determining the choices available to both female and male citizens. At the same time, however, a Jewish Israel and an independent Palestine are positioned as the frameworks within which the struggle for women's liberation will necessarily take place.

My concluding chapter considers Anton Shammas' celebrated novel *'Arabesḳot* (1986, Eng. *Arabesques*, 1988). This novel portrays a man, also named Anton Shammas, who recounts the oral history of his natal Palestinian Christian village alongside a present-day narrative of his life as a Hebrew-language writer. Over the course of the novel, the two narratives converge to create a fictional analogue of an Israel that is the state of all of its citizens. Of the texts addressed in this book, *Arabesques* is the only one that gestures towards a genuinely post-Zionist idea of the nation that could include all of the region's inhabitants. In this sense, Shammas fulfils Said's exhortation to writers by actively seeking to 'construct fields of coexistence rather than fields of battle' (2004, 141), though it must be stressed that for Shammas this possible coexistence is decisively premised on a rejection of Zionism. While this project is distinct from that of Said's memoir, in their different ways both texts insist that national narration is always a provisional political act, one that depends on the vision of a wider social liberation.

Reading for the Nation

Rarely in the latter half of the present century has one come across so unabashed a recommendation that the world, especially the 'Orient' – Palestine, Algeria, India – and indeed all the races, white and black, should be *consumed* in the form of those fictions of this world which are available in the bookshops of the metropolitan countries; the condition of becoming this perfect consumer, of course, is that one frees oneself from stable identities of class, nation, gender. Thus it is that sovereignty comes to be invested in the reader of literature, fully in command of an imperial geography.

– Aijaz Ahmad (1992)

It seems to me that one of our basic political tasks lies precisely in the ceaseless effort to remind the American public of the radical difference of other national situations.

– Fredric Jameson (1986)

The two statements that begin this chapter mark the poles of a longstanding debate over how metropolitan readers can and should read literary texts from other parts of the world. Critics and teachers of 'postcolonial literature,' that controversial yet entrenched catch-all term for non-Western texts, have long been aware that their reading is part of an economy in which literature from the global peripheries is consumed by a readership that is eager for spectacles of violence and poverty set in exotic locales. Graham Huggan describes the dilemma concisely: "The well-intentioned desire for "adversarial internationalization" – for the fashioning of global solidarities in the continuing anti-imperial struggle – must contend with the power of a market that seeks,

in part, to contain such oppositional gestures' (2001, 10–11).¹ It is tempting, in such a context, to refuse the category of 'postcolonial' or 'third-world' literature altogether, in the name of the historical and cultural particularity of the many different places and times that these terms evidently subsume. But this does not relieve us of the problem, since there is still such a thing as 'third-world' literature, 'if only in the mind of the metropolitan reader of books' (Brennan, 1997, 26). Rather than wish this formation away, we might instead address how it works, in its popular and academic incarnations: which texts it includes and excludes, what knowledge it assumes, and what kinds of thinking it does or does not make possible. At the same time, as much as we might desire it to be otherwise, the parts of the world that have been 'underdeveloped' by empire, in Walter Rodney's sense (1981), are linked by what Jameson calls their 'radical difference' from the metropolitan centres in that they face common, if uneven, circumstances of economic and political subordination within the current global order.² The point, then, is not that all 'postcolonial' or 'third-world' literature is the same, but simply that the world looks very different from the peripheries than it does from the metropole. This is what gives postcolonial literary studies its rationale, and it is also what underpins the idea of 'postcolonial' or 'third-world' national narration.

The sense of fatigue that has come to be associated with the idea of national narration in postcolonial literary studies has little to do with its exhaustion as a methodology, since, as critics as differently positioned as Neil Larsen and Jonathan Culler have pointed out, the relationship between narrative (or allegory, or the novel) as a form and the nation-state as a political idea remains inchoate. We are unable to distinguish between Flaubert and Balzac's representations of France as an 'imagined community' (Larsen, 2001, 173), or to explain the difference between the form of the novel as a 'condition of possibility' for imagining the nation and individual novels' representations of national content (Culler, 2007, 69, 72). A key reason for this impasse is the disavowal of the nation as such in some of the most prominent work in literary and cultural studies, which, as I noted in the introduction, has tended to discourage this kind of criticism. However, it also results from the tendency of critics to read for the nation as a *theme*, embarking on a 'mock-expedition in search of national-allegorical correspondences' (Larsen, 2001, 173) to 'prove' Anderson's thesis that the nation can be 'imagined' in literature. This approach can tell us something about the political vision of a particular writer, but it makes it difficult to compare techniques of national representation across texts and contexts, or to draw wider conclusions about the connections between narrative as a social and intellectual practice and the nation as a form of social and political organization, since it limits us to a 'contemplation of literary content' (Szeman, 2003, 41).

To these methodological failings, we must add the problem of a significantly restricted literary corpus. The remit of postcolonial literary studies, as defined by course syllabi, job advertisements, and publishers' catalogues, has historically been limited to post-independence Anglophone writing from

the former British colonies, apart from the occasional inclusion of texts in other European languages, usually by writers who are already well known in English translation (Gabriel García Márquez, Edouard Glissant, Assia Djebar). It has often been limited still further to texts from the 'failures of independence' genre, which also tend to be favoured by the metropolitan markets. As Timothy Brennan has put it, with reference to Rushdie, García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa, among others, in such texts

the contradictory topoi of exile and nation are fused in a lament for the necessary and regrettable instance of nation-forming, in which the writer proclaims his identity with a country whose artificiality and exclusiveness have driven him into a kind of exile – a simultaneous recognition of nationhood and an alienation from it. (1990, 63)

There is, of course, a historical reason for this emphasis on the literary representation of post-independence lament. What Neil Lazarus calls 'the literature of disillusionment' (1990, 18), in reference to the work of the Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah, describes the outlook of many anticolonial nationalist intellectuals in the 1970s and afterwards, when it became clear that, in many cases, political independence had simply transferred colonial institutions of governance to a native elite, who were themselves subject to and often complicit with US-led neo-imperial dominance. Postcolonial studies can itself be seen, as Lazarus argues elsewhere, as 'a rationalization of and pragmatic adjustment to, if not quite a celebration of' this containment of the 'historic challenge from the third world' (2004a, 5), such that much of the best-known work in the field rehearses an 'Afro-pessimistic melancholia about the sham of independence' (Wenzel, 2009, 9).

The position of Palestinian and Israeli texts in this institutionalized form of postcolonial literary studies is akin to the infamous Israeli legal category of the 'present absentee,' which enabled the Israeli government to expropriate land owned by Palestinians who were displaced within the state's borders in the period immediately after 1948. We have on the one hand the ubiquitous figure of the 'abject' Palestinian. This figure serves as a ready point of reference for the dispossessed post-imperial subject more generally, and it shows up in unexpected places, including the work of Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha.³ The availability of this figure indicates the degree to which the Palestinian national movement has been 'popularized, pop-culturalized, and added to the style pantheon of the global left' (Bhattacharyya, 2008, 46). Edward Said's towering presence in the field is, of course, another reason that the Palestinian situation is as visible as it is in postcolonial studies: I would speculate that much of what scholars working in other areas know about Israel/Palestine comes from reading Said, as the many references to his work in this context by non-specialists suggest.

Yet despite the visibility of the 'abject' Palestinian, it remains the case that so far as curricular and publication trends in dominant forms of postcolonial studies are concerned, Israel/Palestine is still largely absent. The region is

bracketed as an exception to the postcolonial: it is a holdover of European settler-colonialism, or an unfortunate caveat to the emancipatory power of diaspora (Hall, 1993, 401). Of course, postcolonial studies is usually taught in English departments, and Palestinian and Israeli literature is not normally written in English; the region is not also *postcolonial*, since Israeli military rule and territorial expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is ongoing. Yet since introductions to the field of postcolonial studies regularly define it in terms of its opposition to contemporary forms of imperial and colonial rule, the relative lack of attention to cultural production from Israel/Palestine, the world's most visible contemporary colonial conflict, is troubling.⁴ As Patrick Williams has recently demanded, 'How can we *not* be working on Palestine?' (2010, 91). Some oversights seem almost wilful. The work of the Jerusalem-based Arab nationalist George Antonius, who wrote *in English* about the Palestinian struggle in the 1930s, is barely known and rarely cited as relevant beyond its immediate context, even though Said introduced Antonius to postcolonial studies twenty years ago in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994a, 295–314).⁵ Writers like Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish, and Sahar Khalifeh have name recognition in the field, but nowhere near the status of a Chinua Achebe or a Salman Rushdie, despite the ready availability of their work in translation. There is also insufficient recognition of the gaps in a field that is centrally concerned with the legacies of British imperialism, but until recently has had little to say about the Middle East in general or Palestine in particular. British rule had a decisive impact on Palestine, following twenty-five years of direct governance (1923–48), during which time British forces brutally crushed the Palestinian uprising of 1936–39 and seriously weakened the Palestinian military and political leadership, leaving them unrecovered by the time of the 1948 war (Khalidi, 2006, 105–139). Britain also sponsored the Balfour Declaration (1917), which instantiated the British Empire's commitment to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and the Peel Report (1937), which introduced the principle of partition to Palestine, just as Britain had done in Ireland and would do in India, with disastrous results in all three contexts.

While Palestinian and Arab scholars and activists, along with the international communist movement, have described Zionism as a form of settler-colonialism since the 1920s, the idea has taken much longer to gain any kind of recognition in Israeli and Euro-US public discourse. In the 1960s, the Israeli Socialist Organization, better known as *Matzpen* (Compass), who were a breakaway group from the Israeli Communist Party including both Jewish and Arab members, advanced a critique of Israel as a colonial power and imperial client state that was pioneering among a Hebrew and English-speaking audience.⁶ In a key essay published in English in the *New Left Review*, Haim Hagnebi, Moshe Machover, and Akiva Orr argued that the 'permanent conflict between the settlers' society and the indigenous, displaced Palestinian Arabs has never stopped and it has shaped the very structure of Israeli sociology, politics and economics' (1971, 5). A version

of this argument gained a wider international hearing with the publication of Maxime Rodinson's essay 'Israel, fait colonial?' (1967), which appeared in English as *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (1973). (Rodinson's essay is often cited as a landmark piece, but we might note that the influential Palestinian-American historian Rashid Khalidi, then a doctoral student, damningly described it as 'an able exposition of some basic facts about Zionism' that was of little use to 'the specialist or even the well-informed reader' [1974, 137–38]). The rise to prominence of the Israeli 'New Historians' in the 1980s and '90s has made the anticolonial critique of Zionism more widely visible in Israeli and Euro-US academia, as has the spread of 'postcolonial theory' – as represented by Said, Spivak, and Bhabha – within the Israeli academy.⁷ However, as Bashir Abu-Manneh has observed, a major difference between the work of most of the 'New Historians' and *Matzpen* is that only the latter understand Israel as a 'Zionist-colonial project that is *constitutively aligned* with Western interests in the region' (2006, 37, emphasis added). Hagnebi, Machover, and Orr pull no punches on this point: 'Israel's primary relationship with imperialism is as a watchdog in the Middle East, funded and privileged for serving this purpose' (1971, 12).

This analysis points to a more sinister explanation for the omission of Israel/Palestine from postcolonial studies, following Shohat's suggestion that '[t]he study of the postcolonial, one sometimes suspects, is relatively privileged in the United States precisely because of its convenient remoteness from this country's racial matters' (2006b, 5–6). In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is far more difficult to maintain this fiction of remoteness. Institutional pressures – hiring, publication, tenure, and funding – serve to regulate the contexts in which one can undertake the study of Palestinian and Israeli literature, which does not have the perceived 'real world' application of the social sciences (first to the Cold War, now to the 'war on terror'). Discussion of the question of Palestine in the metropolitan academy remains controversial, to put it mildly, and it is not too much of a stretch to suppose that its disputed status has contributed to the exclusion of Palestinian and Israeli writing from postcolonial studies' purview.⁸ A sceptical observer might conclude that Palestine's *presence* at the margins of the field boosts its oppositional credentials, but that there is a gaping *absence* where we should see a much more detailed knowledge of the region's political and cultural history, of its writers (especially those available in translation), and of the relationship between the ongoing conflict, the legacy of European imperialism, and contemporary American imperialism.

I am sympathetic to the efforts to warn against the depoliticizing effects of certain kinds of applications of the term 'postcolonial' in the context of Israel/Palestine, given the history of Zionist thought's contradictory identification with European imperialism *and* third-world anticolonial struggle.⁹ Yet I would also affirm the value of a literary study that seeks to demonstrate the collective and cross-cultural impact of the various modern forms of colonialism and imperialism on artistic production across the globe. For all

the oft-cited apparent failings of the idea of the 'postcolonial' – its flattening of difference, its premature celebration of an unrealized political and social liberation, its reductive use of the European encounter as an all-purpose form of historical explanation – the discursive, stylistic, and generic affinities between literary texts that respond to colonialism and imperialism across a range of geohistorical contexts remain striking, as scholars working in postcolonial literary studies have consistently sought to demonstrate, if not always with a clear sense of the linked historical and economic formations that engender such similarities (Lazarus, 2011a, 1–20; 2011b, 4–8). Reading Palestinian and Israeli texts in comparison with texts from other colonial and postcolonial contexts helps to counter metropolitan and local notions of this conflict as autonomous and unconnected to struggles elsewhere in the near and distant past. At the same time, a turn to Palestinian and Israeli writing gives us a way to challenge the anti-nationalist tendency in postcolonial studies by promoting an engagement with writers who are rather less sceptical about the idea of the nation, and also less sanguine (again, for different reasons in each case) about the merits of border-crossing and exile.

I am suggesting, then, that the feeling that national narration has been exhausted as a critical approach for postcolonial studies derives not just from *how* we read, but *what* and *from where* we read. This is more than a call for expansion into overlooked regions, since my point is that Israel/Palestine's status as an exception tells us a great deal about what is missing from the current constitution of the field. Here we might recall Neil Larsen's observation that postcolonial studies has historically privileged the 'momentary and superficial nationalist movements' in the British Caribbean and British and French Africa over the Chinese, Korean, Cuban, Vietnamese, and Luso-African revolutions, which have been almost completely sidelined (2001, 14). As with Israel/Palestine, texts from these countries are not normally written in English, and their histories do not follow the same trajectory of post-independence nationalist disappointment. But if we as readers are to be able to respond to the current constellation of the world order and to describe the role that literature plays in maintaining and contesting it, our understanding of the 'postcolonial' cannot stop with the political failures of the Bandung-era nationalisms in the former British colonies. We need to attend simultaneously to more radical and differently disastrous kinds of outcomes and possible futures. We also need, as I explain below, the notion of national allegory, which an attention to Palestinian and Israeli writing can help to recuperate and develop.

Reading for the nation: 'Third-world literature' and Israel/Palestine

Jameson and Ahmad's famous dispute in the pages of *Social Text* in the mid-1980s has come to stand as a warning of the dangers that await the metropolitan reader of non-metropolitan texts.¹⁰ As is well known, in the

first part of the exchange Jameson defined 'national allegory' as a necessary correspondence between the 'third-world' text's domestic plot and the political context of its production: 'the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society' (1986, 69). His proposal was widely denounced as a scandalous generalization, in line with Ahmad's influential rejoinder: 'Politically, we are Calibans, all. Formally, we are fated to be in the poststructuralist world of repetition with difference; the same allegory, the nationalist one, re-written, over and over again, until the end of time' (1987, 9).¹¹ One long-lasting consequence of the controversy was a backlash against Marxism in postcolonial studies: Jameson's prominence as a Marxist critic helped to pave the way for the enduring perception, among a surprisingly large number of critics of postcolonial literature, that Marxism is a Eurocentric discourse, Ahmad's own self-definition as a Marxist notwithstanding (Lazarus, 2011a, 99).

Yet what the furore tended to obscure was that Jameson's 'national allegory' is in fact a theory of metropolitan reading, albeit negatively framed: it is an intentionally 'sweeping' (Jameson, 1986, 69) corrective to the 'first-world' reader (1986, 66) who has been taught to affirm a 'radical split' between poetics and politics (1986, 69). As Neil Lazarus has suggested in his account of this challenge to the first-world reader – who for Lazarus is not any first-world reader, but a reader with a particular kind of literary and political training and set of beliefs (2011a, 103) – Jameson's 'third-worldness' is best understood not as a geographical term, but as the name of a political desire for national autonomy and collective self-determination (2011a, 106). In circumstances where this aspiration is held in common, it is not surprising that writers would seek to represent it. Nor is it surprising that the reader with limited knowledge or experience of this kind of political desire, and with entrenched ideas about literature's affirmation of the personal and intimate, would find its artistic expression difficult to read as 'literature.' This does not mean that the 'first-world' reader can only misread 'third-world' texts, nor that 'third-world' texts can only be read as national allegories. The point is rather that as readers we need to 'confront honestly the fact of fragmentation on a global scale' (Jameson, 1986, 67) and grapple with its effects on our habits of perception and interpretation.

If we are to reclaim the Jamesonian national allegory for use, both in its own right and as a way of thinking about the conditions that structure our readings of Palestinian and Israeli texts, we must first distinguish between the two very different senses of national allegory that underlie this debate. On the one hand, as Ahmad and others after him dismissively claim, national allegory is 'the kind of reading one does when one cannot read the "alien" dynamics of the text' (George, 1999, 121); it is an automatic response, in which we read to confirm what we already 'know' about 'third-world' countries and conflicts. This phenomenon can be demonstrated by even a cursory look at English-language reviews of Palestinian and Israeli writing

in metropolitan circulation, which regularly connect these texts' private content to the public conflict in terms that, on the surface at least, are not unlike Jameson's (Bernard, 2011, 80–81). Some critics have sought to defend Jameson on the grounds that this is the situation his 'Third-World Literature' essay is trying to describe. Brian Larkin, for instance, suggests that Jameson's analysis is 'grounded in the difficulty of translation across difference, and it is in that precise encounter [between metropole and periphery] that the force of national allegory is released' (2009, 166). But Jameson is arguing just the opposite: if the 'nation' in national allegory names the very possibility of imagining social relations (Szeman, 2001, 820), then far from producing national allegories, a text's transmission across 'difference' shows how *poorly* equipped the 'first-world' reader is to engage with the literary representation of collectivity. In this formulation, national allegory is a 'structural tendency' (Larsen, 2001, 19; Lazarus, 2004b, 58) that informs literary production in times and places where the desire for an as-yet-unrealized national liberation defines and determines everyday experience, as in contemporary Israel/Palestine. (This 'liberation' obviously has a very different political valence for Zionists and Palestinian nationalists; my point is that its literary expressions are related.) In such a context, 'national allegory' names the problem of constructing a literary narrative of any type – realist, absurdist, autobiographical – that can adequately respond to the sense of permanent and specifically *national* crisis engendered by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is something quite different to the assumption that all Palestinian and Israeli literature is 'about' the nation.

This distinction between national allegory as a reading and a writing practice is one that Jameson also makes, a few years after the controversy, in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (1992).¹² Jameson argues that the kind of national-allegorical interpretation we use to 'think the world system as such' under post-Cold War American hegemony seizes on 'the most random, minute, or isolated landscapes' of national difference, glimpsed in foreign cultural production and in our own cultural iconography, to construct a fantasy solution to the problem of being unable to imagine the social totality. This form of allegorical thinking, he notes, 'has no equivalent in those older national allegories' proposed in the 'Third-World Literature' essay (1992, 4–5). These 'older' allegories are 'conscious and overt' (Jameson, 1986, 80) because of the superior situational consciousness of 'third-world culture.' Like Hegel's slave, only the inhabitants of the former European colonies 'know what reality and the resistance of matter really are,' because of their profoundly disadvantaged position in the current global order. Meanwhile, like Hegel's master, we metropolitans are 'condemned' to 'the luxury of a placeless freedom in which any consciousness of [our] own situation flees like a dream' (Jameson, 1986, 85). The Jamesonian national allegory is thus a 'differentiating operation' (Parry, 1993, 130) meant to remind a metropolitan audience of the 'radical difference of other national situations' (Jameson, 1986, 77, qtd. Parry, 1993, 130). If we are 'to coincide in any adequate way

with that Other “ideal reader” (Jameson, 1986, 66) of the conscious allegory, we need to be able to recognize the ‘epistemological priority’ (Jameson, 1986, 86) of narratives that do not institute a radical split between the private and the public. It is not that ‘third-world literature’ needs an entirely different theory to ‘first-world literature’; it is rather that we need a theory of literature that can dialectically account for the world literary system as a whole, and for our own place in it.¹³

It is not hard to see why so many Palestinian literary texts might be ‘situational and materialist despite [themselves]’ (Jameson, 1986, 85), and why they might ‘put themselves forward explicitly and self-consciously as the vehicles of a national consciousness’ (Lazarus, 2004b, 58) in response to the intolerably precarious economic and political conditions of most Palestinians’ lives after the *nakba* of 1948. The more difficult claim, which I will try to substantiate throughout the book, is that even though Israel is geopolitically part of the ‘first world,’ Israeli writers must also respond to the challenge of representing a national consciousness, on the basis of a far less materially devastating but still culturally pervasive sense of Jewish Israeli (or simply Jewish) embattlement.¹⁴ This idea has persisted from the beginning of the Zionist movement, when the creation of a Hebrew literature was seen as essential to the consolidation of the Jewish nation, to the present day, such that ‘the question of whether Hebrew literature should be committed to the nation’s needs or whether it should voice the individual has never ceased to haunt Hebrew writers’ (Gluzman, 2003, 35).¹⁵ Contemporary Israeli writing includes plenty of texts that might seem ‘condemned to idealism,’ plenty of crime novels and love stories and family dramas that affirm the ‘individual experience of isolated monads’ (Jameson, 1986, 85) and the naturalness of the divide between public and private life. The point, though, is that even in these texts the collective dimension has to be actively *refused*, as a sign of political iconoclasm or artistic freedom or knowing meta-narrativity.¹⁶ If, to cite Larsen once more, we understand national allegory as a ‘structural tendency’ or ‘thematic *a priori*,’ it can be ‘just as typical’ for texts to reject it, in which case the idea of national narration must then be ironized (as in *Midnight’s Children*) or deliberately ruled out (Larsen, 2001, 19–20). All of the texts I address in this book are situated somewhere along this continuum, some positioning themselves more explicitly as a means of expressing a national consciousness (Barghouti, Khalifeh), some addressing this demand more ironically (Oz, Castel-Bloom). If this gloss already suggests a broad differentiation between Palestinian and Israeli-authored texts, it is one that I seek both to account for and to test in the chapters that follow.

There may seem to be a tension between the claims that I am making for the structural position of all Palestinian and Israeli writing and my focus on a small group of texts in metropolitan circulation, which readers might be inclined to dismiss as unrepresentative or self-selecting. Yet even if the presence of national allegory in ‘world novels’ only demonstrates the impact of Western markets on global literary production (Slaughter, 2007, 37–38),

I am less interested in asking whether these writers might write differently in the absence of a metropolitan market for their work (bearing in mind the relative independence of most Arabic and Hebrew writing, at least at first printing, from the Anglophone publication networks that Slaughter is describing) than in how we can interpret what they *do* write under such conditions. As Said puts it in a critique of Derrida, worldly circumstances 'reveal the *novelist writing*, not the god creating or the man or woman presenting. Whether he is Flaubert, Proust, Conrad, Hardy, or Joyce, the novelist is aware of the discourse of which he voluntarily is a part' (1983, 194). This idea of the author's *awareness* of the multiple fields of reception and interpretation that his or her text will enter is central to my understanding of national allegory as a writing practice. The Palestinian and Israeli writers I discuss know that they are expected, to a degree demanded of few if any other contemporary cultural producers, to 'narrate' the nation for their domestic and international readerships. They cannot but respond, even if negatively, to this overwhelming expectation, and to the tremendous political and intellectual responsibility that it implies.

To offer a brief example of what I mean, consider the following complaint, in an interview with BBC News, by the Palestinian-British novelist Samir El-Youssef, who writes in English: 'My narrator does not want to act out his life according to the fact that he is a Palestinian – so what that he is?' (Greene, 2004). El-Youssef's indignation, as I read it, attests to the sense of coercion that accompanies the expectation that a Palestinian writer will represent a collective Palestinian experience, as well as the desirability, in his view, of being able to assert the 'private subjectivity' that is 'denied' (Jameson, 1986, 85) to Palestinian literature and culture. But in the novella that El-Youssef is referring to, *The Day the Beast Got Thirsty* (2004), the narrator's Palestinianness *is* the story: Bassem is trapped in a miserable existence in a refugee camp in Lebanon, perpetually stoned and thoroughly alienated by the naked self-interest of everyone he meets who is involved in 'politics' (the novella is set during the first intifada, and most of Bassem's interlocutors adopt liberationist rhetoric while selling out their compatriots). The only future he can imagine is unbearably bleak: he will get married and have ten children, who will all be killed in the struggle, '[a]nd Dalal and I would be the proud parents of ten martyrs. After that Israel could invade Lebanon again, destroy the Camp and fuck us all up, so we die and get the hell out of this fucking life' (Keret and El-Youssef, 2004, 170). In this text, there is no private narrative without the public predicament: Bassem's personal hell is both emblematic of and inseparable from the collective hell of Palestinian life in the camps. He may not 'want' this kind of situational consciousness, but 'it is precisely to that that he is condemned' (Jameson, 1986, 85).

Yet El-Youssef's refusal of the collective significance of this experience also makes a certain kind of political sense, for the future that the text prefigures, in an absent, negative way, is a utopian one in which the narrator's Palestinianness really *would not* matter, one in which the question of Palestine

has been justly resolved and Palestinians are no longer collectively bound by their shared dispossession. In this light, El-Youssef's seemingly unequivocal rejection of the demand for national allegory looks less straightforward, since his text reveals how difficult and even absurd it is, at the present time, to try to maintain a 'radical split' between poetics and politics in any narrative featuring a Palestinian protagonist. It also signals an important coincidence between the demands of domestic and international audiences and the demands of literary (in this case, fictional and realist) representation. The narrative foregrounds Bassem's rejection of the national struggle as a way of highlighting and subverting audience expectations about Palestinians' political beliefs, but at the same time it confirms the assumption that a text by a Palestinian writer will be 'about' the Palestinian nation, simply by virtue of its protagonist's situation and predicament.

The apparent contradiction between national allegory as a reading and a writing practice, then, is not really a contradiction after all, or at least not in the way that it first seems to be. This is not because there is any common conceptual ground between national allegory as a metropolitan desire for a glimpse of non-metropolitan difference and as an artistic expression of a political desire for national autonomy. It is rather because, in practice, these two demands are extremely difficult to separate: both structure the conditions of literary production and reception for contemporary Palestinian and Israeli writing, and both require a correspondence between the private and public content of the text. South African writers faced a similar situation during the later years of apartheid, when the political urgency of representing extreme injustice and suffering coincided with international preconceptions about the content of South African writing.¹⁷ An important difference, however, is that in the Israeli-Palestinian case, the demand for *national* representation is even more striking, since the nation, variously defined, continues to be a political desire that is widely recognized and indeed affirmed beyond the region's borders. This means, among other things, that in contrast to most of the 'world novels' from apartheid-era South Africa, which took a strong anti-apartheid stance, Israeli texts in international circulation are not mainly anti-Zionist, though they are often critical of the occupation of the Palestinian territories. This state of affairs cannot be entirely explained by the weakness of anti-Zionism (or its less radical counterpart, 'post-Zionism') in Israeli public culture, or the relatively high level of metropolitan sympathy, especially among Americans, with Zionism today compared to South African apartheid in the 1980s, though these are obviously crucial factors. It is also a sign – both symptom and cause – of the central role that Israel/Palestine plays in our investment in the idea of 'national narratives,' and of the expectation that Palestinian and Israeli texts will provide their readers with a vicarious experience of a strongly felt national belonging and commitment. This expectation helps to determine which texts get translated, who publishes and distributes them, and how their metropolitan readers receive them.

Under such conditions of reception, it can be tempting for readers and critics to reward a writer's impatience with the imperative to 'represent' the nation, since such representation seems boring or obvious, and to prioritize texts that respond by defamiliarizing or problematizing the demand for national allegories, in keeping with the practice of a writer like J. M. Coetzee or Salman Rushdie. Nicholas Harrison suggests as much when he argues that the 'purposes of art' may include 'the disruption of those dynamics of representativity that identify writing with a person, a "voice" or a place' (2003, 111). My aim in this book, however, is expand the discussion beyond texts that are sceptical of this kind of role for literature, and to take seriously the open 'invitation to allegorize' (Attridge, 2006, 77) that is proffered, in different ways, by all of the texts I consider. I do this in the spirit of Jameson's insistence on the 'epistemological priority' of the 'conscious and overt' national allegory, which seeks to advance its own sense of the truth of a social reality by designating the nation as the privileged form of narrative and social order. I emphasize once more that I am not suggesting that Zionist and Palestinian nationalisms should be thought of as politically interchangeable or equivalent, as if nationalism were simply 'a mode of representation,' and all nationalisms 'alike to the extent that they involve the attempt to secure consent for their claims to representativeness' (Lazarus, 1999, 108–9). I am arguing, however, that despite these major political differences, contemporary Palestinian and Israeli writers face a comparable aesthetic challenge. Both must respond to, and both are aware that they must respond to, the expectation that they will accurately and persuasively *represent* a collective national consciousness, in both the political and the mimetic senses of that word.¹⁸ It is worth affirming that this intellectual predicament has resonance well beyond this body of writing, and even beyond 'third-world literature.' As Ian Buchanan reminds us in his defence of the 'Third-World Literature' essay, for Jameson 'the aesthetic dilemma facing Third World writers is one that all political texts have in common: it is 'the challenge to think about our present condition from a higher perspective' (2003, 78–79).

What we 'already know'

Arguably, the most formidable obstacle facing any recourse to 'national allegory' or 'national narration' is that to some readers these terms will seem not just dubious but passé. Beyond the obvious rejoinder – if these ideas are no longer of use, then why do we keep returning to them? – it is worth pausing to note the assumptions that underlie such a response. What does it mean to 'already know' something? Brennan, challenging the tendency in contemporary literary and cultural criticism to fetishize the 'complex' at the expense of the 'simple' or 'obvious,' responds by citing Adorno: 'We know from psychoanalysis that the reasoning, "we know all this!" is often a defense' (1997, 67). For Brennan, it is a way to avoid examining the premises

on which our critical practices are based, and of disavowing 'older' (to use Jameson's term) traditions of critical thought, above all radical and socialist traditions. Thinkers like Noam Chomsky are

automatically discarded as existing in the dutiful, upright, and utterly predictable world of correct political practice, where the object of the game is merely to compile data on various injustices, conspiracies, and acts of greed. One assumes that the information in question may vary from page to page but that the kind of point made is always the same. There is no philosophical meat to the work. It is, in short, already known. (Brennan, 1997, 102–3)

In an academic and public culture that prizes 'innovation,' it is relatively easy to reject an idea by declaring it to be boring, and so to protect ourselves from any uncomfortable conclusions it might provoke.¹⁹ Jameson warns against this reaction in *The Political Unconscious*, in the context of our readings of literary texts: if the reader is 'bored or scandalized' by a text's roots in its historical moment, it is because of 'his resistance to his own political unconscious' and 'his denial of the reading and writing of the text of history within himself' (2002, 19). The idea that Chomsky's work is 'predictable' similarly denies that we might be in any way implicated by what he says.

There is an instructive parallel, in fact, between the boringness of national narration and the boringness of the question of Palestine, which stems in part from the volume of scholarship produced on both subjects. Symptomatic responses in Israel/Palestine studies include those of Gil Hochberg, who begins her important study of the 'inseparability' of Arab and Jewish identities in literature by suggesting that 'we are all well familiar' with the idea of Jewish and Arab antagonism (2007, 2), and Anne Lesch and Ian Lustick, whose book on Palestinian and Israeli ideas of exile and return promises not to 'rehash familiar debates about refugee return' or 'exactly what happened in 1948,' but to address the 'practical, complex, and often messy realities' associated with Jewish and Palestinian 'return' to Israel/Palestine (2005, 7, 9). Such claims depend rhetorically on the academic currency of the new, as well as the seeming outdatedness of ideas of antagonism or contest as opposed to notions of 'complexity' and cultural hybridity, dialogue, and exchange.²⁰ This emphasis distinguishes these scholars' uses of the trope of newness from that of Ze'ev Sternhell, who accuses the historian Gabriel Piterberg of staleness on political grounds: 'One could say that, like post-modernism, anti-Zionism *has aged* badly [... Piterberg's] theory of colonialism [...] is somewhat *antiquated* and hardly credible outside fiercely anti-Zionist political circles' (2010, 99, 111, emphasis added). Sternhell dismisses the charge that Zionism is a form of colonialism as an academic fad: 'a quarter of a century ago, this idea had a certain novelty [...] but since then the anti-Zionists have established their own conformism and become stuck in its mire' (2010, 99).²¹ It would be hard to find a more explicit use of the language of boredom as a means of invalidation.

The idea of national narration has also been around a long time, and certainly long enough to become a 'virtual routine of literary and cultural studies,' as Neil Larsen noted over a decade ago (2001, 169). This sense of weariness stems in part from a broader sense of fatigue with the idea that 'narratives' (like 'identities') are 'constructed,' which, as Nancy Partner has observed, 'is just too patent at the ordinary level of sophistication in academe to be worth much further discussion [... narrative] lost its academic charge of excitement long ago' (2009, 830). However, the boredom with national narration is also very closely connected to the sense of archaism that has come to be associated with nationalism as a political strategy. Because 'national transformation no longer holds the same promise' after the defeat of 'classical imperialism' (Brown, 2008, 273) and the subsequent decline in the fortunes of many of the new African and Asian states, the idea of national liberation, like the idea of international socialism, has come to seem obsolete. Gayatri Spivak's rebuttal to the 'Third-World Literature' essay exemplifies this mood: 'Politically correct metropolitan multiculturalists want the world's others to be identitarians; nationalists (Jameson) or class (Ahmad). To undo this binary demand is to suggest that peripheral literature may stage more *surprising and unexpected* maneuvers toward collectivity' (2003, 55–56, emphasis added).

These uses of the language of surprise, excitement, and novelty on the one hand, and boredom and familiarity on the other, represent a general intellectual atmosphere in literary and cultural studies, one which reflects the significant degree of correspondence between the languages of criticism and the corporation (Brennan, 1997, 119–62). However, the coincidence of this language across discussions of Israel/Palestine and national narration should give us pause. If the question of Palestine persists, it is because the Israeli state's dispossession and disenfranchisement of the Palestinians has not ended: '[the Palestinian question] is as intransigent as it was in 1917, when the Balfour Declaration was issued' (Massad, 2006, 166). Similarly, if the question of the nation persists for literary and cultural studies, it is '*because* the economic and political crisis of national polities, particularly peripheral and poorer ones, violently foregrounds it' (Larsen, 2001, 170). If our approaches to these problems no longer seem 'fresh,' it is because the conditions they address are ongoing; this may have something to do with the effectiveness of our tactics, but it has at least as much to do with the obduracy of the status quo. Here Slaughter's comment on the apparent tautology of human rights law – 'human rights are the rights of humans' (2007, 78) – provides a stirring reminder of why we might need to keep saying what we 'already know': 'Human rights law is therefore not precisely tautological because it is *not yet* tautological, because it is *not yet* socially and culturally redundant, because the human person is *not yet* the human person of international human rights' (2007, 81). By the same token, the idea of Palestinian and Israeli national narration is not yet redundant because the world is not yet post-national, and because the struggle for Palestinian self-determination is not yet won. That these points

are 'already known' does not make them any less true, or any less in need of our attention and critique.²²

If we resist the urge to dismiss the idea of Palestinian and Israeli national narration as something we 'already know,' it becomes possible to distinguish its more specific meanings and possibilities as an intellectual and literary practice from the ways it is normally used in public discourse about the conflict. Part of the reason this idea seems obvious is that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has come to function as a kind of shorthand for the very idea of 'national narrative.' Partner makes this point persuasively by collating references to the Palestinian and Israeli 'narratives' as evidence of the popular purchase of the idea of narrative in contemporary public discourse. (She also warns against the language of boredom: 'if we, now well into the yet-to-be defined post-postmodern era, are not surprised, we should discard veils of sophistication until we find a fresh response' [2009, 826].) Partner is rightly sceptical about the superficial notion of narrative that has made its way into popular consciousness, which has 'nowhere near the precision and rigor of narrative theory as a mode of analysis' (2009, 833). Yet in the context of Israel/Palestine, this theoretical vagueness is precisely what allows the idea of 'national narrative' to be put to contradictory uses. The meaning of this idea is not transparent, but has a strategic function that varies significantly depending on the speaker and context.

Historically speaking, the rise of the 'two narratives' paradigm is no small achievement, since it registers how much more widely the Palestinian national movement is recognized among Jewish Israelis and Euro-US observers today than it was three decades ago, when Edward Said, among others, first made use of the idea of the 'Palestinian narrative.' In the well-known essay 'Permission to Narrate' (1984), Said makes 'impish' use of the textual idealism that was in ascendency at the time (Brennan, 2006, 124) by noting the absence of the Palestinian 'narrative' from metropolitan discourse: '[The Palestinians] are there all right, but the *narrative* of their present actuality – which stems directly from the story of their existence in and displacement from Palestine, later Israel – that *narrative* is not' (1984, 29, emphasis added).²³ The idea of two narratives, one Palestinian and one Israeli, gained greater currency in the late 1980s and 1990s, in parallel with not only the cultural turn in the metropolitan academy but also the diplomatic efforts to achieve a 'two-state solution.' Those who viewed the 1993 Oslo accords optimistically could perceive a satisfying logic in the seemingly straightforward analogy between two narratives and two states, in marked distinction to Said, who famously called the agreement a 'Palestinian Versailles' (1993).²⁴

As this development suggests, by this stage the idea of two narratives had lost most of its radical or oppositional force. Today, it is widely held that the resolution of the conflict depends on Palestinians and Israelis 'recognizing' one another's 'narratives,' as Robert Rotberg suggests in his introduction to the aptly titled collection *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict*: 'Until each side recognizes the validity of the other's narrative

– until conditions exist that permit a mutual, cross-national examination of the opposing narratives – conditions conducive to a reduction of conflict, or to delegitimizing the whole quality of the existing conflict, will not emerge’ (2006, 17).²⁵ Since the conflict is understood primarily in cultural terms, as a clash between ‘narratives,’ it is also perceived (or perhaps, hoped) to be dependent on cultural and narratological processes for its resolution. This tells us something about how the synecdochal relation of Israel/Palestine with the idea of national narration has come about. It makes sense, at a time when political belief is habitually subsumed within or displaced by ‘identity,’ ‘culture,’ or ‘faith,’ that ‘the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,’ understood not as a settler-colonial conflict bolstered by US support for Israel but as an endless ethno-national war, would be used to confirm and promote the idea that political belief is intrinsically identitarian. We understand other foreign civil wars and national struggles in this way too, of course: media and cultural representations of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, or sectarian violence in Iraq, are presented in terms of ‘the media phenomenon of neo-ethnicity, a simulacrum in which it is no longer a question of *belief*, in any religious sense, but very much a question of *practices* [... N]eo-ethnicity is something you decide to reaffirm about yourself’ (Jameson, 1992, 117). However, because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more firmly associated with ideas of ‘ancient’ or ‘eternal’ self-definition than any other contemporary conflict, it is uniquely available to shore up an ‘era of filiative reassertion [...] that seems to render opinions, positions, and arguments secondary to modes of being’ (Brennan, 2006, 5). In this way, the idea of ‘two narratives’ enables the conflict to function as a metropolitan spectacle, in which both Zionism and Palestinian nationalism serve as didactic illustrations of the intractability of all nationalist politics for a cosmopolitan audience encouraged to congratulate itself on its own putative post-nationalism.²⁶

The further problem with the notion of ‘two narratives’ is that it misconstrues Said’s original argument. Instead of confronting the idea of Jewish national liberation with the Palestinian experience of colonization and dispossession, as Said tried to do, the idea of competing narratives has enabled the widespread adoption of a liberal commitment to ‘balance’ in which, as Rashid Khalidi has noted, ‘often [...] permission cannot be granted for a Palestinian voice to be heard – even on matters having absolutely nothing to do with Israel – without the reassuring presence of its Israeli echo. The opposite, of course, is not true’ (1997, 146–47). Palestinian and Israeli nationalisms are understood as quests for justice for the victims of almost mythical – that is to say, dehistoricized – experiences of dispossession, dispersion, and violence, in which the ‘tragedy’ of the conflict is that both peoples ‘lay claim to the same land’ (I use the cliché deliberately). This model follows Amos Oz’s famous dictum, in response to the 1967 war, that the conflict represents a tragic clash of ‘right versus right’ (1994, 37). In this regard, the improved receptiveness to the ‘Palestinian narrative’ has

produced a condition of political stasis, tempering a palpable emergent sympathy for the Palestinian struggle with a strong residual – and for some observers, undiminished – identification with the political and moral authority of the Jewish state after the Holocaust. The idea of the ‘Palestinian narrative’ is also increasingly used as a means of delegitimizing Palestinian claims, since ‘narrative’ also suggests an idea that falls short of universally accepted truth. When the Israeli negotiator Tal Becker dismisses Palestinian demands for property restitution and the return of refugees as an inappropriate imposition of ‘their narrative’ (Black and Milne, 2011), or when the director of the American Anti-Defamation League astonishingly claims that US advisors to the post-Annapolis negotiations have been ‘more in tune with the Palestinian narrative than the Israeli narrative’ (Cooper and Landler, 2011), they use the term ‘narrative’ not to recognize Palestinian claims, but to refute them, and to defensively assert Jewish Israelis’ right to a ‘narrative’ of their own.

The idea of two warring narratives is not only politically misleading, however. It is telling that despite its profoundly culturalist assumptions, the conflicting-narratives paradigm has not led to a corresponding depth of metropolitan interest in the actual cultural production of the region, nor in the specific ways in which literary narratives might intercede in the project of narrating the nation. This has much to do with the marginalization of literary and cultural studies when it comes to the study of contemporary conflicts, but it also stems, I would argue, from the tendency to receive Palestinian and Israeli texts as already read. Since we already ‘know’ that Palestinian and Israeli narratives are ‘about’ the nation, to examine the particular ways in which these narratives might develop, theorize, or interrogate Zionism or Palestinian nationalism appears to be uninteresting, or worse, redundant. Yet if we understand Palestinian and Israeli literary narratives simply as rehearsals of their respective national narratives, the idea of one kind of narrative shades deceptively into the other, obscuring the ‘contestatory nature of the struggle for nationhood,’ which is ‘also the history of opposition, counter-manoeuvres, appropriation from below and alternative “imaginings” of community’ (Gopal, 2005, 19). To figure the national imaginaries of Palestinian and Israeli texts as already known is to fail to reckon not only with what is most interesting and vital about these texts, but also with what they actually seek to accomplish.

I would like to stress again that this is not the same as seeing Palestinian and Israeli literature as necessarily or even typically subversive of the antagonism between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs. It is undeniably the case that ‘Jew’ and ‘Arab’ (or ‘Israeli’ and ‘Palestinian’) are constructed categories, and literature’s ability to reveal their provisionality and relative modernity is an important political task, as critics like Hochberg (2007) and Brenner (2003) have shown. Yet it is also necessary to understand *how* these categories are envisioned and perpetuated, and how writers mobilize them for solidaristic as well as exclusionary ends. Thus, while I agree with

Hochberg that Palestinian and Israeli literature 'not only *reflects* historical and socio-political realities but further *competes* with them' (2007, 3), in this book I emphasize the first of these terms over the second, with the understanding that the effort to 'reflect' historical and political reality is a form of strategic intervention in itself. The writing of national – and nationalist – literature is a specific kind of intellectual practice, one that generates its own aesthetic satisfactions and rewards. Such texts, from the perspective of their creators, are part of Fanon's 'literature of combat,' a call to arms which gives national consciousness its 'forms and contours' (1963, 240). Far from boring us, these narrations should command our full attention.

The demographic imaginary:
Literature and citizenship in Israel/Palestine

It is, of course, one thing to speak in general terms about the imperative to represent the nation, but quite another to correlate the evidence of an individual text, in all the 'slippery facets of its literariness and particularity' (Harrison, 2003, 84), with specific forms of political argument. The familiar strategies for representing the nation, or for responding to the expectation that a writer will represent the nation, that we have come to recognize after Anderson and Rushdie tend to provide a kind of prefabricated critical process, which has the unfortunate effect of limiting our understanding of national narration as a literary practice, as I noted in the introduction. I am referring to such tropes as the pastoral depiction of a national landscape, the linking of apparently unconnected characters by the accidents of plot, or the connections between the events of a protagonist's life and an official or suppressed national history. The difficulty is that these kinds of readings, while often readily demonstrable with reference to a given text, are also easily limited to Larsen's 'mock expedition' or Jameson's 'isolated landscapes' of national difference, in which the aim of the exercise is simply to find thematic evidence of 'the nation,' or more often, to find evidence that undermines 'the nation's' perceived hegemony.

But we might approach the problem differently, by seeking to restore the link between 'national narration' and the state, which would mean conceiving of the nation as a mode of social organization that authorizes a particular form of civic administration.²⁷ The national landscape is not just an emotive setting, but a bounded and administered territory; characters are linked not solely by their proximity in time and space, but by their recourse (or lack thereof) to a common form of political representation or authority; and the protagonist is more properly a citizen-protagonist. What I am describing, of course, is a form of political imagination or education that we have long associated with the relationship between the bourgeois novel of nineteenth-century Europe and the development of the idea of the modern citizen, which we conventionally understand as becoming disrupted

and even irrelevant in the twentieth century. This is the situation alluded to in the opening of Jameson's 'Third-World Literature' essay, when he imagines the response of a 'first-world' reader who is inclined to dismiss 'third-world' writing on the grounds that 'they are still writing novels like Dreiser or Sherwood Anderson' (1986, 65), both of whom helped to define the meaning and purchase of an American national citizenship before the United States assumed its current global dominance. The 'radical difference of other national situations' manifests in part in the undiminished urgency of such battles elsewhere, as the struggle over the meaning of citizenship in contemporary Israel/Palestine so vividly shows.²⁸

The defence of national citizenship has become increasingly unfashionable in the academy, in parallel with the disavowal of the idea of the nation itself, as frustrations with curbs on metropolitan immigration and state oppression of minorities and dissidents have led scholars to focus on non-state actors and the possibility of civic and political forms of global citizenship.²⁹ But rather than bypassing the notion of national citizenship altogether, we might instead emphasize its strategic value in the battle for 'just membership' (Benhabib, 2004, 3) in a world of nation-states, where citizenship is the name of a demand for the equal distribution of civil, political, social, and material rights (Davis, 2000, 51).³⁰ In Israel/Palestine, the notion of citizenship is what links the Law of Return for Jews to the right of return for Palestinians, and what links Palestinians living in Lebanon or Gaza to the European Jews who became stateless during and after World War II: it is a declaration of rights that seeks to defend against their denial, or (in the case of the Law of Return) the future threat of their denial.

As is well known, it was the situation of the denationalized European Jews that provoked Hannah Arendt's thinking on statelessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), which remains one of the most influential interrogations of the idea that the nation is the locus of individual rights. Arendt – who was sceptical about Zionism, especially after 1948, because it associated political rights with identity³¹ – famously argued:

The survivors of the extermination camps, the inmates of concentration and internment camps, and even the comparatively happy stateless people could see without [Edmund] Burke's arguments that the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger [...] If a human being loses his political status, he should, according to the implications of the inborn and inalienable rights of man, come under exactly the situation for which the declarations of such general rights provide. Actually the opposite is the case. It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man. (1967, 300)³²

A number of scholars have seen this articulation of the tautological relationship between citizenship and rights as an ironically prescient description of the situation of stateless Palestinians in the West Bank and

Gaza, who are directly or indirectly ruled by the Israeli state but denied most of the rights enjoyed by Israeli citizens.³³ Governance in Israel/Palestine is defined by its overlapping zones of 'full citizenship, "weak citizenship," or no citizenship at all' (Weizman, 2007, 7): these categories correspond to the rights of Jewish Israelis (especially the Ashkenazi elite), Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the stateless residents of the Palestinian territories.³⁴ Since Zionism defines the Israeli state as synonymous with the Jewish nation, the full rights of citizenship, including social and material rights, are reserved for the state's Jewish citizens (Davis, 2000, 54).

Yet this 'ethnic' conception and implementation of the rights of citizenship competes with the Israeli state's self-definition as a democracy, which makes the idea of national citizenship not just a means of exclusion, but also the grounds for a demand for inclusion. As Jacques Rancière has written in response to Arendt:

The very difference between man and citizen is not a sign of disjunction proving that the rights are either void or tautological. It is the opening of an interval for political subjectivization. Political names are litigious names, names whose extension and comprehension are uncertain and which open for that reason the space of a test or verification. Political subjects build such cases of verification. They put to test the power of political names, their extension and comprehension. They not only confront the inscriptions of rights to situations of denial; they put together the world where those rights are valid and the world where they are not. They put together a relation of inclusion and a relation of exclusion. (2004, 304)

The notion of citizenship as a 'litigious name' for the equal extension of rights identifies a point from which stateless Palestinians and Palestinian citizens of Israel can and do fight their claims.³⁵ In Rancière's model, Palestinians are already political subjects, not excluded from the realm of politics, as Arendt and others would have it. Whether such claims are made in the name of a Palestinian right to national self-determination (as in the drive for UN recognition of Palestine as a full member state, which continues as I write) or a Palestinian Israeli's right to full Israeli citizenship, they envision an alternative 'relation of inclusion' to the 'ethnocratic' regime that is currently in place, a regime in which ethno-religious identification, not territorial citizenship, is the 'main determinant of the allocation of rights, powers, and resources' (Yiftachel, 2006, 16).

Israel/Palestine differs from most contemporary postcolonial contexts in that in the absence of a negotiated or internationally enforced solution to the conflict, the question of who is a citizen, and of what kind of polity, is an ongoing and central point of dispute.³⁶ Many of the features of Palestinian and Israeli society that are typically understood in terms of 'national narratives' can be productively framed in relation to the definition of citizenship, since when we talk about a feeling of 'belonging' to the

nation, here and elsewhere, this is what it signifies in material terms: ‘a simpler, more knifelike communal sense based upon the passport, the green card, and the open-ended residency permit’ (Brennan, 1997, 124). The idea of two states for two peoples evidently associates citizenship with ethnic belonging: Israeli citizenship is premised on racial and religious criteria, and the idea of a yet-to-be-achieved Palestinian citizenship both reacts against that definition of membership and draws on a prior history of indigenous presence. Citizenship can be extended to individuals who are not members of the ethno-nation, but the state ‘belongs’ to that nation, as both the Palestinian and the Israeli declarations of nationhood make clear. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (1948) asserts ‘the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in *their own* sovereign state’ and appeals to the ‘Arab *inhabitants* of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the state on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation’ (‘Declaration,’ 2009, 244–45, emphasis added). The Palestinian Declaration of Independence (1988), which was written in Arabic by Mahmoud Darwish and translated into English by Edward Said, responds: ‘The State of Palestine is *the state of Palestinians* wherever they may be. *The state is for them* to enjoy in it *their collective national and cultural identity* [...] The rights of minorities will be duly respected by the majority, as minorities must abide by decisions of the majority’ (1989, 215, emphasis added). In both documents, the language of citizenship as a mode of democratic governance (due representation, respect for minorities) is mobilized to legitimate a campaign for national self-determination: it is invoked as part of the demand for collective, not individual rights.³⁷

These texts belong to the ‘literature of citizenship’ in the expansive sense provided by Julia Reinhard Lupton, who sees it as ‘a distinct genre and tradition of writing’ that includes foundational civic documents as well as literary texts (2005, 24). For Lupton, what distinguishes the literature of citizenship is its distinctive form of address: it ‘invites us to approach questions of community, sovereignty, and difference from a vantage point *other than culture*’ (2005, 53), by which she seems to mean identitarian belonging. Yet we might see the literature of citizenship of Israel/Palestine as more typically – though not exclusively – engaged in an attempt to erase any opposition between citizenship and culture, by depicting the ‘state/citizen bind’ (Chakrabarty, 2000, 37) in terms of what I will call a ‘demographic imaginary.’ The term evidently takes its cue from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s ‘democratic imaginary’ (2001, 158), but it adapts the utopian valence of that phrase to reflect the contested status of the very idea of democracy, and demography, in Israel/Palestine. The idea of demography invokes a heterogeneous and disunified population: it purports to describe the actual composition of the population of a given territory, instead of ‘an idealized unity on whose behalf various actors might claim to speak’ (Marx, 2011, 68). However, the heterogeneity of

the population living in Israel/Palestine has long been bluntly described by those committed to maintaining a Jewish majority in the state of Israel as a 'demographic problem,' a phrase that suppresses the historical circumstances through which that majority was achieved – namely, the mass expulsions of Palestinians in 1948 – and conjures up the spectre of ethnic cleansing, euphemistically known as 'transfer,' as one of the 'problem's' possible solutions.³⁸ The notion of a 'demographic problem' looks even more egregious (and by some accounts, past 'solving') when we note that in the larger political entity that includes the state of Israel and the occupied territories, the population of Palestinians and Jewish Israelis is roughly equal, with the most recent figures giving the Palestinians an edge (CIA Factbook).

The idea of a demographic imaginary seeks to displace the emphasis on the literary representation of 'the Other' that has not only continually occupied postcolonial criticism after *Orientalism* and the 'ethical turn' in literary studies, but has also influenced studies of Arab-Jewish rapprochement. This is because the phrase refers not to the representation of ethnic or national 'difference,' but to the literary representation of the national 'same,' which may or may not be defined according to ethnic or religious criteria. Indeed, if we conceive of literary texts as producing 'a literary sort of governmental thought whenever they associate character with group, population with territory, and administration with defining what it means for a population to be secure, productive, or otherwise well-off' (Marx, 2011, 67), then we can envision the possibility that they might also produce demographic imaginaries that are more expansive and emancipatory than those of the status quo, and which do not rely on identitarian notions of bonding or convergence. Said offered one such alternative imaginary, in a 1995 speech on the future of Jerusalem:

Simply to speak about East Jerusalem mechanically as Arab is not enough. I myself do not at all believe it is in our interests as a people to introduce another division in a city that has remained ethnically separated albeit municipally glued together in the manner that Israel has done it; I think it would be much better to set an example, and provide an alternative to such methods as Israel's by projecting an image of the whole of Jerusalem that is truer to its complex mixture of religions, histories and cultures, than the one of Jerusalem as something that we would like to slice back into two parts. (2011, 66)

Much depends on whether literary texts envision Palestinian and Israeli national identities as static and opinion polls as 'an unyielding edifice' (Tilley, 2005, 42), or whether they set out to 'project' another kind of polity, one which 'requires the ability to live with others precisely when there is no obvious mode of belonging' (Butler, 2007, para. 20).

In place of the idea that narrative literature functions as an analogue or a specific instance of the macro-narratives of Zionism and Palestinian

nationalism, then, I am proposing that we read for evidence of the ways in which Palestinian and Israeli texts in international circulation intervene in the conflict over different definitions of citizenship, and how they theorize, predict, and defend the political and social implications of contrasting models of national belonging. The possible political futures that provide the templates for such interventions are well known. The US-led 'peace process' assumes an outcome of two states, one Jewish and Israeli and one Palestinian and Arab, based on the 1967 borders with 'mutually agreed land swaps' to 'account for the changes that have taken place over the last 44 years,' as President Barack Obama has euphemistically put it ('Obama's AIPAC Speech,' 2011). This evasive formulation ratifies much of the Israeli settlement, illegal under international law, that has taken place since 1967, and it assumes the principle of political separation based on ethnic division – partition – as the only means of resolving the conflict. Meanwhile, an increasing number of Palestinians and Palestinian solidarity activists have come to endorse the idea of a single state in all of historical Palestine, although this is still a minority view, not least because such a state is not the preferred outcome of most of the Palestinian and Jewish Israeli public (Khalidi, 2006, 207). This single polity between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River is variously conceived as a binational or federated state which would recognize the national claims of both Israelis and Palestinians, or as a de-ethnicized territorial state, based on the principle of one citizen, one vote. More recently, analysts like Moshe Behar have chillingly argued that the Israeli political establishment is looking to produce its own 'one-state solution,' namely 'further consolidation of Israeli-Jewish domination over the whole territory comprising Mandatory Palestine' (2011, 360).

Unlike political theorists, writers are not normally in the business of predicting future social arrangements, and so it is only a very specific type of text that would set out to depict a utopian or dystopian future state in Israel/Palestine: Theodor Herzl's programmatic 1902 novel *Altneuland* (Eng. *Old-New-Land*, 2007) comes to mind. The demographic imaginary might instead be understood in terms of the 'recourse to biographical form,' which Georg Lukács famously argued limits the "'bad" infinity' of the novel by restricting its horizons to the experiences of a single protagonist (1971, 81). Neil Larsen, in an effort to advance the idea of national narration beyond Jameson and Anderson's contributions, builds on Lukács' claim by suggesting that just as the hero's experiences limit the scope of the novel, those experiences are themselves limited by the 'meta-narrative' form of the nation as imagined community. For Larsen, '[t]he "nation," at this synthetic, structural level, becomes that mediated form of "bad" infinity necessary to the social self-reproduction of the individual "subject": nation as that which, "politically," mediates between the individual and its "life"' (2001, 180–81).³⁹ The nation, in other words, is the condition of possibility for the protagonist's constitution as a social subject, which corresponds in political terms to her constitution as a citizen.

My position in this book is that any Palestinian or Israeli literary text, fictional or not, that is structurally reliant on the 'recourse to biographical form' for its project of sense-making will produce its own demographic imaginary – its own mediated infinity – and so its own criteria for national citizenship and national belonging. This includes a range of narrative forms and modes: Anderson's 'old-fashioned novel,' modernist and experimental fiction, testimonial narratives, and memoir and autobiography. When these texts enter into international circulation, their imaginings of a national citizenry travel beyond their domestic readers to an international audience, and advocate for the recognition of a particular definition of citizenship among that wider readership. We can assess this journey from periphery to metropole sceptically, seeing it as a move that commodifies and renders banal (Slaughter, 2007, 37) the notion of citizenship in Israel/Palestine by reducing it to yet another instance of the 'national narrative.' But as I have been suggesting, we might also see the global literary marketplace as one of the arenas in which the contest over the meaning of citizenship in Israel/Palestine is fought. If, as Slaughter also argues, literary 'genres emerge and become conventional' by making actual and possible social formations and relations intelligible (2007, 10), then we might see the Palestinian and Israeli narrative forms that tend to make it into international circulation (memoir, novel, testimony) as having become familiar on the basis of their articulations of the modes of social organization that we expect to see in the region, as well as those that we might hope to see. In this way, the relation of biographical form to demographic imaginary in Palestinian and Israeli 'world literature' can be understood as a specific incarnation of national allegory: it is a conjoining of private and public that functions, once again, as both a reading and a writing practice. The link between biography and demography influences the reception of Palestinian and Israeli writing – as readers, we expect the representation of the state/citizen bind to have something to do with religious and ethnic identity – *and* it describes the means through which literary texts are able to 'imagine' a present or future Palestinian, Israeli, or shared nation-state.

The idea of the demographic imaginary and the corresponding definition of citizenship obviously do not exhaust the representational possibilities of the texts I consider in this book: I am not suggesting that they have '*nothing else* to narrate' (Ahmad, 1987, 9) besides the idea of the nation. My aim is rather to present a framework for thinking about the ways in which narrative literature might serve as a laboratory for testing different ways of organizing and defining a polity, at a time in which the political future of Israel/Palestine remains very far from certain. In this respect, these texts have something in common with the writing that preceded independence in other colonial contexts, which also responded to the 'range of radical *possibilities* that were thrown up by the very nature of the anti-colonial struggle and the process of decolonisation' (Gopal, 2005, 23). If the prospect of decolonization in Israel/Palestine seems anything but assured, the region

is nevertheless positioned in a time of tumult and possibility, one that is continually being transmitted and consumed on the world stage. However marginal its readership, Palestinian and Israeli 'world literature' is a key site for imagining the region's political future, and for allowing readers across the world to do the same.

Exile and Liberation: Edward Said's *Out of Place*

For where no straight line leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity, all events are accidents, all progress is a digression, all residence is exile.

– Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*

During his long tenure as the West's best-known and most eloquent Palestinian spokesperson, Edward Said contributed more than any other writer to the metropolitan recognition of the Palestinian national movement. Among his many books, essays, and articles on the subject of Palestine, most of them pitched to the informed general reader, two texts stand out for their reach towards a still wider audience. The first is *After the Last Sky* (1999a [1986]), Said's collaboration with the photographer Jean Mohr, from which this chapter's epigraph is taken. *After the Last Sky* was written at a particularly bleak time in Palestinian history, after the armed resistance movement had been decisively defeated in Lebanon in 1982 and before the unprecedented popular resistance of the first intifada in 1987. As a consequence, perhaps, the book occupies an odd generic niche, somewhere between coffee-table activism and illustrated prose poem, with its lyrical and sometimes discomfiting blend of autobiography, ethnography, and emotive universalization of the Palestinian experience. The second text is Said's memoir, *Out of Place* (2000 [1999]), written in English (though quickly published in Arabic translation) between the years of 1996 and 1998, after the crushing disappointment of the Oslo accords and during a period when Said was seriously ill with leukaemia and did not publish any other major work.¹ While more formally and stylistically conventional than *After the Last Sky* – it draws on the 'great man' and confessional modes of memoir, as

well as the classical and postcolonial *Bildungsroman* – *Out of Place* (*OP*) also resorts to affective representation as a response to public and private crisis. The memoir occupies a unique place in Said's oeuvre as his only full-length narrative work, and it explicitly uses non-fictional biographical form, the story of the life of the young Edward, to address the same commitments to Palestinian national identity, indigeneity, and statehood that Said explored and fought for in the rest of his work on Palestine.

Said's stated motivations for writing the memoir were largely personal: he wanted, he writes, to 'leave behind a subjective account of the life I lived in the Arab world' (*OP*, xiii) and to 'defen[d]' himself against the agony of extended periods of intensive chemotherapy (Said, 1999c, para. 7). Yet the memoir is not as much of a departure from his other work as this description might make it seem, since virtually everything Said wrote was received, and just as importantly, conceived in biographical terms. The most basic form of this conjuncture is the routine interpretation of Said's scholarship through the lens of his identity as a Palestinian or Palestinian-American. As early as 1976, in the special issue of the journal *Diacritics* that was devoted to Said's first major book *Beginnings* (1975), J. Hillis Miller began his review by noting that both the book *and* its author were '*sui generis*':

Edward Said is a Palestinian from a family long Christian, whose native language is Arabic, but whose early schooling was, as the striking interview essay in this issue of *Diacritics* indicates, in English-speaking British schools in Egypt and Palestine. Said's family has lived for many years in Lebanon, that country whose present disaster, so difficult, if not impossible, for a Westerner to understand, might be taken by synecdoche (whole for part) as an emblem of the violent complexity of a Near-Eastern heritage. (Miller, 1976, 2)

Miller uses this startling opening as a lead-in to his discussion of the many ways – methodological, generic, political – in which *Beginnings* 'resists pigeon-holing, like its author' (1976, 2). While Said's non-American origins were not always so bluntly represented, this use of Said's background as the key to understanding the originality of his scholarship extends to the reception of his work in postcolonial studies. Timothy Brennan observes that the field's tendency towards identitarian thinking has ensured that *Orientalism* (1978) is grouped with the 'poetical testimonies' of *After the Last Sky* and the rest of Said's Palestinian writings: it is seen as an insider's account of imperial racism, rather than a 'profoundly American book' that sought to counter the ascendancy of a dematerialized poststructuralism (Brennan, 2006, 94, 120). Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia endorse a very broad version of this approach:

[W]hether [Said] wrote about English literature, about the complexities of texts and how they are formed, about the ways in which the West exerted power over the Oriental world, about the functions of intellectuals in society, or even about music, his own place as an exiled Palestinian intellectual remains constantly inflected in his work. (2009, 1)

Admittedly, such biographical conjectures also had something to do with Said's own self-presentation. Said opens many of his major works (including *Orientalism*, though not *Beginnings*) by describing himself as an 'Oriental' (1979, 25), an Arab (1994a, xxx), or a Palestinian (1992, xxxv). His earliest essays on Palestine made explicit use of identitarian assumptions in their sweepingly authoritative titles – 'The Arab Portrayed' (1970a), 'The Palestinian Experience' (1970b), 'A Palestinian Voice' (1970c) – 'as if, on the way to finding his own voice on such subjects, Said had first to pose as an abstract representative, a laboratory specimen of "the Arab" or "the Palestinian" in American literary culture' (Howe, 2007, 61). Said's objective was, of course, to make his views heard at a time when the Palestinian position was 'not very well known and certainly not well appreciated' (Said, 1992, xxxv), and he could begin to do that by taking advantage of his position as a native of a much-discussed but little-known region, one that Miller was not alone in seeing (then as now) as 'so difficult, if not impossible, for a Westerner to understand.' But rather than see this form of self-representation as simple pragmatism, we might also note, as Hayden White did in his *Diacritics* review of *Beginnings*, that to observe the details of Said's biography when considering his work is 'fully within the spirit' of his critical method, which relies on 'the grounding of critical judgments in the personal intentions of the authors being analyzed' (1976, 9). Brennan makes this case more strongly still: for him, Said's work 'has always been biographical, consisting almost entirely of savoring with the reader the representative lives of remarkable individuals,' as well as shrewdly autobiographical, relying on 'the creation of a persona, which in his case was a peculiar combination of invention and circumstance' (2010, 103). Brennan expressly refuses to limit this mode of intellectual conduct to Said's memoir, but the persistence of the auto/biographical method throughout Said's writings gives *Out of Place* a special status, since it most fully realizes the strategic self-presentation and emphasis on authorial intention that informed all of his work.

Of the texts discussed in this book, Said's memoir is easily the most self-conscious about its anticipated reception as a document of the Palestinian 'narrative.' Said alludes to his readers' expectations when he introduces *Out of Place* as an attempt to reclaim an 'essentially lost or forgotten world' (*OP*, xiii): the pre-1948 Palestine that the young Edward 'took for granted, [as] the country I was from' (*OP*, 20), and the 'worldly' and 'cosmopolitan' (though also colonial and bourgeois) Cairo of the 1940s and early '50s, before the 1952 revolution (*OP*, 195, 200). This is, on the one hand, the claim of a cultural insider, who can give the reader vicarious access to an unfamiliar place and time. But it is also a veiled warning that the book will not satisfy those looking for confirmation of the post-1948 'Palestinian experience' of refugee testimony and documentary, and who might judge Said's authenticity as a Palestinian on those grounds. Said's was not a representative twentieth-century Palestinian childhood, even by the already unrepresentative standards of the Palestinian autobiography in

English. His parents did not have to flee their home in 1948, like Ghada Karmi's (*In Search of Fatima*, 2002) or Raja Shehadeh's (*Strangers in the House*, 2002), and he did not grow up in a Lebanese refugee camp, like Fawaz Turki (*The Disinherited*, 1972). Instead, Said was raised in conditions of exceptional material comfort and security. He was born in Jerusalem in 1935 but (like Yasser Arafat, who was six years older) brought up in Cairo, the eldest child and only son of a wealthy self-made businessman. Said's father had gained American citizenship as a reward for military service during World War I, which meant that his children, though not his wife, were also American citizens. The family belonged to the Anglican Church, and they spoke both Arabic and English at home; Said and his four sisters were all given English names. The children attended expensive British- and American-run schools in Cairo, and a significant portion of the memoir consists of recollections of upper-class luxuries such as the employment of domestic servants, trips to the theatre and the symphony, stays in holiday villas, and transatlantic journeys by plane or ocean liner.

Yet, despite these advantages, or because of them, the memoir's early chapters are marked by an oppressive anxiety. The young Edward feels constantly 'out of place,' believing that he is forever being judged and found wanting by his parents, teachers, and classmates. We are told in the second chapter that the only time he does not feel this pressure is during family visits to Palestine, which come to an end in 1948 (*OP*, 21). This opening sets up the divide that structures the rest of the memoir, which develops along two parallel lines. One traces Edward's intellectual awakening, in keeping with the trajectory of the modernist *Bildungsroman* or *Künstlerroman*, in which the 'conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demand of socialization' (Moretti, 2000, 15) is firmly resolved in favour of the solitary genius: Edward discovers his vocation and becomes increasingly unconcerned and even empowered by his feeling of being 'out of place.' The second, more muted and elusive track charts his political education, beginning with his dim awareness of the mass displacements of 1948 and culminating with his active politicization after the Israeli conquest of the Palestinian territories in 1967. In this storyline, Edward's Palestinian 'origins' are deliberately and with difficulty transformed into 'beginnings,' in the sense in which Said had defined the term twenty-five years earlier, as an 'intentional act' (Said, 1975, 32). Edward becomes an intellectual by temperament and talent, but he becomes a Palestinian by conviction.

It is tempting, as with other memoirs, to take this narrative at face value as a faithful account of Said's subjective experience. Some of Said's readers have understood the memoir in just this way: Said presents his 'identity' as 'double and split' because he *felt* that he both was and was not Palestinian, and that he therefore had to 'learn and perform' Palestinianness, as we all have to learn and perform 'the patterns of belonging that define us' (Armstrong, 2003, 106–7). But if we take seriously Brennan's suggestion that Said's writing relies on the creation of a persona, we can see this trajectory as more purposefully

crafted, working to produce a particular idea of what Palestinian belonging could and should look like. The demographic imaginary that emerges from the memoir is more ambiguous than that of Said's political writings of the period, in which he had begun to advocate a secular-democratic or binational single state in all of mandatory Palestine, albeit very much in the idealistic mode rejected by other analysts.² In *Out of Place*, by contrast, an idea of collectivity has to be inferred from Said's account of his own formation and development. This is not least because the narrative gives more space to Edward's intellectual awakening than his politics: the memoir, Said says in a reflective piece in *Al-Ahram*, is 'deliberately unpolitical' (1999c, para. 12). Yet a notion of collective belonging can be derived from the memoir's tracing of the same willed trajectory from location to position that Brennan argues is found throughout Said's work (2006, 97), such that Said's account of his reasons for writing *Beginnings* might just as well have been said of *Out of Place*: 'I was examining the way in which one launches himself from contemplation to a sort of worldly action' (1976, 39).

In the memoir, the move from contemplation to action corresponds to the move away from the desire for a sense of being 'at home' and 'in place' (Said, 1983, 8), which Said equates not only with nativism, as his readers in postcolonial studies have tended to assume, but also with the complacent acceptance of material privilege and an unjust status quo (Brennan, 2006, 96). The desire to belong to the ruling class is ultimately replaced by a principled commitment to the Palestinian demand for national self-determination, one that is also available to Said's non-Palestinian readers, since it is based not in geographic or ethnic origins but in political belief:

1967 brought more dislocations [for Palestinians], whereas for me it seemed to embody *the* dislocation that subsumed all the other losses, the disappeared worlds of my youth and upbringing, the unpolitical years of my education, the assumption of disengaged teaching and scholarship at Columbia, and so on. I was no longer the same person after 1967: the shock of that war drove me back to where it had all started, the struggle over Palestine. I subsequently entered the newly transformed Middle Eastern landscape as a part of the Palestinian movement. (*OP*, 293)

At this moment of epiphany, Said undermines an identitarian explanation of his entry into politics by reiterating the difference between his own experiences ('whereas for me') and those of the Palestinian refugees, whose losses are far more catastrophic than his own. The idea of the Palestinian nation is in this sense a device in Said's power as author: at first, in the chapters set in pre-1948 Palestine, it stands in for the kind of belonging that comes from a long family history in a particular place, but by the end of the memoir it names the possibility of a different kind of belonging, anchored in critical solidarity and political activism instead of certain forms of experience. The aspirational form of Palestinian belonging that the narrative seeks to develop is thus specific but not singular, to borrow Peter Hallward's

formulation: it is an 'ongoing *taking* of sides,' not a transcendent or essential subjectivity (Hallward, 2001, 51).

The significance of this plotline has often been misread or overlooked, I think, in critical responses to *Out of Place*, which have tended either to downplay the text's brief engagements with the idea of Palestine or to reassert the politics of identity that it seeks to challenge. The reluctance to explicitly name Said's Palestinianness as *chosen*, as a matter of belief instead of being, is due in no small part to the controversy surrounding the memoir's publication. Several weeks before *Out of Place* came out, the American Zionist magazine *Commentary* ran an 'exposé' by Justus Reid Weiner, an Israeli-American employee of a Jerusalem think tank, archly titled "'My Beautiful Old House" and Other Fabrications by Edward Said' (1999).³ The article, which 'revealed' that Said had spent his childhood in Cairo rather than Palestine, generated a slew of approving citations and vehement rebuttals, most of them concerned, as Weiner purported to be, with the validity of Said's status as a Palestinian representative.⁴ Weiner, for his part, connected his findings directly to the credibility of the Palestinian cause, in a line that would be quoted in virtually every response to the piece: 'For Edward Said in this scenario,' he writes, 'now substitute the Palestinian people – as his readers and listeners are meant to do – and one begins to gain some apprehension of the myth-driven passions that have animated the revanchist program of so many Palestinian nationalists' (1999, 31).

The deplorable intentions of Weiner's *ad hominem* attack made it hardly worth a response, but it nevertheless seems to have had an effect on the parameters of the discussion of Said's memoir. Even in essays published years later, Weiner features prominently, and critics have often taken their responses to the memoir as an opportunity to prove him wrong, to show that Said 'really' was Palestinian or, more often, to challenge the fallaciousness of that idea. Said's defenders emphasize the 'complexity' of his background against Weiner's assault on his credentials, they reassert the legitimacy of his familial claims to Palestine and his personal memories of Jerusalem, and they prioritize the memoir's account of his intellectual and emotional formation over its 'Palestinian' content.⁵ These readings of the memoir are not wrong, but since they do not foreground the explicitly anti-identitarian approach to political belonging that is articulated at the end of the memoir and through its trajectory of intellectual and political development, they are often left in the frustrating position of endlessly affirming its status *as* a Palestinian text, rather than addressing what seems to me to be the more suggestive problem of what *kind* of Palestine emerges from the memoir's revisionist engagement with the idea of Palestinian belonging.

In what follows, I explore these questions by reading *Out of Place* against the grain (to use a favourite Saidian phrase) as a national allegory, in the expanded sense in which I defined that term in Chapter 1.⁶ This approach is against the grain not just for reasons of genre, but also because the text so pointedly reverses the allegorical move from private to public by focusing

on what the idea of national belonging might mean for the individual. Yet *Out of Place* also relies on the collective significance of Edward's personal exile and liberation, two terms that are central not only to much of Said's work, as other critics have noted, but also to post-1948 Palestinian national consciousness.⁷ Although the correspondences are not always immediately obvious, Edward's effort to liberate himself from the demands of his parents and teachers cannot help but evoke the perpetually deferred liberation of the Palestinian people, just as his sense of alienation cannot help but figure their unchosen displacement. By placing these publicly resonant ideas at the heart of his private narrative, Said makes it very difficult *not* to read *Out of Place* as a national allegory, one that seeks to undo the 'natural,' filiative relationship between the protagonist and the imagined community and to replace it with the political goal of ending Palestinian statelessness.

Exile and liberation

The claim that Said's emotive account of his own feeling of being 'out of place' might have collective significance will no doubt meet with scepticism from some readers. Apart from his work on Palestine and *Orientalism*, Said is best remembered, at least in postcolonial studies, for his insistence on the epistemological advantages of exile, to the delight of some of his interlocutors and the irritation of others. *Out of Place* often appears to make the same kind of claim, rejecting collective notions of exile and liberation in favour of a configuration more commonly associated with Euro-US modernism, in which the social alienation of the individual is the enabling condition for independent thought and existence. In *Out of Place*, the young Edward's halting discovery of an 'inner, far less compliant and private self who could read, think, and even write independent[ly]' (*OP*, 165) is decisively enhanced by his actual geographical displacement at the age of fifteen, when he is sent to boarding school in the United States, the country where he would spend the rest of his life. Despite the trauma of being separated from his family, especially his mother, he represents this metropolitan 'exile' as his route to a personal liberation that could not have been achieved in any other way:

My search for freedom, for the self beneath or obscured by [the obedient] 'Edward,' could only have begun because of that rupture, so I have come to think of it as fortunate, despite the loneliness and unhappiness I experienced for so long. Now it does not seem necessary or even desirable to be 'right' and in place (right at home, for instance). Better to wander out of place, not to own a house, and not ever to feel too much at home anywhere, especially in a city like New York, where I shall be until I die. (*OP*, 294)

On the face of it, this declaration is troubling, not just because it romanticizes a migration from periphery to centre that is anything but liberating for all but

the most privileged (as Said well knew), but because its emphasis on personal freedom and detachment appears to reject the notion of collective solidarity altogether (Lazarus, 2011a, 201).⁸ Joan Cocks sums up the prevailing critique of this strand of Said's thinking when she notes that his notion of exile has

a nonpopular tinge to it – not, ironically, in the exile's most tragic moment, when the exile unites with other exiles in an outcast community hostile to those who belong in their surroundings, but in its most ebullient moment, when the exile becomes a rebel who challenges conventions, destabilizes society, and evades the corruptions of power and perversions of gods that fail. (2002, 154)

Statements like '[e]xile is a model for the intellectual who is tempted, and even beset and overwhelmed, by the rewards of accommodation, yea-saying, settling in' (Said, 1994b, 63) appear self-aggrandizing, or worse, of a piece with the self-justificatory platitudes of 'spiritual self-help' (Collini, 2006, 432). At such moments, Said seems to embrace an outlook that 'claims its power from its own autonomy, its own self-constituent authority,' not from 'workable relations *with others*' (Hallward, 2001, 60).

Yet as a counterweight to such criticisms, we might point to Said's own reading, in *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994b), of Adorno's much-misunderstood pronouncement, 'it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home' (Adorno, 2005, 39), which Said's encomium to New York is undoubtedly intended to echo. However, rather than simply extracting this statement and affirming its ethical value, as less careful readers have been wont to do, Said notes the dialectical reversals that follow it: that this idea, in Adorno's words, 'leads to destruction, a loveless disregard for things which necessarily turns against people too,' and yet that 'the antithesis, no sooner uttered, is an ideology for those wishing with a bad conscience to keep what they have' (Adorno, 2005, 39). I am not sure that Said's gloss adds much to Adorno's text – he seems to synthesize its contradictions a little too glibly, with the comment that 'that state of in-betweenness can itself become a rigid ideological position' (Said, 1994b, 58) – but my point is that he strives to engage Adorno's aphorism in its context, as part of a series of negations that are not resolved within the text.⁹

Many of Said's own statements on the advantages of exile, including those in *Out of Place*, are similarly distorted when quoted out of context. This is not to say that Said's thought should be understood as dialectical: on the contrary, as Benita Parry has convincingly argued, Said circumvented dialectics, which he reductively understood as the smooth reconciliation of opposites, his frequent recourse to Adorno notwithstanding (Parry, 2010, 504–7). But even though Said rejected the idea of dialectics, his methods of argument were not altogether divorced from it. We might revisit his essay 'Reflections on Exile,' first published in 1984, with this point in mind. The essay, as has often been observed, distinguishes between the exile of Joyce and Nabokov and 'the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been

created' (2002c, 175). But Said also moves between these two definitions over the course of the essay, setting the loneliness of exile alongside diasporic nationalism, Joyce alongside Conrad, detachment alongside loss, until he reaches an apparent point of synthesis on the final page: 'Most people are provisionally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal*' (2002c, 186). Yet as with Adorno's fragment, this much-quoted statement is not where Said stops. Instead, he qualifies it:

This remains risky, however: the habit of dissimulation is both weary and nerve-racking. Exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure. Exile, in the words of Wallace Stevens, is "a mind of winter" [...] no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew. (2002c, 186)

This last line finishes the essay, so that the reader is left at the 'most tragic moment' of exile, not the 'most ebullient.' The notion of the exile's compensatory 'contrapuntal' vision tempers Said's indignation at the fate of the 'uncountable masses,' to be sure, but this idea is at the same time inseparable from its antithesis (or, for Said, its counterpoint), exile as mass displacement and dispossession.¹⁰

Said does something rhetorically similar in *Out of Place*: his evocations of exile as an advantage or a chosen position are countered by their opposite elsewhere in the text. He follows his refusal of the notion of 'home' with a moving remembrance of his mother, who spent the last weeks of her life in Washington DC, far from her home in Beirut and her extended family (*OP*, 294) and threatened with deportation even as she lay unconscious (*OP*, 133). It is in this 'contrapuntal' sense that we can see Said's use of the language of exile in *Out of Place* as linking his private experience to a collective history. His own 'exile,' by turns estranging and freeing, always also evokes that term's disastrous meaning for others, above all the Palestinians, even as it explicitly distances the refugees' plight from his own. If this claim seems counterintuitive, we have only to look at the book's title, whose multiple, contradictory meanings are called up every time Said uses the phrase: to be 'out of place' is to embrace non-belonging and non-conformity, but it is also to belong to a self-excluding elite (his wealthy, Anglophilic family, who are repeatedly characterized as complicit in their social isolation in Cairo), and it is also to be a victim of colonial rule and its legacies, from the racial discrimination Edward experiences at school to the refugees' flight from Jerusalem.

By the same token, we might understand Said's description of his personal liberation as tied to an unrealized Palestinian liberation. The idea of liberation figures most strongly for Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, where it is not the '[i]ndependent strength or nascent will' that Edward develops in the United States (*OP*, 236), but Fanon's final stage of revolution:

Fanon's achievement [...] is first to represent colonialism and nationalism in their Manichean contest, then to enact the birth of an independent movement, finally to transfigure that movement into what is in effect a trans-personal and transnational force [... Fanon] forcibly *deforms* imperialist culture and its nationalist antagonist in the process of looking beyond both towards liberation. (1994a, 325)

Admittedly, Said appropriates Fanon's socialist liberation for his own non-aligned left humanism, failing to acknowledge the communist standpoint of third-world liberation theory or the class interests of the bourgeois and liberationist national movements that Fanon's analysis is meant to differentiate (Parry, 2010, 508).¹¹ Yet Said's outlook is still nationalitarian: he insists that change 'cannot occur without the willingness of men and women to resist the pressures of colonial rule, to take up arms, to project ideas of liberation, and to imagine (as Benedict Anderson has it) a new national community, to take the final plunge' (1994a, 241). When Edward finds a sense of freedom between the covers of a book, or in a small gesture of defiance against his parents or teachers, the language Said uses to describe his feelings draws extensively on the terms of the Palestinian and other third-world national movements – resistance, refusal, liberty, independence – even though his 'liberation' is self-generated or, we might say, self-determined.

These double meanings are only rarely made explicit in *Out of Place*. But as I have been suggesting, it is hard to read a storyline that draws so centrally on the notions of exile and liberation without thinking of their larger meanings for Said and for the Palestinian national movement. I take this point from Lazarus, who in his defence of the Jamesonian national allegory offers a scene from Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995), in which Dina Dalal finds a lodger to enable her to support herself: 'Once again, her fragile independence was preserved' (Mistry, 1997, 11, qtd. Lazarus, 2004b, 59). Lazarus argues that '[t]he word 'independence' is radically overdetermined in this context, of course. It is impossible for us *not* to read Dina's story as the story of postcolonial India' (2004b, 59). This is national allegory as a reading practice – Mistry's readers assume a correspondence between the private narrative and the public context, because his novel is set in India – but Mistry also *encourages* such a reading through his phrasing. We can see Edward's 'exile' and 'liberation' as similarly overdetermined. Said knows that his readers will connect Edward's feelings of being out of place and his search for personal freedom with Palestinian collective experience, and he promotes the association by making these themes central to his narrative.

This approach leaves Said open to the accusation that he puts 'the suffering of the Palestinian people into the service of his own credentials as an intellectual hero,' as Ian Buruma (1999) acerbically suggests: without this legitimating backdrop, he insinuates, Said's poor-little-rich-boy story would have little appeal. Yet such an allegation assumes that as protagonist Edward simply stands in for the Palestinian nation, instead of gesturing

towards a more difficult and discontinuous correspondence between the biographical form of the narrative and the history of the collective. In naming this relationship as discontinuous, I am thinking once again of Jameson: 'the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogenous representation of the symbol' (1986, 73).¹² By calling up collective experiences that are clearly *not* equivalent to his own experience, Said simultaneously links himself to the collective (politically) and distances himself from it (experientially): he asserts an emotional and moral sense of belonging while also intimating the mildness of his own unhappiness in comparison to Palestinian suffering. As Said retorted in his response to Weiner, 'I have been moved to defend the refugees' plight precisely because I did not suffer and therefore feel obligated to relieve the sufferings of my people, less fortunate than myself' (1999b). His memoir tells the story of how Said came to *feel* that obligation, in the fullest sense of the word.

Affiliation and dissent

'How,' Mustapha Marrouchi asks of *Out of Place*, 'do we get from the lone, fragile child to the consummate public intellectual?' (2004, 147). Marrouchi's question is rhetorical, but we might respond by pointing to the memoir's form: we get there through Said's reliance on the generic conventions of the *Bildungsroman*, in its classical form and its postcolonial variants. As a genre, the classical European *Bildungsroman* might be thought of as the fictional counterpart of a 'great man' autobiographical tradition that is common to European and Arabic literature: each didactically depicts a 'model relationship between the individual and the social world' (Swindells, 1995, 2).¹³ Edward's progression towards a successful intellectual and political self-realization aligns *Out of Place* with both of these traditions, but Said was reluctant to describe his memoir as in any way exemplary. He distinguished *Out of Place* from modern Egypt's best-known memoir, Taha Hussein's *al-'Ayyām* (*The Days*), where the 'family is treated with reverence, if not piety, and the schools are places of real education.' By contrast, Said's own schools 'were dreadful colonial establishments, I learned very little and my own career there was little short of disgraceful' (1999c, para. 9). Even as Edward's path to success evokes the classical or idealist *Bildungsroman*, then, the memoir's confessional tone and its emphasis on institutional failure recalls the preoccupations of the 'late *Bildungsroman*,' which Franco Moretti associates with Kafka, Mann, Conrad, and Joyce:

[T]he world of the late *Bildungsroman* has solidified into impersonal institutions [...] kernels are no longer produced by the hero as turning points of free growth – but *against* him, by a world that is thoroughly indifferent to his personal development. In the abstract and often uselessly

painful tasks enforced by the school, the individualized socialization of Western modernity seems to collapse back into archaic initiation rituals; more informally, seemingly harmless episodes turn out to be, most strikingly in Kafka, all-encompassing trials. (2000, 233–34)¹⁴

Conrad was of course a constant point of reference for Said, who also wrote of the process of writing the memoir that '[o]nce again I recognized that Conrad had been there before me' in his representation of the searing losses of permanent exile (2002d, 556). But it is only towards the end of *Out of Place*, when Edward goes to boarding school in the United States, that being 'out of place' comes to mean a 'long[ing] to be back in Cairo' (OP, 234). In the earlier chapters, it connotes a recognizably modern form of institutional alienation. Edward's education and upbringing consist largely of 'uselessly painful tasks' and 'all-encompassing trials,' from the Arabic classes in which Edward has to pretend that Arabic is not his native language (OP, 82–83), to the truss his father buys to correct his posture when he is twenty-one (OP, 64). Such embarrassments and indignities are depicted in exaggerated, if also often self-deprecating, language as the workings of a consummately powerful social apparatus that Edward is for a long time unable to resist.

Lest this portrayal be attributed entirely to the modernist sympathies of Said's more sentimental representations of the exile as a lonely rebel, we might also note the contemporary association of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre with non-metropolitan and first-world minority struggles for enfranchisement. Far from ending with Joyce and Kafka, as Moretti (2000, 229) and many subsequent critics insist, the *Bildungsroman* 'retains its historic social function as the predominant formal literary technology in which social outsiders narrate claims for inclusion in a regime of rights and responsibilities' (Slaughter, 2007, 27). Slaughter names the genre's most common contemporary variant as the 'dissensual *Bildungsroman*,' after Jacques Rancière's definition of political dissensus as the paradoxical protest of the disenfranchised, who by contesting their exclusion from the realm of rights demonstrate that they are in fact political subjects who possess rights (Rancière, 2004, 304).¹⁵ The dissensual *Bildungsroman* enacts a similar paradox: it invests in the promise of the protagonist's social enfranchisement even as it narrates its perpetual unfulfilment (Slaughter, 2007, 181). *Out of Place* participates in this tradition by registering protest at the unjustified demands of an imperial order, and by making a broader if mostly implicit claim for the inclusion of disenfranchised Palestinians in a global realm of rights.

The early chapters of *Out of Place* draw on both variations, the 'late' and the 'dissensual' *Bildungsroman*, in their relentlessly detailed account of the corporate instruments of control that are ranged against the young Edward. His family stands in not for a possible social pact, as in the idealist *Bildungsroman* (Moretti, 2000, 24), but as one more source of oppression, an

eager enforcer of the 'archaic initiation rituals' of the modern institutions of class, state, and empire. To be sure, William (Wadie)¹⁶ and Hilda Said are richly drawn characters, and they emerge from the narrative as fully rounded and often lovable individuals, their idiosyncrasies and tyrannies explained as a complex admixture of personality, class, ambition, and the isolating effects of emigration. Their main function in the plot, however, is to plant the seeds of the young Edward's 'lifelong' compulsion to struggle against domination (*OP*, 230). Edward's parents 'were at the heart of the administered system that determined my time minute by minute [...] a system that allowed me only the smallest spots of relief to enjoy and feel that I was out of its clutches' (*OP*, 28). His hyper-masculine father, at once athlete, businessman, and taskmaster, represents 'a devastating combination of power and authority, rationalistic discipline, and repressed emotions' (*OP*, 12). Said's father seeks to oversee every aspect of his life, from his education and leisure activities to his sexuality: 'he tried to create a world very much like a gigantic cocoon, into which I was introduced and maintained at, as I look back over half a century later, exorbitant cost' (*OP*, 12). Said's mother, on the other hand, operates through consent rather than force. She is his 'closest companion for twenty-five years' (*OP*, 12), the only person who seems to understand him and who shares his love of literature and music, and yet her emotional power over Edward can be just as devastating as his father's unbrookable authority:

[S]he had the most deep-seated and unresolved ambivalence towards the world, and me, that I have ever known. Despite our affinities, my mother required my love and devotion, and gave them back doubled and redoubled; but she could also turn away quite suddenly, producing in me a metaphysical panic that I can still experience with considerable unpleasantness and even terror. (*OP*, 13)

The impassioned and at times overwrought prose of such passages – the jacket copy calls Said a 'Palestinian Proust' – transforms William and Hilda from individuals to gendered institutional forces: the father as government and law, the mother as culture and the social world, each of them equally if differently subjugating. There is a national-allegorical resonance to their methods of control: the father's attention to every aspect of Edward's life recalls Said's description of pre-state Zionism as a 'Benthamite policy of detail' (1999a, 101), and the relationship between the children and their mother is described as one of 'colony to metropole, a constellation only she could see as a whole' (*OP*, 60). Structurally, however, the function of these episodes is to establish a point of origin for Edward's journey from location to position, to recall Brennan's terms. It is not simply that his parents are 'thoroughly indifferent' to his individual desires, and that he rails against all forms of social coercion on principle; it is rather that the particular mode of social incorporation that his parents envision for him is one that he comes to reject.

The memoir's much-quoted opening passage should be understood with this argument in mind. Said writes:

[I]t took me about fifty years to become accustomed to, or more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with, 'Edward,' a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arab family name Said. True my mother told me that I had been named Edward after the Prince of Wales, who cut so fine a figure in 1935, the year of my birth, and Said was the name of various uncles and cousins. But the rationale of my name broke down both when I discovered no grandparents called Said and when I tried to connect my fancy English name with its Arabic partner. For years, and depending on the exact circumstances, I would rush past 'Edward' and emphasize 'Said'; at other times I would do the reverse, or connect the two to each other so quickly that neither would be clear. The one thing I could not tolerate, but very often would have to endure, was the disbelieving, and hence undermining, reactions: Edward? Said? (*OP*, 3–4)

In their responses to this passage, Said's readers have tended to take his self-description as 'bicultural' (2004, 1) at face value. His name is said to represent 'the conflict in his double self' (Porter, 2001, 310), to have 'induced' the split between the obedient 'Edward' and the real Edward (Ruthven, 2003), and to serve as a metaphor for 'the colonial history of the Arab world – half English, half Arab, and entirely invented' (White, 2000, 135). Yet the language of the passage is more attentive to the imbalance of power between Said's two 'sides' than the symmetrizing notions of doubleness, splitting, or halves acknowledge. The name 'Edward' is 'foolish,' 'fancy,' and 'fine,' joined 'forcibly' to the unmodified 'Said,' the alliteration highlighting both the inappropriateness of the English name and the relentlessness with which this cod Englishness was enforced on the young Edward.¹⁷ Although 'Said' is also an insecure marker of identity, since it cannot be traced back more than a generation, the name's comparative lack of modification suggests that there may have been a less alienating sense of self available to Edward, even given his location as a Palestinian Christian in Cairo, through his identity as a Palestinian Arab. Although Said does not make the point himself, the name 'Sa'īd' and its derivations feature prominently in Palestinian literature of the 1960s and '70s: it is the name of Emil Habibi's everyman protagonist, Sa'eed the Pessoptimist, as well as the son of Ghassan Kanafani's matriarchal heroine, Umm Sa'ad. However, the possibility of identifying with an indigenous cultural heritage was compromised by his parents' desire to make their family into a 'mock little European group' (*OP*, 75).

To complain, then, as Buruma does, that it is not clear 'why Edward Said should be harder to bear than, say, Edward Cohen, Edward Coppola, or indeed Ian Buruma' (1999) is to miss the point. The language of the passage admittedly comes off as overly self-pitying (did it really take Said fifty years to get over his discomfort with his name?), but it plainly seeks to show that Said was given an English name not as a marker of his parents' desire that

he assimilate into local society, as might have been the case had he been raised in Britain or the United States, but to signal his membership in an Anglicized native elite during the waning years of the British empire and the start of American neo-imperial rule in the Middle East: to signal, in other words, his family's affiliation with the colonizing power.¹⁸ I am using the term 'affiliation' in Said's original sense in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, as a name for the modern social bonds and forms of authority that replace the traditional 'filiative' forms: 'guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture' (1983, 20). Said's distinction between filiation and affiliation does not indicate a preference for the latter, as many of his readers have assumed, even though the forms of association that Said identifies with affiliation might seem to offer a greater degree of agency and choice to their adherents, and some, like collegiality and professional respect, might appear desirable in themselves.¹⁹ Yet for Said, the advent of an affiliative society means the substitution of one set of power relations for another, since both filiation and affiliation are systems of coercive identification: 'It should go without saying that this new affiliative structure and its systems of thought more or less directly reproduce the skeleton of family authority supposedly left behind when the family was left behind' (1983, 22). Affiliation, in this formulation, is not the choice to side with the powerless, but an endorsement of the rule of the powerful.

Affiliation might also be described as the reconciliation of groups that might have other interests – such as a native bourgeoisie – with the existing social order, in the manner of the classical *Bildungsroman*: 'It is the bourgeois reader who must be shown the advantages of social reconciliation. It is to him that meaning – the happy belonging to a harmonious totality – is offered in exchange for freedom' (Moretti, 2000, 65). The trajectory of *Out of Place* largely affirms this metaphorical economy – belonging or freedom, but not both – but the early chapters make it clear that the 'reconciliation' offered by Edward's family, and later his schools, is *non-liberational*: it means acquiescence to the colonial order. At his British-run primary school, Said reports that he felt alienated from his English classmates because 'I was perfectly aware of how they were just *right*, and their clothes and accents and associations were totally different from my own. I cannot recall ever hearing any of them refer to "home," but I associated the idea of it with them, and in the deepest sense "home" was something I was excluded from' (*OP*, 42). The reference to 'home' feels a little forced here – it clearly comes from Said's later scholarship – but it works ironically to remind us of the imperial endeavour to make the rest of the world over in the image of the mother country, so that its enforcers might feel 'at home' anywhere, as if Edward's school were in Cambridge instead of Cairo. Slaughter observes of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) that it is 'a dissensual *Bildungsroman* about the lure of the consensual *Bildungsroman*' (2007, 244), and something similar might be said of Said's narrative of these years: it evokes the power of

the desire to belong to an order that seems 'just *right*' because it is already dominant. This, then, is the memoir's opening definition of the state of being 'out of place,' as entrapment in a social order that demands not only obedience to, but also mimicry of, an imperial ruling class.

This is only a point of departure, of course. Said once described the memoir as 'an attempt to make sense of an effort at self-liberation which didn't completely succeed' (Rose, 2000, 15) and the main narrative event is Edward's struggle to free himself from this regime. Edward's earliest acts of resistance are articulated in the language of escape, a motif introduced in a scene from one of his father's home videos: a very young Edward runs past the camera and dives out of shot into a pool, thwarting his father's attempts to capture him on film. Said reflects: '[T]hat I managed occasionally to escape his fearsome strength [...] tells me something I only realized years later, when I had gone my own way: that there was more to "Edward" than the delinquent yet compliant son, submitting to his father's Victorian design' (*OP*, 78–79). As Edward enters his teens, he comes to identify the idea of escape with literature and music. At first, he fantasizes about becoming a book, 'whose fate I took to be happily free of unwelcome changes, distortions of its shape, criticism of its looks' (*OP*, 76). (The childhood desire to become a book also shows up, interestingly enough, in Amos Oz's 2002 memoir, though the young Amos envisions it as a means of surviving enemy attack.) Reading becomes associated with a profound experience of freedom, which is directly opposed to the 'appalling limitations' (*OP*, 164) of Edward's administered public life. As a young teenager, Edward reads Kant, Hegel, and Plato, and 'by my middle teens,' he says,

I was aware of myself making connections between disparate books and ideas with considerable ease, wondering about, for example, the role of the great city in Dostoyevsky and Balzac [...] I would have moments of exultant recollection that enabled me to look out over a sea of details, spotting patterns, phrases, word clusters, which I imagined as stretching out interconnectedly *without limit*. (*OP*, 165, emphasis added)

The idea of self-empowerment through reading is of course a familiar trope of the idealist *Bildungsroman*, which shares with today's global literacy campaigns the 'literary vision of liberty as confinement in a library' (Slaughter, 2007, 282). Yet there is little mockery or self-distancing in the adult Said's account of Edward's discovery of this kind of liberty, in contrast to the revelations of his various embarrassments and frailties in the previous chapters. Instead, Said identifies this period as the beginning of 'a kind of reflection and self-reflection that had a coherence of its own, despite my inability for some years to articulate this process. It was something *private and apart* that gave me strength when "Edward" seemed to be failing' (*OP*, 165, emphasis added). Here, freedom means solitude and detachment, the renunciation of the social world. Edward begins to experience an 'absolute separation' between his public life at school and his private consumption of

books and music: 'It was as if the integration and liberty I needed between my selves would have to be endlessly postponed, although I subliminally retained the belief that one day they would somehow be integrated' (*OP*, 202). The phrase 'and liberty' doesn't quite work grammatically, and this makes it stand out, revealing it as part of the ritual invocation of the idea of liberation that characterizes this section of the narrative.

When Edward arrives in the United States in 1951 to attend Mount Hermon in rural Massachusetts, his 'exile' becomes the engine of a more active form of resistance, and he finds himself developing 'a newfound will that had nothing to do with the "Edward" of the past but relied on the slowly forming identity of another self beneath the surface' (*OP*, 230). This is the anti-institutional autonomous self-formation of the late *Bildungsroman*, which at times slips into the self-congratulatory lexicon of the heroic quest. Edward feels that he alone is able to 'resis[t] the American leveling and ideological herding that seemed to work so effectively on so many of my classmates' (*OP*, 236). This quest for an authentic, uncoopted self is gendered male (Edward's sisters aren't shown to have the same yearnings²⁰); it is inherently solitary instead of coalitional or collective; and it relies on an aesthetic of wandering that ends only with the final release of death ('especially in a city like New York, where I shall be until I die') instead of earthly emplacement and enfranchisement. His isolation enables him to stake a new ground for action, so to speak, as his own extended use of metaphors of place implies: 'The fact that I was never at home or at least at Mount Hermon, out of place in every way, gave me the incentive to *find my territory*, not socially but intellectually' (*OP*, 231, emphasis added). He finds this ground as an undergraduate at Princeton, where, despite the university's 'poisonous social atmosphere' in the 1950s, the reading and coursework is 'tremendously exciting,' coming to comprise 'the foundation of everything I have done as a scholar and teacher' (*OP*, 276–77). In this respect, Edward's attempt at self-liberation does succeed: he ascends to the 'Utopian space still provided by the university' (1994a, xxix), a place where radical dissent remains possible, and he achieves extraordinary professional success.

This looks, of course, like the resolution of an idealist *Bildungsroman*. By renouncing the desire to belong, by going his own way, Edward becomes one of the most famous intellectuals of the late twentieth century: his 'tendency towards *individuality* [... is] made to coexist with the opposing tendency to *normality*' (Moretti, 2000, 16). Yet the memoir's trajectory towards self-realization does not actually resolve but deepens the tension between the memoir's anticolonial critique and its didactic portrayal of a model life. The reader is encouraged to sympathize with the socially awkward, emotionally coerced, and racially victimized Edward, to unite with him against the institutional forces that oppress him. Yet at the same time, Said's self-liberation relies on his exceptional talent and resilience, undermining its usefulness as a strategy for others to follow, much less a model for collective endeavour. By the end of the narrative, the reader is

presented with an adult Said who no longer subscribes to 'the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance' (*OP*, 295), suggesting that it is the need for belonging, above all other obstacles, which is the greatest barrier to independent thought and achievement.

This outcome takes us back to the problem I raised earlier: how are we to reconcile Said's representation of exile as a collective tragedy with exile as a metaphor for critical consciousness? The 'creative wholeness which connects Said's early emotional experiences with the political form of adult imagination' (Marrouchi, 2004, 149) might seem to endorse a psychologically inflected identity politics. Said is an exile by situation and temperament, and this is what makes him able to speak for other exiles: 'the brokenness of the Palestinian past, as understood through a quasinationalist perspective, matches his sense of self' (Marrouchi, 2004, 149). But instead of understanding this relationship as a symbolic one, in which Said's social exile metaleptically signals the very different condition of Palestinian statelessness in the manner of Walter Benjamin's 'complete reconciliation between object and spirit' (Jameson, 1971, 72), we might take seriously Said's insistence on the contrast between 'Edward,' who fearfully complies with the dominant order, and 'the slowly forming identity of another self' (*OP*, 230) that can recognize and speak up against injustice. The divide between 'Edward' and this other self recalls Said's comments on the separation of his scholarship and activism in his interview in *Diacritics*, which was published just before he became highly publicly visible as a Palestinian activist, with his election to the Palestinian National Council in 1977 and the publication of *The Question of Palestine* in 1979:

Until recently I led two quite separate lives [...] On the one hand I'm a literary scholar, critic, and teacher, I lead a pretty uncontroversial life in a big university, and I've done a fair amount of work which has always been plugged into the established channels. That's a function of a certain education, an appearance of a certain social background. Yet I lead another life, which most other literary people say nothing about [...] My whole background in the Middle East, my frequent and sometimes protracted visits there, my political involvement: all this exists in a totally different box from the one out of which I pop as a literary critic, professor, etc. (1976, 35)

The link between the two descriptions of a split self is hard to overlook. 'Edward' parallels the establishment critic, while the resistant 'self beneath the surface' prefigures the Palestinian activist.²¹ If exile metaphorically represents 'an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life' (Said, 2002c, 184), then, it is because it denotes an alternative to *affiliation*, understood as a passive acquiescence to the social order. The exemplary journey from origins to beginnings demands that Edward repudiate his initial, literal sense of exile or out-of-placeness in favour of a notion of exile that is (almost) entirely figurative, signifying the responsibility 'to

imagine and investigate in spite of barriers, and always to move away from the centralizing authorities towards the margins' (1994b, 63).²² The first definition is not a vehicle for the second, nor is it a necessary condition for it. Instead, Said's metaphorical exile is the counterpoint and inversion of his literal exile; it is Hallward's ongoing taking of sides, not a singular expression of non-belonging.

It is in the context of this move from origins to beginnings, however, that the connection between Edward's liberation and a collective Palestinian liberation becomes something more than a contrapuntal linking of opposites. *Out of Place* clearly does not offer the 'triple *uhuru*' of the affirmative postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, in which the individual, the nation, and the race are liberated simultaneously (Slaughter, 2007, 125). Yet Edward's search for an uncompromising self echoes Said's description of the Palestinian struggle as 'the one uncooptable national and anticolonial cause still alive' (1992, xxvii), while his feeling that 'the integration and liberty' of his two selves would have to be 'endlessly postponed' evokes the 'protracted not-yet' (1999a, 165) of Palestinian national liberation.²³ This deferred self-integration is also a feature of the dissensual *Bildungsroman*, which narrates 'not the fusion but the fission of the narrator-protagonist' (Slaughter, 2007, 239), not the reconciliation of individual desire with social demands, but the suspension of that reconciliation until a time when those demands might look different. This is 'liberation as a *process*,' in the same ambiguous idiom, at once individual and collective, that Said borrows from Fanon: 'Liberation is consciousness of self, "not the closing of a door to communication" but a never-ending process of "discovery and encouragement" leading to true national self-liberation and to universalism' (1994a, 330–31; Fanon, 1963, 247). The sequence of events at the end of the memoir – intellectual liberation, then political awakening – asserts the incompleteness of the first achievement without the second. True self-liberation, Said's narrative asserts, depends on a commitment to a wider social liberation, which extends beyond Said's intellectual labour to his investment in the Palestinian national struggle.

Palestine as history and cause

This is reading a lot into Said's tale of private pathos and redemption, perhaps, and, without the memoir's Palestinian storyline, such claims might be more easily dismissed as conjecture. But Palestine figures prominently, if intermittently, in the memoir, as both the historical backdrop and the impetus for Edward's coming to political awareness. This strand of the narrative offsets the intellectual *Bildungsroman* plot by participating in the distinctly different genre of the political *Bildungsroman*, a genre that is still fairly marginal in European and North American writing. Moretti suggests that this genre remained undeveloped because liberal Europe found it impossible to imagine, after World War I, that 'mass movements could be

constitutive of individual identity – and not just destructive of it' (2000, 232). However, we might also see it as evidence of a more general twentieth-century metropolitan tendency to psychologize political commitment, which makes it hard to conceive of a *Bildungsroman* that might privilege the political over the psychological, or even interpret the psychological through the lens of the political. (The examples that spring to mind – *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, for instance – underline the genre's almost total absence from hegemonic Euro-US culture.) This is hardly true of anticolonial writing from the global South, however, and it is certainly not true of Palestinian memoir and fiction in metropolitan circulation, in which coming of age is virtually synonymous with politicization.²⁴ In this respect, the Palestinian political *Bildungsroman* might seem to be an obvious genre, a corollary of the Palestinian national novel, with a natural endpoint at the moment that the protagonist assumes his role in the national struggle. *Out of Place* works within this framework, but in doing so it challenges the 'basic grammar of subjectivation' through which one 'becom[es] positively what one already is by natural right' (Slaughter, 2007, 98): the narrative, in other words, through which a Palestinian becomes a Palestinian. Said starts off by presenting himself as a Palestinian by 'natural right,' but he is at pains to *denaturalize* the process through which he becomes a Palestinian by choice and commitment.

In giving an account of his Palestinian origins, Said begins once again with his parents. He gives Hilda's background in two sentences: 'Born in Nazareth, then sent to boarding school and junior college in Beirut, *she was Palestinian*, even though her mother, Munira, was Lebanese. I never knew her father, but he, I discovered, was the Baptist minister in Nazareth, although he originally came from Safad, via a sojourn in Texas' (*OP*, 5, emphasis added). The whirlwind of place names which surrounds the firm statement 'she was Palestinian' conveys the sense of movement that could characterize Palestinian experience even before the founding of the Israeli state, making room for the movements of the Said family to come. His father's background is hazier, but Said knows he was born in Jerusalem, where he attended St George's School, as Edward later did himself in 1947; his mother's surname was Shammass and his father's Ibrahim, rather than Said, and Said does not know how it came to be changed; the family are said to belong to the Khleifawi clan in Nazareth (*OP*, 6–7).²⁵ Each fragment of information draws on recognizably Palestinian names and places, making the point that Palestinian experience is not limited to having been expelled from the country in 1948. Yet for all its assertiveness, Said's account of his Palestinian 'credentials' recalls his wry observation in *After the Last Sky* that Palestinians are 'required to show proofs of identity more or less constantly' (1999a, 16). His parents' stories, like the assorted family photographs included in the memoir, are a defensive claim to indigeneity against those, like Justus Weiner, who would deny it. This gives the opening pages a self-conscious quality reminiscent of Said's account of his first post-1948 visit to Palestine in 1992:

I found myself repeating that I did have a right to be here, that I was a native, and that nearly everything in my early life could be traced to the city of my birth [...] my family had owned property in Jerusalem barely a mile from where I now stood, was connected to a whole network of other families, was in fact as Palestinian as you could be. (1995, 177)

Said's parents' stories also give context to the brief but evocative descriptions of the time the young Edward spent in Palestine. The memoir's second chapter begins: 'My early memories of Palestine itself are casual and, considering my profound later immersion in Palestinian affairs, curiously unremarkable. It was a place I took for granted, *the country I was from*, where family and friends existed (it seems so retrospectively) with unreflecting ease' (OP, 20–21, emphasis added). He goes on to describe their neighbourhood in Jerusalem as a series of play spaces: the Said family home contains 'lots of rooms and a handsome garden in which my two youngest cousins, my sisters, and I would play,' and the front of the house features an 'empty rectangular space where I rode my bike or played' (OP, 21). His sense of freedom in Palestinian space is all the more apparent in contrast with his play space in Cairo, a neighbourhood park which is literally overlooked by the family flat: 'I spent all of my playtime, always supervised, within range of my mother's voice, which was always lyrically audible to me and my sisters' (OP, 22). Said makes the contrast between the two spaces explicit: the family trips to Palestine, he says, 'provided an escape from the regime already forming around me with cumulative daily reinforcement in Cairo' (OP, 21). Even at this early stage in the narrative, Palestine is figured as exempt from Edward's imperial control by proxy in Cairo and the United States. Although Said acknowledges the sentimentality of his 'retrospective' gaze, he hardly tempers the pre-lapsarian innocence of this portrayal: his urban, upper-class Jerusalem is a place of children at play, 'handsome' gardens, 'exceptionally delicious' food, and large extended families (OP, 21). Far from being 'unremarkable,' then, as he rather disingenuously puts it, Said's early sense of being *in place* in Palestine provides a key point of contrast for the many descriptions of being 'out of place' that follow.

Yet this is the last we get of Said's Palestinian origins. When Palestine next appears, and in each appearance thereafter, it is as a catalyst for political beginnings. The sixth chapter opens:

On November 1, 1947 – my twelfth birthday – I recall the puzzling vehemence with which my oldest Jerusalem cousins, Yousif and George, bewailed the day, the eve [of the thirtieth anniversary] of the Balfour Declaration, as "the blackest day in our history." I had no idea what they were referring to but realized it must be something of overwhelming importance. (OP, 107)

Though there was of course a historical coincidence between this anniversary and Edward's birthday, at this point in the narrative it signals the start of

Edward's political education, which allegorically parallels that of the nation: Balfour's legacy is about to come to fruition, bringing about the mass politicization of the Palestinian public. At first, because the loss of Palestine is 'relatively repressed, undiscussed, or even remarked on by [his] parents' (OP, 117), Edward is bewildered by what it all means:

I often saw the sadness and destitution in the faces and lives of people I had formerly known as ordinary middle-class people in Palestine, but I couldn't really comprehend the tragedy that had befallen them nor could I piece together all the different narrative fragments to understand what had really happened in Palestine. (OP, 114)

Yet he begins to get a sense of the *nakba's* devastating material consequences from his father's sister Nabiha, who dedicates her new life in Cairo to helping destitute refugees:

It was through Aunt Nabiha that *I first experienced Palestine as history and cause* in the anger and consternation I felt over the suffering of the refugees, *those Others*, whom she brought into my life. It was also she who communicated to me the desolations of being without a country or place to return to, of being unprotected by any national authority or institutions, of no longer being able to make sense of the past except as bitter, helpless regret nor of the present with its daily queuing, anxiety-filled searches for jobs, and poverty, hunger, and humiliations. (OP, 119, emphasis added)

In this passage, the shift from a locational relationship to Palestine to a positional one is overtly signalled by the phrases I have emphasized. To 'experience' the nation as 'history and cause' disrupts Edward's identification with Palestine as a 'country I was from.' He has no sense of connection with the refugees: they are 'those Others,' and his anger on their behalf derives from an abstract sense of justice rather than the feeling that he is personally afflicted: 'I do not recall ever clearly thinking that all this woeful spectacle was the direct result of a politics and a war that had also affected my aunt and my own family' (OP, 120).²⁶

It is at this juncture that exile is first figured as a collective tragedy, rather than an individual sense of alienation. Edward comes to understand Palestinian dispossession in material and overtly physical terms, as 'an ongoing state of medical emergency' (OP, 121), in response to Aunt Nabiha's 'heart-rending reports of malnutrition, childhood dysenteries and leukemias, families of ten living in one room, women separated from their men, children destitute and begging (which angered her beyond reason), men stricken with incurable hepatitis, bilharzia, liver, and lung disorders' (OP, 118). The list is a collectivizing device in itself: it summons up the image of 'dozens and dozens' of desperate people lined up along the staircase of Nabiha's building (OP, 120), all of them destitute for the same reason. Edward is too young at this stage, and too sheltered, for a full-fledged political epiphany. However, the episode's significance as a moment of awakening is emphasized by the

episode that immediately follows it, which tells the story of a family friend in Cairo, Dr Farid Haddad, who was killed in police custody in 1959 for his membership in the Egyptian Communist Party. There is a contextual link between the two episodes – Farid, whose father was Palestinian, had treated Nabihah's refugees without charge – but Said also represents it as a missed opportunity to make sense out of what he had seen and heard. Farid had a political existence as well as a medical career and a young family: he might have been able to explain to Edward 'what his work and political life "meant"' (OP, 123) and to put the refugees' plight in the context of the question of Palestine, 'a social and national cause he and I weren't able to discuss or, except for the facts of our birth, even pronounce' (OP, 124).

Edward encounters a series of possible mentors besides Farid over the course of the memoir, most notably the Lebanese UN and US ambassador (and Said's relative) Charles Malik, whose embrace of a Christian Lebanese separatism and Cold War Americanism represents 'the great negative intellectual lesson' of Said's life (OP, 264). But none of them emerge as definitive in the way that Farid might have been, and Edward's political epiphany is ultimately self-generated, an independent and unexpected reaction (for him if not the reader) to the Israeli conquest of the Jordanian, Egyptian, and Syrian-controlled Palestinian territories in June 1967. The narrative is at its most Jamesonian at this moment, when Said names 1967 as 'the dislocation that subsumed all the other losses' and claims that the 'shock of that war drove me back to where it all started, the struggle over Palestine' (OP, 293). The passage links the memoir's two parallel storylines, collapsing the public and private spheres in the ambiguous pronoun 'it.' This sudden moment of synchronicity recalls Jameson's 'obsessive return of the national situation itself, the name of the country that returns again and again like a gong'; it is the nation as the return of the repressed, and the individual experience as 'the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself' (Jameson, 1986, 65, 86). We are told that Said's active politicization draws from 'the agitated, largely hidden side of my prior life – the anti-authoritarianism, the need to break through an imposed and enforced silence, above all the need to draw back to a sort of original state of what was irreconcilable, thereby shattering and dispelling an unjust Establishment order' (OP, 293). The memoir's intellectual *Bildungsroman* plot is revealed not simply as an end in itself, but as the condition of possibility for Said's political awakening, making it possible for him to become the Palestinian he already is, and from there to take on the often thankless task, especially in the United States, of representing the Palestinian national struggle to a largely unreceptive and uncomprehending audience.

Said can certainly be criticized for representing his political epiphany as particular to him alone, when the events of 1967 were to have the same effect on virtually all Palestinians and Arabs. Said's sister Jean Said Makdisi, who was also living in the United States at the time, makes this clear in her memoir:

The 1967 June war, and the total defeat of the Arab armies within a few hours, shattered us, *as it did an entire generation*. What made it even more traumatic, however, was being in the United States and suffering the anti-Arab bias of the press coverage [...] *I know of no Arab in America at that time who did not feel the same way*. (2005, 126, emphasis added)

Indeed, Hosam Aboul-Ela names Said as a quintessentially Arab-American author – and the memoir as a quintessentially Arab-American text – for this very reason: ‘this turn toward foreign policy is the most Arab American of elements in his profile, for it is just this aspect of his writing that forms the most compelling expression of the experience of Arabs in America since 1967’ (2006, 20). Yet, beyond simply sharing this experience, Said was to powerfully articulate it, taking advantage of the prestige conferred by his elite location as an Ivy League professor of English literature.²⁷ Other Arab-Americans may have been shocked into political awareness, but Said would take on the role of speaking for the Palestinians as a group. *Out of Place* continues this effort by positioning Said as a liaison figure, someone whose plight a metropolitan reader of comparable privilege might be able to identify with, and so to begin to apprehend the scale of a much larger and more catastrophic dispossession. In earlier publications Said sometimes ran these different experiences together: in *After the Last Sky*, for instance, he laments, ‘The stability of geography and the continuity of land – these have completely disappeared *from my life and the life of all Palestinians*’ (1999a, 19, emphasis added). In *Out of Place*, however, the difference between Said’s life and the life of other Palestinians is the very subject of the narrative: it is the engine of the trajectory from location to position. The memoir affirms Said’s position among the ‘emissaries’ whose work he extolled in *Culture and Imperialism*, especially Fanon, George Antonius, C. L. R. James, and Ranajit Guha: ‘scholarship and politics are more openly connected in [their] books because these writers think of themselves as emissaries to a Western culture representing a political freedom and accomplishment as yet unfulfilled, blocked, postponed’ for the people whose views they seek to represent (1994a, 312).

If in his literary critical work Said tended, sometimes frustratingly, not always to endorse the politics of *national* liberation as robustly as he could have, representing national sovereignty and social liberation as mutually exclusive goals instead of affirming the Fanonian idea that the first is a necessary step towards the second (Hallward, 2001, 56), in his Palestinian advocacy he was less ambivalent.²⁸ He writes, in *The Politics of Dispossession*, ‘I had to keep saying that Palestinians were not only the opponents or victims of Zionism, they also represented an alternative [...] a non-exclusivist, secular, democratic, tolerant, and generally progressive ideology, not about colonizing and dispossessing people but about liberating them’ (1995, xix). Said followed Fanon, then, in representing ‘Palestinian identity’ as a formation derived *from* the struggle for national liberation, which gave it its grandeur

and force. He expresses this idea most powerfully in a memorable passage in *After the Last Sky*: 'it was not just that Palestinians fought back; it was that they projected a vision, and in their own lives embodied a nation in exile rather than a collection of individuals' (1999a, xviii).

Said was to speak of the idea of a 'vision' of Palestine more sceptically in his later work, in light of the disastrous failures of the Palestinian leadership since Oslo: '[T]o speak about the "vision" of a Palestinian state, as has become fashionable, is mere vision alas, unless the question of land ownership and sovereignty is openly and officially conceded by the Israeli government' (2002a, xvii).²⁹ Yet *Out of Place* does offer such a vision (albeit equally unmaterialized) by developing a model of Palestinian identity and belonging that is based on political belief rather than geographical or biological origins. The notion of citizenship that comes out of this presentation is not clearly associated with a future state, which Said pointedly refuses to imagine in the memoir, ending his narrative at a point of limbo and irresolution. Instead, it is a form of humanism, of universalism, an 'engaged (and, indeed, *enraged!*) citizenship' (Lazarus, 2011a, 199). This is what the Palestinian struggle means not just for Palestinians, but for Said's metropolitan readers: it reminds us that it is always possible, and necessary, to think outside of the existing social order. We might recall here Said's early engagement with Raymond Williams:

[H]owever dominant a social system may be, the very meaning of its domination involves a limitation or selection of the activities it covers, so that by definition it cannot exhaust all social experience, which therefore always potentially contains space for alternative acts and alternative intentions which are not yet articulated as a social institution or even project. (Williams, 1979, 252, qtd. in Said, 1983, 29)

The idea of Palestine – which is still no more than an idea, a decade after Said's death – remains a site that prompts us to imagine alternatives.

‘Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction’: Mourid Barghouthi’s *I Saw Ramallah*

I used to long for the past in Deir Ghassanah as a child longs for precious, lost things. But when I saw that the past was still there, squatting in the sunshine in the village square, like a dog forgotten by its owners – or like a toy dog – I wanted to take hold of it, to kick it forward, to its coming days, to a better future, to tell it: ‘Run.’

– Mourid Barghouthi, *I Saw Ramallah*

While he does not have the visibility of his near contemporaries Edward Said or Mahmoud Darwish, in the last decade the poet Mourid Barghouthi has joined the short list of Palestinian authors who are widely recognized among an Anglophone metropolitan readership. Barghouthi has published a number of books in English translation, among them two collections of poetry and two memoirs, but it is his first work to be translated into English, *Ra’aytu Rām Allāh* (1997, Eng. *I Saw Ramallah*, 2000/3), that is chiefly responsible for his current prominence.¹ Part memoir, part essay, and part prose poem, *I Saw Ramallah* (ISR, 2003a) is a poignant account of Barghouthi’s first return trip to Palestine after thirty years of enforced absence, a result of the Israeli conquest of the West Bank in 1967. Barghouthi’s account of his life outside of Palestine is interspersed with his impressions of the changes that have taken place in Ramallah and Deir Ghassanah, the neighbouring village where he spent his early childhood, creating a narrative that moves self-consciously between past and present in the pursuit of an accurate portrait of the hometown that the author is no longer legally allowed to call home.

The book was immediately and enthusiastically recognized by the Arabic literary establishment, winning Barghouthi the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature in 1997 and the Palestine Prize for Poetry in 2000. The book’s

subsequent publication in English by the American University in Cairo Press (2000) was also a significant literary event.² Translated by the English-language Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif and with a foreword written by Edward Said, the English edition of *I Saw Ramallah* linked Barghouti with two of the best-known Arab writers in the English-speaking world and so established him as a writer of international standing. Following its American release by Random House (2003) and its UK release by Bloomsbury (2004), the book has enjoyed a significant afterlife on university curricula and reading lists aiming to introduce English speakers to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and it has recently begun to attract a measure of English-language scholarly attention as well (Mullaney, 2010, 96–98; Bugeja, 2012; Farrier, 2013).

The book's metropolitan reception was characterized from the outset by assumptions about its national representativeness, in a vivid demonstration of the use of national allegory as a reading practice. Barghouti's early reviewers took *I Saw Ramallah* as a confirmation of their views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with the political stance of the publications in which their reviews appeared. In the UK, for instance, Tom Paulin, writing in the *Independent*, claimed, 'Outside any political faction, Barghouti manages to be temperate, fair-minded, resilient and uniquely sad' (2004), while David Pryce-Jones argued in the *Daily Telegraph* that '[t]hose who claim to be speaking for Palestinians regularly incite them in this insidious manner to hate Israel [...] The population has more to fear from their own intellectuals who promote and justify [violence] than from the Israelis' (2004). Despite their conflicting readings, Paulin and Pryce-Jones' approaches to the text are both based on an assumption of Barghouti's typicality, since each presents *I Saw Ramallah* as a quintessential example of a Palestinian intellectual's response to the conflict (the obvious figure for comparison would of course be Said, whose declared non-alignment after Oslo may partly have inspired Paulin's praise for Barghouti). This mode of interpretation was not limited to the mainstream English-language press: in a review published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Fouad Moughrabi, a Palestinian-American political scientist, declares it 'a beautiful testimony for [Barghouti's] generation and mine' because, he says, 'I see myself in every paragraph and page of this book' (2003, 109).

One source for the consensus among the book's interlocutors is Said's influential pronouncement in his foreword to the English translation. In his opening paragraph, Said calls *I Saw Ramallah* 'one of the finest existential accounts of Palestinian displacement that we now have' (*ISR*, vii), a phrase which is much repeated in English-language reviews.³ The word 'existential' carries a double significance: it denotes Barghouti's attention to what Said calls the 'lived circumstances of Palestinian life' (*ISR*, ix), but it also maps Barghouti's private 'existence' onto that of the collective, producing the all-encompassing term 'Palestinian displacement.' In his conclusion, Said restates the second part of this assessment more strongly:

Barghouti the exile and dispossessed writer finds himself anew – only to find himself again and again in the new forms of his displacement. 'It is enough for a person to go through the first experience of uprooting, to become uprooted forever.' Thus despite its joy and moments of exuberance this narrative return at bottom re-enacts exile rather than repatriation. This is what gives it both its tragic dimension and its appealing precariousness [...] The Palestinian experience is therefore humanized and given substance in a new way. (*ISR*, xi)

In this passage, the distinct and discontinuous notions of individual and collective exile that Said articulates in *Out of Place* slide into one another. By emphasizing Barghouti's status as a dispossessed *writer*, Said combines the notion of exile as a shared condition of geographical displacement with its contrasting formulation as an archetypally modern(ist) condition of alienation ('uprooted forever') that writers feel particularly acutely. This statement refracts the book's existential materialism through the vocabulary of existentialist individualism, even as it seeks to capture the dominant structure of feeling of Palestinian culture since 1948. The 'Palestinian experience' becomes identified with a permanent state of detachment, and Barghouti's personal experience becomes a metonymic figure for the experience of all Palestinians, the relative material comfort of his exile and the specificity of his work as a poet notwithstanding.

It may seem unfair to quibble with Said's wording here: evidently, the purpose of the foreword is to introduce Barghouti's book to a non-specialist readership, as was the case with his forewords for many other Palestine-related texts. Still, the passage should give us pause, because it reveals something important about the terms of *I Saw Ramallah's* Anglophone reception. Because Barghouti's writing was unknown in English when *I Saw Ramallah* was published, it was almost inevitable that his memoir would be advertised and interpreted as a document of what we might call 'immediate' Palestinian experience (Williams, 1977, 46). Said is resisting the terms of this kind of allegorical interpretation, to a point, by insisting on Barghouti's status as a writer who makes conscious decisions about how to represent his own circumstances. Yet even his reading overlooks Barghouti's persistent refusals of a too-easy equivalence between his private experience and the experiences of Palestinians as a group. Against a national narrative which defines the Palestinian collective through its members' sense of a shared identity – often based, as in Said's analysis, on the experience of exile – *I Saw Ramallah* employs a materialist aesthetic which emphasizes both the circumstantial diversity of Palestinian lives and Barghouti's sense of his own responsibility, as a poet, to resist the temptation to reify the dynamic materiality of that diversity. This approach represents a move away from Said's claim in *The Question of Palestine* that exile is the 'fundamental condition of Palestinian life' (1992, xxxi). Though Barghouti is attentive to the continuing fact of Palestinian displacement, his effort to narrate the experiences of Palestinians living in

occupied Ramallah alongside those of Palestinians in the 'bourgeois diaspora' (Bowman, 1988, 36) offers a more sustained consideration of the particular kinds of intellectual activity demanded by the geographical, political, and experiential 'fragmentation' of the Palestinian collective (Khalidi, 1997, 34; Zreik, 2004, 71) than Said's emphasis on his exilic consciousness suggests. By attempting to envision a Palestinian unity that does not rely on a narrative of shared identity, Barghouti's memoir strives to create a more deliberate and difficult national imaginary, and to articulate a role for the Palestinian poet that is distinct from that of national representative.

Autonomy and commitment: Barghouti's 'Palestinian aesthetic'

In an essay published in *Autodafe*, the journal of the International Parliament of Writers, Barghouti outlines his idea of the poet's responsibility to his community. Written in English and coinciding with the release of the American edition of *I Saw Ramallah*, the essay can be read as an author's foreword to that edition. He begins the essay with a manifesto for the Palestinian poet:

The prolonged Israeli occupation has brought sclerosis to our language. Our poems have been more pulverized than our streets. Yet the majority of us are aware of the fact that we must resist military metre, simplistic imagery and *khaki poems*; not an easy task, but we have to pursue it with painstaking attention and care [...] we, the Palestinian poets, have to struggle not only against all this existential danger and defenselessness but also against the aesthetic vulnerability of our poetry. (2003b, 40)

It soon transpires that the opposite of 'aesthetic vulnerability' is not a belletristic detachment from the real, but rather a deep engagement with the details of the material world:

There were times when the poetic imagination worked to escape reality; I claim that the poetic imagination now works to confront it [...] I construct my own perception of lived experience, a new version of reality, different from the original. And maybe because of its difference, it enters into a problematic converse and oppositional dialogue with the everyday reality. (2003b, 45)

This conceptualization of the poet's relationship to the material world shifts the terms of existing debates over the aesthetic value of politically committed writing by Palestinians, with implications for analogous debates in other settings. Whereas critics such as Hanan Ashrawi and Salma Khadra Jayyusi have criticized Palestinian texts that 'neglec[t] exigencies of style and form for the pressures of politics,' as Ashrawi (who would later become a prominent politician) put it in her doctoral dissertation (Said, 1999a, 157),⁴ such 'exigencies' are often implicitly defined as the formal, linguistic, and/

or intertextual experimentation employed by 'avant-garde' writing produced in the West.⁵ Barghouti shares these critics' disapproval of those who would 'reduce the painting into a poster, the lyric into a military anthem, the play into preaching, the novel into a straight ideology, or the poem into slogan,' as he writes in *Autodafe* (2003b, 43). However, in *I Saw Ramallah*, Barghouti attempts to create a literary aesthetic which is evaluated not by a fixed set of formal or stylistic criteria derived from a particular tradition, but by its success in conveying the everyday experiences of Palestinian individuals. This approach goes beyond an affirmation of the idea that literature can do political work: it puts the question of how to do that work at the heart of Barghouti's artistic project. He writes, 'What can I do with my poetry and my own language here and now, in my part of the world? What happens to a poet in a cataclysmic society, where people live under semi-eternal emergency, and their life is destabilized and exposed to daily horror and endless suffering?' (2003b, 42). Whereas a critic like the young Ashrawi would most likely see this question as unnecessarily tied to political considerations, while other readers might contend that his concerns about language are superseded by the urgency of the disaster, Barghouti rejects both such responses. He concludes, in the same essay, that the poet's responsibility is to 'embrace the universal, the human, as well as the intimate and the personal. Most Palestinian writers are aware of this fact: For a fanatic it is always useful to simplify; for a poet it is categorically suicidal. The suffering of a nation should not be used as a pretext to justify the mediocre, the clichéd and thumb-worn, in any form of artistic expression' (2003b, 43).

This might look like a statement of the obvious: surely all writers (and readers) would describe themselves as opposed to mediocrity. Yet this conception of a writerly or artistic relationship to 'the suffering of a nation' differs from the responses I have imagined above in that it directly addresses the need 'to universalize the crisis,' to borrow the terms of Said's exhortation to intellectuals (Said, 1994b, 32–33). Barghouti is clearly anxious about a reception of his work that would limit its relevance to his 'part of the world,' rather than seeing it as a description of a military occupation comparable to other occupations in other places and times, or indeed as a portrait of people living their lives under circumstances that are not of their choosing. However, instead of responding to the problem by confining literature and politics to discrete spheres or prioritizing political exigency over craft, Barghouti takes on the difficult task of imagining a coincidence or coexistence of aesthetic and political demands.

Barghouti's reference to cliché recognizes the difficulties of undertaking this project through language, and it is this preoccupation that is most clearly foregrounded in *I Saw Ramallah*. Through a combination of expository and narrative passages, Barghouti sets out a methodology for narrating Palestinian experience that is founded on the possibilities and limitations of language. He approaches language as the creation of human agents, and therefore as both subject to revision and capable of effecting real change.

As he writes in *Autodafe*, 'Language is the key word. Language is a shared element between the world of the marketplace and that of poetry [...] It is our attempt to restore to each word its specificity and resist the process of collective vulgarization and to establish new relations among words to create a fresh perception of things' (2003b, 45). This claim importantly resembles Williams' gloss, in the volume cited above, of Vološinov's argument in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929). Signification, writes Williams, is not

an operation of and within 'consciousness,' which then becomes a state or process separated, *a priori*, from social material activity. It is, on the contrary, at once a distinctive material process – the making of *signs* – and, in the central quality of its distinctiveness as practical consciousness, is involved from the beginning in all other human social and material activity. (1977, 38)

From this premise, it follows that, for Barghouti, the type of political writing singled out by Ashrawi and Jayyusi is flawed because its authors have failed to appreciate the significance of language's function as a social and material practice. Thus, in *I Saw Ramallah*, Barghouti passionately condemns

that rubbish they call the "poetry of the stones" because it 'takes the accessible and the easy from the human condition and so blurs that condition instead of defining it, misrepresents it at the moment of pretending to celebrate it. It is the eternal difference between profundity and shallowness. Between art and political rhetoric. (*ISR*, 160)

Here, instead of repudiating engaged art, Barghouti argues that a work's aesthetic value is chiefly located in its efforts to engage with the material world.

To produce writing that meets this standard, Barghouti proposes a narrative mode that emphasizes the evidence of the senses over accepted truths, above all the idea of an idyllic, pre-lapsarian Palestine:

The Occupation has created generations without a place whose colors, smells, and sounds they can remember; a first place that belongs to them, that they can return to in their memories in their cobbled-together exiles [*'iqāmatihā al-mulaffaqa*, lit. 'put-together residencies'] [...] The Occupation has created generations of us that have to adore an unknown beloved: distant, difficult, surrounded by guards, by walls, by nuclear missiles, by sheer terror.

The long Occupation has succeeded in changing us from children of Palestine to children of the idea of Palestine. I only started to believe in myself as a poet when I discovered how faded all abstracts and absolutes were. When I discovered the accuracy of the concrete detail and the truthfulness of the five senses, and the great gift, in particular, of sight. When I discovered the justice and genius of the language of the camera, which presents its view in an amazing whisper, however noisy this view

was in fact or history. Then I made the effort necessary to get rid of the poem that was an easy accompaniment to the anthem, to get rid of the badness of beginnings. (*ISR*, 62–63; 2008b, 74)

This project has some affinities with a Wordsworthian Romanticist poetics, given its emphasis on the primacy of sensory perception and its rejection of literary abstraction. However, Barghouti is not suggesting that the poet attempt to comprehend 'the life of things' for personal spiritual gain (Wordsworth, 2000, 133). Instead, the commitment to the 'truthfulness of the five senses' is a political strategy intended to benefit the collective. By identifying the narrative sanctification of Palestine as a negative effect of occupation rather than a mode of resistance, Barghouti contends that this trend must be countered through a focus on what life in Palestine is like now.

It is important to note that this stance does not indicate a rejection of narrative as such. As Williams points out, the idea that the 'whole "real life process" can be known independently of language ("what men say") and of its records ("men as narrated")' is an 'objectivist fantasy,' since 'the very notion of history would become absurd if we did not look at "men as narrated" (when, having died, they are hardly likely to be accessible "in the flesh")' (1977, 60). Instead, Barghouti is arguing that material reality can and must be narrated, but that some narrations are truer to that reality than others. Those who would 'dare to make it [Palestine] into an abstraction' (*ISR*, 6) produce bad poetry, prose, or policy because they have allowed themselves to believe that their received understandings of Palestine as a place and as a human community represent a complete knowledge of it, and that there is therefore no need for reconsideration or revision. Significantly, and perhaps problematically, it follows that the kind of intellectual work Barghouti argues needs to be done can be carried out fully only by those who are either resident in historic Palestine or are allowed to visit it. For those who remain in 'exile' – a condition which has been common to most Palestinian artists and intellectuals, not only Barghouti and Said – the refusal of 'abstracts and absolutes' must continue to be an imaginative effort, albeit one that is distinct from an unquestioning commitment to an idealized vision of land and nation.

It is presumably for this reason that the book's first chapter, 'The Bridge,' in which Barghouti describes crossing over the Jordan River into Palestine, provides one of the clearest example of what this 'Palestinian aesthetic' might look like, since the subject of the chapter is the moment of return itself. The chapter opens with an apparently simple catalogue of Barghouti's physical sensations:

It is very hot on the bridge. A drop of sweat slides from my forehead down to the frame of my spectacles, then the lens. A mist envelops what I see, what I expect, what I remember. The view here shimmers with scenes that span a lifetime; a lifetime spent trying to get here. Here I am, crossing the Jordan River. I hear the creak of the wood under my feet. On

my left shoulder a small bag. I walk westward in a normal manner – or rather, a manner that appears normal. Behind me the world, ahead of me my world. (*ISR*, 1)

The passage shows evidence of a deliberate purging of all patriotic or symbolic description of the scene's constituent objects. Barghouti's interactions with these objects begin with sensory experience – he feels the sweat slide down his forehead, he hears the wood creak beneath his feet – but they soon give way to a more self-reflexive and self-conscious description of the poet's thoughts and feelings. The view shimmers not simply because of the heat, but also because of the memories that Barghouti's conscious mind superimposes on the scene; the 'mist' he 'sees' is almost certainly not literal, but rather a reference to the emotional haze mediating Barghouti's perception of his surroundings. By the end of the passage, the distinction between 'the world' and 'my world' bears only a tenuous relationship to Barghouti's sensory input, since it refers primarily to a cognitive differentiation between a place where Barghouti feels he belongs and the many other places that do not hold this significance for him. From the beginning of the narrative, then, Barghouti propels *I Saw Ramallah* beyond a Heideggerian celebration of the 'ecstatic "thingliness"' of the land of Palestine (Brennan, 2006, 15; Heidegger, 1975, 20–39). The 'truthfulness' of the senses is conveyed not only by what the eyes and ears take in, but also by the way in which Barghouti, as the human subject at the centre of the narrative, assimilates and interprets this information.

The rest of the chapter continues this line of argument, using the bridge across the Jordan as both a visual and thematic focal point for the scene. The bridge, Barghouti writes, is 'no longer than a few meters of wood and thirty years of exile. How was this piece of dark wood able to distance a whole nation from its dreams?' (*ISR*, 9). The conspicuous absence of any human actor in this image serves as a pointed reference to the unnamed human beings who are in fact responsible for controlling the purpose and function of the bridge, introducing the idea that material objects take on symbolic significance as a result of their social function. It also illustrates, through the absurd personification of an inanimate object, the Brechtian affinities of Barghouti's use of metaphorical language. Barghouti's descriptions of objects repeatedly use improbable or unexpected terms of comparison that force readerly contemplation of the object's material function by creating a distance between vehicle and tenor. Paulin observes, for instance, that Barghouti's description of the dried-up Jordan as a 'river like a parked car' (*ISR*, 5) 'is at once precise in its deliberate, slightly surreal, banality; on the other hand it is quietly ominous' (Paulin, 2004). The river and a parked car share immobility, but nothing else; the immediate accessibility of the image is undermined by the unexpected association of the two unrelated objects. Barghouti demands that the reader recognize the image as an artificial one, a realization that should lead his or her attention back to the material

consequences of the evaporation of the river for the inhabitants of the West Bank. However, this revelation does not entirely displace the symbolic value of the Jordan, since the tragic quality of the image preserves the dry river's status as a symbol of loss and defeat.

This technique is sufficiently counterintuitive to have escaped notice by some readers. Moughrabi, for instance, argues that the centrality of the bridge in this chapter comes from the bridge's significance as a place of collective humiliation and a metaphor of 'endurance, tenacity, and persistence' for the Palestinian people as a whole (2003, 109–10). Yet by privileging the bridge's metaphorical meaning over its physical uses, Moughrabi overlooks Barghouti's emphasis on the interdependence of the real and symbolic functions of the bridge. The bridge's metaphorical significance is not essential or fixed, but is instead created by the human beings who experience it in different ways:

Fayruz calls it the Bridge of Return. The Jordanians call it the King Hussein Bridge. The Palestinian Authority calls it al-Karama Crossing. The common people and the bus and taxi drivers call it the Allenby Bridge. My mother, and before her my grandmother and my father and my uncle's wife, Umm Talal, call it simply: the Bridge. (*ISR*, 10)

In this light, the wealth of opposing meanings that Barghouti considers assigning to his own crossing – 'Is this a political moment? Or an emotional one? Or social? A practical moment? A surreal one? A moment of the body? Or of the mind?' (*ISR*, 11) – signifies the various ways in which the bridge can potentially be understood, depending on the nature of the encounter and the interpretive paradigm used to comprehend it.

However, these figurative meanings must not be used to obscure the bridge's primary function as a means of political control. When Barghouti succeeds in crossing the bridge into Palestine, he immediately encounters an Israeli soldier 'wearing a yarmulke' (*'bi-qubba'at al-mutadiyyin*, lit. 'with a religious hat on') and is forced to remind himself that '[t]his is a real hat and not a literary conceit' (*ISR*, 12; 2008b, 17). In the same way, the bridge is a real object that enables the soldier to control human traffic into Palestine, not merely a symbol of that control and even less a symbol of resistance to it. Thus, in his narration of his own moment of return, Barghouti first attempts to chronicle his reactions to the physical encounter with the bridge, an object whose cultural significance has been overdetermined by a history of dispossession and occupation; he then strives to renarrate it using language which is more attentive to its status as an object producing certain relations between individuals. In this respect, his encounter with the bridge is itself a moment of production, because it makes this process visible.

As Barghouti continues his journey into the West Bank, his attention shifts to the natural landscape as a site of confrontation between the symbolic and the material. During the taxi ride to Ramallah, he observes:

I used to tell my Egyptian friends at university that Palestine was green and covered with trees and shrubs and wild flowers. What are these hills? Bare and chalky [*kāliḥa wa jardā*], lit. 'dull and bare'. Had I been lying to people, then? Or has Israel changed the route to the bridge and exchanged it for this dull road [*al-ṭarīq al-kāliḥ*] that I do not remember ever seeing in my childhood?

Did I paint [*hal qaddamtu*, lit. 'did I offer'] for strangers an ideal picture of Palestine because I had lost it? I said to myself, when [my son] Tamim comes here he will think I have been describing another country. (*ISR*, 28; 2008b, 35)

The wry self-criticism Barghouti expresses here suggests a more general critique of the 'pastoral' quality typical of Palestinian landscape writing after 1948 (Cleary, 2002, 89). Although Samir El-Youssef writes in his review of *I Saw Ramallah* that at this moment Barghouti as author 'realises how wide the gap is between the real land and the image in which it appears in his, and other's [*sic*], poems' (2001, 132), Barghouti's repeated and exaggerated expressions of dismay suggest a rather different timescale. Rather than a genuine epiphany, the scene reads as an artificial staging of the returnee's discovery that his dream of the land does not match the reality of it. He continues:

Had I been describing Deir Ghassanah with its surrounding olive groves, and convinced myself I was describing the whole country? Or was I describing Ramallah, the beautiful, lush, summer resort and thinking that each spot in Palestine was exactly like it? Did I really know a great deal about the Palestinian countryside? (*ISR*, 29)

Barghouti once again identifies this distortion as a detrimental effect of the Israeli occupation:

I have always believed that it is in the interests of an occupation, any occupation, that the homeland should be transformed into the memory of its people into a bouquet of 'symbols.' Merely symbols. They will not allow us to develop our village so that it shares features with the city, or to move with our city into a contemporary space. (*ISR*, 69)

Here, as he does throughout the episodes set in Ramallah and Deir Ghassanah, Barghouti opposes the pastoral imaginary to the material benefits of urban development, in contrast to (for example) Raja Shehadeh, who tends to foreground the West Bank's environmental degradation (2007). Barghouti's dichotomy draws the reader's attention to the landscape's function as a physical and economic space where people continue to live, and, by extension, to the political failure of a national literature that continues to glorify a lost past instead of articulating the immediate need for a different future.

As part of his interrogation of the gap between the abstracted and tangible landscape, however, Barghouti's narrative continues to engage with the conventions of Palestinian landscape writing by continually recycling

and resituating the tradition's imagery. The most obvious application of this imagery is in his frequent references to trees. As Carol Bardenstein has argued, trees carry great symbolic force in Palestinian (and Israeli) poetry and prose as part of a discourse of rootedness and rootlessness, the trees' physical properties standing in readily for the abstract concepts of belonging and diaspora (1998; 1999). On Barghouti's first morning in Ramallah, one of the first natural objects he describes is a 'green fig that covers a third of the hill next to Abu Hazim's house.' Yet in this passage, the tree serves not as a national symbol, but as a signal, like the bridge, of the narrative convergence of the metaphorical and the real. Barghouti demands of his reader how it is possible to 'distinguish between ideologies and conflicting opinions and political theories on the one hand and this green fig' (*ISR*, 37), setting himself the challenge of describing the tree using language that does not substitute the tree's physical presence with its symbolic functions.

A subsequent episode suggests what this materially engaged form of landscape description might look like. On the way to Deir Ghassanah, Barghouti's friend Husam stops the car on a hill above the village and invites Barghouti to look down at it from above, '[a]s though it were on a postcard' (*ISR*, 64). From their vantage point, Husam calls Barghouti's attention to another tree:

'Mourid! I burned it down! But it came back and grew again. Would you believe it?'

Husam pointed at a palm tree growing out of the wall of his second-story room in Dar Salih. A palm tree spilling her young fronds into the air over the fields.

'A palm tree, man [*yā rajul!*] Would you believe it?' (*ISR*, 65; 2003a, 77)

Bardenstein identifies the tree of many Palestinian narratives as 'embodying the experience of the Palestinian collective: thriving when it thrives (or being remembered as having thrived) [...] or, in a large number of representations, manifesting the unnatural, disrupted, and disturbed condition of the people-land bond' (1999, 153). In this passage, the healthy palm tree draws on both paradigms. As an embodiment of the collective, its determination to grow over and around the obstacle of the house invokes the Palestinian virtue of *ṣumūd*, or steadfastness. Yet at the same time, the obstacle that the tree has circumvented is a Palestinian home. Thus, while the palm tree growing out of the wall is not 'unnatural' – Barghouti notes that 'plants [...] grow in the stone and live for hundreds of years' (*ISR*, 65), suggesting a symbiotic relationship between the tree and the house – it is also an indicator of powerlessness and poverty. Even as the palm tree flourishes, the house continues to decay, casting the palm tree in the role of a parasite indifferent to the people's plight. By allowing the tree's vigorousness (as opposed to deformity or weakness) to represent the disruption of the 'people-land bond,' Barghouti once again upsets a conventional relationship between vehicle

and tenor, insisting that an accurate representation of this relationship must privilege its present dynamics over those of an idealized past.

Taken together, Barghouti's repeated refusals of a Palestinian national narrative which takes the Palestinian landscape as a static entity represented by an established set of signifiers present a cogent challenge to the idea of a Palestinian national consciousness based on a vanished national past instead of a shared civic future. Barghouti's approach distances him from Benedict Anderson's understanding of the nation as a 'cultural artifact' which is first discursively 'imagined' and then passed down to subsequent generations (1999, 4). Instead, Barghouti argues that the nation is continually produced through what Williams calls 'the real processes – all of them physical and material, most of them manifestly so – which are masked and idealized as "consciousness and its products" but which, when seen without illusions, are themselves necessarily social material activities' (1977, 62). The idea of the nation and the national identification of the human subject are, like all ideas, part of human action, and because they are conveyed through language, the poet-intellectual's stock-in-trade, the poet is especially responsible for recognizing that language is a form of that action.

The fundamental condition of Palestinian life

Barghouti's project coincides in several important respects with Said's theorizations of the historicity of literature and the role of the critic. Said's insistence on the 'worldliness' of literary texts (1983, 4) prefigures Barghouti's remarks on the social function of poetry in its claim that human consciousness is inseparable from the historical events that shape it. Like Barghouti, Said sees individuals, specifically intellectuals, as capable of contesting and transforming dominant epistemologies, since 'the individual consciousness is not naturally and easily a mere child of the culture, but a historical and social actor in it. And because of that perspective, which introduces circumstance and distinction where there had only been conformity and belonging, there is distance, or what we might call criticism' (1983, 15). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said extends this argument to the idea of an aesthetic which, like Barghouti's, is evaluated in terms of its relationship to the real: 'understanding that connection [between the novel and history] does not reduce or diminish the novels' value as works of art: on the contrary, because of their *worldliness*, because of their complex affiliations with their real setting, they are *more* interesting and *more* valuable as works of art' (1994a, 13). In pointing out these parallels, I do not mean to argue that Barghouti's idea of intellectual agency is an imitation of Said's, or that Said has any original claim to the idea that discourse is part of the material world, particularly since Said himself relied on a number of different sources for his argument, including Williams and Auerbach. However, it is worth noting that both Said and Barghouti conceive of literature as a means

of representing events in the world, and that both of them define the work of the intellectual as an act of counter-hegemonic representation. Moreover, in their comments on the relationship of Palestinian art to Palestinian reality, each insists that the task of representation is dependent upon aesthetic considerations that are specific to the Palestinian context. For Barghouti, the essential concern for Palestinian writers is 'the language of the camera'; for Said, in one of his rare discussions of Palestinian literature, it is a text's structure or form, exemplified by Kanafani's use of the scene as a means of representing the present (1999a, 38).

It is perhaps because their intellectual and critical projects share these basic premises that Said so readily reads Barghouti's representation of the experience of exile in terms of his own understanding of it in his foreword to the memoir. On the one hand, Said presents Palestinian 'exile' as a collective experience, its essential features remaining constant among a wide variety of circumstances. Thus, having made a 'similar trip' to Jerusalem himself, Said is already familiar with the 'whirlwind of sensations and thoughts' that Barghouti recounts in the narrative of his return (*ISR*, viii). However, because he goes on to argue that *I Saw Ramallah* is not so much a document of 'repatriation' as a voyage of self-discovery, Said paradoxically distances Barghouti's experience from that of other Palestinians. In the most literal sense, the claim that *I Saw Ramallah* 'reenacts exile' (*ISR*, xi) is of course correct; the book does not end with its hero's permanent return to an independent Palestine, since such a place does not exist. Yet Said's insistence that this is the narrative's project 'at bottom' glosses over the intellectual and emotional repatriation that takes place in the narrative through Barghouti's efforts to depict Ramallah as it is now. By foregrounding the tragic provisionality of Barghouti's narrative of return, Said overlooks the critique of the idealized exilic perspective that runs throughout the narrative.

There are certainly important reasons for Said to have interpreted Barghouti's narrative as a document of the constitutive role of mass displacement in the formation of Palestinian identity. In addition to the 750,000 Palestinians who became refugees in 1948, 400,000 people were displaced in the war of 1967, about half of whom were 1948 refugees displaced for a second time (Pappé, 2004, 139). The commemoration of these catastrophic events and their aftermaths is one of the most powerful tools that Palestinian literature has at its disposal, and both Said and Mahmoud Darwish are justifiably famous for their eloquent representations of Palestinian exile. Darwish's poem 'We Travel Like Other People' (*Nusāfir ka-n-nās*, 1983) opens with the line, 'We travel like other people, but we return to nowhere [*ilā 'ayyi shay*, lit. to nothing],' defining the collective through its members' experience of displacement (Darwish et al., 2005, 30–31). In *After the Last Sky*, first published in 1986, Said employs a similar tactic, claiming that Palestinians 'are migrants and perhaps hybrids in, but not of, any situation in which we find ourselves. This is the deepest

continuity of our lives as a nation in exile and constantly on the move' (1999a, 164).

However, although the situation that Said and Darwish describe is ongoing, their use of an aesthetic of placelessness and wandering is also closely connected to the moment of these particular texts' composition. Both *After the Last Sky* and 'We Travel Like Other People' were written soon after the PLO's expulsion from Beirut, during a period when the Palestinian national movement was in deep crisis (Sayigh, 1997, 464–94, 589–606). As Salim Tamari has written:

[B]efore Oslo the images of Palestinian dismemberment and the paradigms of exile dominated the debate over Palestinian identity [...] The politics and poetics of exile became so dominant in this formative period that the conditions, aspirations, and outlook of those Palestinians who remained in Palestine (almost half the total number of Palestinians) were virtually forgotten. (1999, 3–4)

I Saw Ramallah, on the other hand, was written during the early years of the post-Oslo period, when the focus of the debate shifted to the 'juridical aspects of [Palestinian] identity' and 'the politics of statehood' (Tamari, 1999, 3). At the same time, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank redirected the attention of many commentators from the 'places of exile' ('*al-manāfi*') where the PLO had been based to the ground of a potential Palestinian state (*ISR*, 134; 2008b, 161).⁶ In this context, the occupation takes on a new and more urgent significance, since it comes to represent (as it seemed at that time) the most immediate obstacle to Palestinian independence. This is not to paint Barghouti as a champion of Oslo or the Palestinian Authority, since he is deeply critical of both in *I Saw Ramallah*, but simply to situate his text as responding to and participating in a broader shift in the national imaginary of its time. This is a time that we are still in, particularly with regard to the Palestinian literature and other forms of cultural production in international circulation, which tends to emphasize Palestinian dispossession and deprivation in the West Bank and Gaza as the most pressing problem faced by the Palestinian national movement.

A more specific difficulty with Said's reading of *I Saw Ramallah*, however, is that his claim is based on an incomplete citation of the paragraph in question. Barghouti certainly begins this passage by exploring the idea that exile is a permanent state of consciousness. He continues from the line Said quotes: 'It is like slipping on the first step of a staircase. You tumble down to the end. It is also like the driving wheel breaking off in the hands of the driver. All the movement of the car will be haphazard and directionless' (*ISR*, 131). Both images fit Said's paraphrase, depicting exile as a catastrophic and irreversible condition. However, these images represent only the first stage of Barghouti's thinking. He continues: 'But the paradox is that strange cities are then never completely strange. Life dictates that the stranger acclimatize every day. This might be difficult at the beginning, but

it becomes less difficult with the passage of days and years. Life does not like the grumbling of the living' (*ISR*, 131).⁷ The import of the full passage, then, is that while Barghouti's 'stranger' (*'al-gharīb*,' also 'exile' [2008b, 157]) may initially *feel* that his displacement has caused him to 'become uprooted forever,' he is compelled to go on living, forming new connections and losing the immediacy of his relationship with his former home. The injustice of this experience lies in the fact that it is not chosen, but forced; the tragedy of it, however, comes in part from allowing oneself to be trapped in the horror of the initial stage, intent on retrieving a past that is irrecoverable. Thus, while Barghouti repeatedly expresses his rage at the Israeli state's dispossession and displacement of the Palestinians, he refuses to thematize exile, with its attendant connotations of either nostalgia or heterodoxy, as the defining characteristic of a collective Palestinian existence.

Instead, *I Saw Ramallah* juxtaposes its narrative of Barghouti's own experience of exile with an attempt to account for those Palestinians whose lives are defined not by the experience of displacement but by the occupation. This differentiated demographic imaginary provides an important corrective to the privileging of exile in Said's foreword. This does not mean that Barghouti thinks his subjects who remain in the village of Deir Ghassanah or in Ramallah have a more accurate or authentic view of what it is to be Palestinian than he does. On the contrary, in his critique of intifada poetry noted above, he writes that 'what is interesting is that the writers who lived under the Occupation and lived the Intifada fell into the same error as the writers of the Diaspora' by failing to 'penetrate to the essence of their material' (*ISR*, 160). His project is rather to highlight the gulf between the experiences of Palestinians living 'under the Occupation' and in 'the Diaspora,' even as he identifies both groups as part of a connected whole.

For the most part, this effort is carried out through juxtapositions of the material deprivations Barghouti witnesses in Deir Ghassanah with his description of his own relatively high standard of living during his exile in Budapest. In his account of his return to Deir Ghassanah, Barghouti begins by recalling the village's agricultural bounty in his childhood, when the villagers 'grew every plant that would grow in the climate of this land,' from honey-apples to pomegranates to spinach (*ISR*, 86), and the courtyard of his childhood home was dominated by yet another tree, this time a 'huge fig tree with a massive trunk and spreading branches' which had 'fed our grandfathers and our fathers – there was not one person in the village who had not tasted its delicious fruit' (*ISR*, 55). In the present day, however, the farms are 'overrun with brambles' (*ISR*, 87) and the fig tree has been 'cut off at the point where its awesome trunk met the earth' (*ISR*, 55), leaving a large cement block in its place. Barghouti's aunt Umm Talal, now living alone in the five-family home, says she was forced to cut the tree down:

'I've grown old and weak. People have emigrated and people have died

[*hājar illī hājar u māt illī māt*]. To whom should I feed the figs, my son? No one to pick the fruit and no one to eat. The figs stay on the tree till they dry and litter the whole yard. It wearied me and I cut it down. (*ISR*, 56; 2008b, 68)

While this scene sets up what is ostensibly a fairly standard contrast between the pastoral past and the 'bad modernity' (Cleary, 2002, 90) of the Israeli present, Barghouti uses this imagery to illustrate the economic collapse that has taken place in Deir Ghassanah in his absence. The West Bank's economic transformation after 1967 was the result of a convergence of factors including the confiscation of Palestinian land for Israeli settlements, which led to 'land hunger' among Palestinian residents; the introduction of modern agricultural methods, which increased production capabilities for some small landowners but reduced the overall number of agricultural jobs; the employment of large numbers of West Bank residents within Israel, particularly in the decades between the June 1967 war and the Oslo agreement; and the 'mass emigration' of West Bankers to the Gulf States in the 1970s (Pappé, 2004, 206; Farsakh, 2002). Barghouti summarizes this history thus:

Everybody's income here is from the olive and its oil. People who can still work, work in the fields: men and women together as they have always done. But the work of sons or grandsons or husbands in the Gulf is the most important source of income [...] When thousands of Palestinians were thrown out of Kuwait after the Gulf War the economic situation of many families in the village was affected. (*ISR*, 57)

The loss of the fig tree and its fruit signifies not only the loss of Palestinian sovereignty over the land, but also, and more crucially, the dispersal of the Palestinian population and the narrowing of local industry to a single cash crop. In this light, the narrative's pastoral thematics are not simply a lament for what has been lost, but a condemnation of the Israeli occupation's disruption of the local economy.

Certainly, Barghouti's attention to the dispersion of the population of the village to the Gulf and elsewhere could be viewed as an assertion of the centrality of exile to Palestinian experience, and thus align him more closely with Said's emphasis on displacement. However, his concomitant effort to draw attention to the contrast between the poverty he witnesses in Deir Ghassanah and his own relative material comfort outside of Palestine evinces a reluctance to collapse the different experiences of displacement and dispossession into one another. In his garden in Budapest, the fig tree is replaced by an apple tree, 'with children always climbing its branches and playing on the pistachio-green grass underneath it, as though it bore both apples and children' (*ISR*, 134). In contrast to the blighted Palestinian landscape, the land of Barghouti's 'place of exile' is both fertile and accessible to its inhabitants. In a similarly pronounced juxtaposition, Barghouti notes that his movements from place to place have been marked by the abandonment of a

series of decorative houseplants – ‘my yucca, my syngonium, my dracaena, my shefflera, my bear’s foot, my fern’ (*ISR*, 91) – which he has had to distribute ‘among friends in the country that leaves me or that I leave’ (*ISR*, 92) each time he moves on. Although the loss of the houseplants recalls the originary loss of the land of Palestine, they are not food-bearing plants, and so their loss has no effect upon his survival. For Barghouti, then, the ‘pleasures of exile,’ in Said’s invocation of George Lamming’s phrase (2002c, 186), signify not the privileged understanding of more than one culture, but the material disparity between most of the Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and those in the bourgeois diaspora.

Key to this presentation, however, is the idea that these experientially different constituencies nevertheless share some common goals that identify them as a national collective on political grounds. While Barghouti’s discussion of what these goals might be remains fairly general, his strategic deployment of the idea of the ‘we’ puts forward a Palestinian national formation based on a coalitional, rather than identitarian, politics. Barghouti sets the stage for this intervention by considering the divisions among Palestinians in earlier historical moments, thus allowing for comparisons between past disunities and possible forms of solidarity in the present. In an extended recollection of his childhood and adolescence in Ramallah, Barghouti uses the first person plural to refer to the group of children with whom he grew up. This is in keeping with the ‘strong tradition of what might be called urban patriotism’ in Palestine, which predates the Palestinian encounter with Zionism (Khalidi, 1997, 153). This ‘we’ is a stable collective, but it is not an exhaustive one, for the group is continually confronted with other forms of collectivity:

While we were still in short trousers we were shaken by the news of the martyrdom of our fellow student Raja Abu ‘Amasha in [the] demonstrations [against the Baghdad Pact ...] in Ramallah we celebrated the union between Egypt and Syria and the birth of the United Arab Republic, and there we wept when the union was dissolved [...] we heard for the first time of the ‘socialist’ revolution coming out of Egypt and wondered, we young schoolchildren, about the meaning of the term. (*ISR*, 39–40)

Although the group to which the pronoun (or in Arabic, the verb form) refers does not change throughout this passage, the various contexts in which it is used indicates that the originary ‘we’ of the city can also serve as a building block for the construction of other collectivities, which are based during this period on the linguistic and political affiliations of pan-Arab nationalism. As a group, the young people of Ramallah are instilled with a sense that the social and political upheavals taking place throughout the Middle East during the 1950s and ‘60s are relevant to their own lives. Although they follow these developments ‘with the minds of teenagers’ (*ISR*, 39), the experience awakens them to the idea that they might share goals with people they have never met. The episode highlights the role of the media in producing this

common sense of identity and purpose among geographically distant groups: Barghouti makes reference to both print and radio media outlets, including the ‘illegal pamphlets’ (*ISR*, 39) circulating the West Bank, the ‘Voice of the Arabs’ radio program, and the newspapers *al-Difā*, *al-Jihād*, and *Filasṭīn*.⁸ As in Anderson’s discussion of the role of print media in creating American national identities distinct from those of the Spanish and British empires (1999, 47–65), these publications inform the residents of Ramallah of events in other Arabic-speaking locations and strengthen their sense of themselves as part of a community of Arab listeners and readers.

However, this nostalgic account of Arab nationalism’s heyday shifts abruptly from an Andersonian model of the nation as imagined community to a retrospective critique of that model, which allowed the Palestinians of Ramallah to privilege their Arab nationalism over their solidarity with other Palestinians. Barghouti writes:

How can we explain today, now that we have grown older and wiser, that we on the West Bank treated our people [*‘ahlanā*, lit. ‘our relatives’ or ‘our family’], as refugees [*al-lāji’īn*]? Yes, our own people, banished by Israel from their coastal cities and villages in 1948, our people who had to move from one part of the homeland [*al-waṭan*] to another and came to live in our cities and towns, we called them refugees! We called them immigrants [*muhājirīn*]! [...] We were familiar with these words, comfortable using them. How is it that we did not ask ourselves then about their meaning? How is it that the adults did not scold us for using them? (*ISR*, 40–41; 2008b, 50)

Barghouti uses biological language (*‘ahlanā*) to designate the Palestinian nation here, which might seem to privilege a filiative form of belonging over the affiliative anti-imperialism of pan-Arabism. But the idea of the nation being advanced is not simply given or natural. It is based on a common presence in a defined territory (*al-waṭan*) and on the shared interests of a disparate group of people who also have never previously met. Barghouti describes a collective whose material and political needs are distinct from those of Egyptians, Syrians, and Iraqis, and different again from those of the Israelis who control the territory. The charge against Arab nationalism, then, is that it provided an insufficiently particular understanding of the circumstances that only affected Palestinians, which meant that it upheld identitarian divisions between Palestinians that were inimical to their common wellbeing. The idea of the Palestinian ‘family’ is thus a rather loose metaphor, positing an unrealized alternative past in which the 1948 refugees were not considered immigrants but fellow nationals.

By lamenting the absence of a sense of national unity in the period between 1948 and 1967, Barghouti also insists that a productive and genuine solidarity requires a more heterogeneous characterization of what it is to be Palestinian than its current articulations allow. In Barghouti’s narrative of the present, this broader conceptualization is intimated through the use of

a first person plural that includes any Palestinian Arab whose quality of life is degraded by Israeli economic, military, or immigration policies. This idea extends to the right to life itself, as illustrated by Barghouti's emphasis on the frequency of violent and premature death among Palestinians. His own grief for deceased family members and friends, particularly his brother Mounif and his assassinated friends Naji al-Ali and Ghassan Kanafani, is figured as part of a collective Palestinian bereavement: 'This is not a personal matter that concerns me alone. Our catastrophe and our pains [wāji'unā wa mawāji'unā]⁹ are repeated and proliferate day after day [...] Our calendars are broken, overlaid with pain, with bitter jokes and the smell of extinction' (*ISR*, 171; 2008b, 205). The daily repetition of these tragedies shifts the emphasis from the historical domain to the present, reiterating the idea that the Palestinian nation is continually produced by human action, including the negative, coercive actions of Kanafani and al-Ali's assassinations and Mounif's forced exile in Paris.

The disconsolate national imaginary that Barghouti puts forward in this passage goes beyond a collective inventory of individual stories of loss, since it is defined above all by the increasingly remote chance of an end to the legal and geographical limbo in which most Palestinians live. He continues:

Our future grew more mysterious, more unknown with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, then the War of the Camps, then Oslo. And it is still mysterious, now, today. Since June 5, 1967 we have been left to sort out our lives in the lengthening shadow of the defeat, the defeat that has not yet ended. (*ISR*, 175)

Here 'we' refers to a people who are joined not by their material circumstances, but by the fact that each of them has had to 'adapt – even though with difficulty – to the dictated reality' (*ISR*, 140), whatever that may be, which has been imposed upon them by the Israeli government. Thus, it is their total subjection to Israeli policy, not a particular way of looking at the world, that connects the members of Barghouti's Palestinian nation. The specifically national character of this collective is defined less by the idea of a shared past or a specific territorial claim than by a general demand for Palestinian self-determination, albeit one that is qualified by Barghouti's anxiety about the potential insularity of an independent Palestinian state: 'Am I hungry for my own borders? I hate borders, boundaries, limits. The boundaries of the body, of writing, of behavior, of states [...] Now I want borders that later I will come to hate' (*ISR*, 38).

Barghouti remains unwilling throughout the narrative to define this shared set of goals any further, and he continues to problematize his own ability to identify them, most notably on the occasion of his poetry reading in Deir Ghassanah. Barghouti's initial fear of a lukewarm reception is not realized, and he feels able to claim a place for himself as part of the village community: 'I recite in front of "my uncles,"' he says, 'as I called them when I took hold of the microphone, in front of the headman, the plowman, the

shepherd, the mothers, the grandmothers, the educated, the illiterate, and even the children, all gathered in this village square in which a poet had never stood before' (*ISR*, 83). Yet Barghouti goes on to complicate the image of a natural rapport between himself and the villagers by ending the scene not with a final affirmation of his sense of belonging, but with what he describes as a 'cruel and hurtful thought': 'What does Deir Ghassanah know of you, Mourid? What do your people know of you now?' (*ISR*, 84–85). He admits that he knows just as little about them:

Have they not changed also? Umm Talal, unusually, speaks about politics. They tell me that many of the young people of the village are enthusiastic supporters of Hamas [...] Perhaps if it was I who had carried on living there I would have knocked down or built, or planted or cut down trees with my own hands. Who knows? They lived their time here and I lived my time there. Can the two times be patched together? And how? They have to be. (*ISR* 85)

This moment represents a sober reckoning with the differences between the villagers' understanding of what it has meant to be Palestinian since 1967 and Barghouti's own. Their decisions to cut down the fig tree or to support Hamas are decisions that, as human actors, they have chosen to make, and Barghouti seeks to comprehend those decisions instead of condemning them. He recognizes that his position of prestige at the reading is another privilege of exile, made possible only by his long absence: 'These boys and girls, if they had seen me with their fathers and their uncles in their homes every evening for thirty years, would they have asked for my autograph in their books as a strange poet?' (*ISR*, 86).

This scene, with its affirmation and subsequent deconstruction of communal intimacy, once again emphasizes the inadequacy of a Palestinian national formation based on a shared sense of identity or experience. It also begins to theorize a specifically literary response to this problem, suggesting that the materialist and located poetics I explored in the first half of this chapter might not only make it possible to distinguish between different forms of Palestinian experience, but can also offer a way of 'patch[ing]' the 'two times' together. The poems that Barghouti reads in this scene approach national ideas – the demand that Israel be held to account for Palestinian suffering, the idea of a Palestinian national culture – through particular events, like the death of Mounif (*ISR*, 81), describing these publicly resonant personal experiences in rich sensory and emotional detail. Barghouti refuses to present his work as an expression of a collective consciousness, exilic or otherwise: the poet 'clings to his own way of receiving the world and his own way of transmitting it' (*ISR*, 133). Yet a more dynamic and provisional form of such a consciousness can briefly take shape in the act of literary transmission itself, in the circulation and reception of individual texts. 'When I write poems,' Barghouti reflects before the poetry reading, 'the audience is not defined. But they become defined when I am asked to read. The specific

receiver. This alone makes the choice easier' (*ISR*, 79). During the reading, he has a 'powerful and all-enveloping' intuition of what the residents of Deir Ghassanah want to hear: 'These people need no more bitterness. Let there be in your poems an indication – however faint – that, in the end, life goes on with the living' (*ISR*, 82). Yet as soon as the reading is over, he is reminded again of the contingency of any shared sense of desire and purpose. The commonality that he glimpses must be continually reforged and redefined through the encounter between listener (or reader), writer, and text.

Near the end of the memoir, Barghouti hints that *I Saw Ramallah* might itself provide an imaginative framework that is flexible enough for this task. He writes:

I want to attach [*waşl*] one moment to another, to attach childhood to age, to attach the present to the absent and all presents to all absences, to attach exiles to the homeland and to attach what I have imagined to what I see now. We have not lived together and we have not died together. (*ISR*, 163; 2008b, 195)

In *I Saw Ramallah*, this task is attempted through the form of the narrative, which binds the members of the collective through its thematic coherence and associative sequencing; through its aesthetic, which emphasizes the ability of individual actors and creators to produce social change; and through the shared imperative of ending the Israeli occupation, which is the dominant refrain of the narrative. By staging what Said sweepingly calls the 'Palestinian experience' (*ISR*, xi) as an encounter between diasporic and non-diasporic Palestinians, Barghouti draws attention to the immense difficulties that Palestinians face, not simply on the long-deferred day when 'the scattered peoples of Palestine [...] gath[er] together in a single place called "Palestine"' (Bowman, 1999, 57), but in their definition of common desires and goals at the present time. The urgent task for Palestinian intellectuals, therefore, is to acknowledge and explore the historical events and contemporary material realities that divide Palestinians from one another so that the differences between them are neither elided nor essentialized; it is only in this way that a viable solidarity can be achieved.

I Saw Ramallah might be criticized for its failure to envision a more pragmatic agenda for bringing about this kind of unity or for Barghouti's utopian insistence on the revolutionary potential of materialist poetics at a time of ongoing catastrophe. However, the great strength of this narrative is that in its evocation of what it means to be a Palestinian today, it manages to avoid the temptation to identify a Palestinian essence or to construct a suitably representative or authentic position from which to speak, a problem that occurs not only in some of Said's writings but in those of many other artists and critics seeking to represent the Palestinian cause. Instead, by asserting that the poet-intellectual has an important role to play in the refutation of received truths and in the creation of more truthful modes of understanding, Barghouti constructs a narrative that is more hopeful than

Said's reading would suggest. The book ends not with a reinvocation of exile, but on an optimistic and expectant note: 'In Amman I will wait for Tamim's permit. I will return here with him. He will see it. He will see me in it, and we shall ask all the questions after that' (*ISR*, 182). Barghouti's English-language readers are invited to witness – to 'see' – this declaration, and to work out their own relationship to the difficult and deliberate forms of connection and solidarity that Barghouti lays before them.

‘Israel is not South Africa’: Amos Oz’s Living Utopias

My books are often seen as political statements, but they’re not. If I want to state something very directly, for example that my government should go to the devil, then I’ll write an article or go to a meeting or go on television and say, ‘Dear government, go to the devil’ [...] If I want to make a political statement, then I’ll write one. When the question is less simple – when within me I hear several points of view – then, perhaps, I write a novel.

– Amos Oz, *Israel, Palestine, and Peace* (1994)

The Israeli writer must always position the present as a *whole* in the consuming context of a *total* history, and reconstitute the individuals of the present as agents but never as principals or sources of principle [...] The Israeli Hebrew author resolves the putative historical order to a narrative order in which moral priorities are stated in reference to a cumulative series of oppressions and resistances superseded by the telos of the living utopia, the Zionist’s Israel.

– Yerach Gover, *Zionism* (1994)

In his epic memoir, *Sipur ‘al ‘ahavah ye-ḥoshekh* (2002, Eng. *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, 2004), Amos Oz describes a post-World War II Jerusalem populated by anxious and impoverished European Jews, living under a British-imposed curfew and behind iron window grates, who spend their time ‘bent over a sheet of paper, correcting, erasing, writing, and polishing’ (2004b, 298). Observing the adults’ behaviour, the young Amos decides that when he grows up, he wants to ‘be a book’:

Not a writer but a book. And that was from fear.

Because it was slowly dawning on those whose families had not arrived in Israel that the Germans had killed them all [...] And who knew what the British might do to us before they left? And after they had left, hordes of bloodthirsty Arabs, millions of fanatical Muslims, would be bound to butcher the lot of us in a few days. They would not leave a single child alive [...]

[I]f I grew up to be a book, there was a good chance that at least one copy might manage to survive, if not here then in some other country, in some city, in some remote library, in a corner of some godforsaken bookcase. After all, I had seen with my own eyes how books manage to hide in the dusty darkness between the crowded rows, underneath heaps of offprints and journals, or find a hiding place behind other books. (2004b, 298–99)

Reviewers have often singled out this passage for its inventive tropology (shared by Edward Said, as I noted in Chapter 2), but it also tells us a great deal about how Oz negotiates the demands of his position as Israel's best-known writer at home and abroad. The scene's affective power comes from its evocation of the European Jewish immigrants' perception of their own existential precarity. In this context, the fanciful image of bibliometamorphosis as a mode of survival identifies the passage as a portrait of the Israeli artist charged with preserving his people's collective memory in the face of the keenly felt threat of physical and cultural annihilation. At the same time, however, Oz's hyperbolic language – 'hordes of bloodthirsty Arabs, millions of fanatical Muslims' – exposes this threat as a fantasy that did not come true in Palestine, for as readers, we know that in 1946 it was the Palestinian Arabs, not the Jews, who were about to face catastrophic dispossession and displacement. Oz's extraordinary influence can be traced to his ability to sustain the kind of ethical balancing act seen here, summed up by his much-cited aphorism that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a case of 'right versus right.'¹ On the one hand, Oz eloquently represents the hopes and fears of many Jewish Israelis and insists that there is no moral or political alternative to the Jewish state. Yet on the other, he advances a stern critique of what he sees as the excesses of the same desires, condemning Israeli expansionism and insisting that both Palestinians and Israelis must be willing to compromise to achieve a negotiated two-state settlement.²

It is hard to overstate Oz's domestic and international reputation. He is an exceptionally prolific writer, having published nearly thirty books in Hebrew to date, among them eleven novels, six collections of short stories and novellas, two children's books, his memoir, two volumes of literary criticism, and five collections of political essays. Nearly all of this work has been translated into English – usually by Oz's long-term translator, the British historian Nicholas de Lange – and a range of texts have been translated into more than thirty other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Finnish, Korean, Malayalam, Urdu, and Vietnamese ('Institute for

the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 2012a; Amos Oz Archive, 2012). Oz has won prestigious literary prizes in Israel and Europe, including the Israel Prize (1998) and the Goethe Prize (2005), and in recent years he has regularly been named as a top contender for the Nobel Prize for Literature (Flood 2009; Amos Oz Archive, 2012). Oz also has an unparalleled visibility at home and abroad as a public intellectual and spokesperson for the Zionist left, with an international standing that is nearly comparable to and more or less coincident with Said's metropolitan prominence as a representative of the Palestinians. Oz was an early opponent of the occupation of the Palestinian territories, a founder of the left Zionist organization Peace Now (*Shalom Akhshay*) in 1978, and a member of the group of Palestinian and Israeli politicians and intellectuals responsible for drawing up the unofficial Geneva Accord in 2003.³ Over the last several decades, his commentary and interviews have appeared regularly not only in Israeli newspapers, but also in mainstream metropolitan publications including the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, and *Der Spiegel*. There are other Israeli writers who have had considerable international recognition, above all David Grossman and A. B. Yehoshua, but as Jacqueline Rose wrote nearly twenty years ago, Oz is 'for many what Israel – in English literary and cultural consciousness – is allowed to be [...] He's the voice that repeatedly gets through' (1996, 22).

In his role as a commentator on Israeli politics, Oz portrays himself, and is portrayed by others, as a voice of reason and empathy, in contrast to the xenophobic belligerence of the Zionist right. His most recent work of political commentary in English, *How to Cure a Fanatic*, was published by Princeton University Press in a slim, pocket-sized volume with a foreword by the South African novelist Nadine Gordimer, who praises Oz for the 'brilliant clarity' of his analysis and his willingness to 'stake his vision and his politico-moral integrity in the belief that the dispute can be resolved' (Oz, 2006b, vii, viii). The moral authority that Gordimer bestows on Oz is rhetorically confirmed by the epigrammatic and all-encompassing terms of his critique. Oz draws extensively on the language of the private sphere to explain the public conflict, at times producing what we might think of as a pedagogic version of the Jamesonian national allegory, in which references to the psychological or the domestic are intended as parables 'to be read in primarily political and social terms' (Jameson, 1986, 72). He writes, for instance: '[S]ome of the worst conflicts are precisely the conflicts between two victims of the same oppressor. Two children of the same cruel parent do not necessarily love each other' (Oz, 2006b, 15). But at other times, Oz's use of such language inverts this analogy by claiming that psychological traits and domestic relationships *produce* political commitment: 'The present crisis in the world, in the Middle East, in Israel/Palestine [...] is about the ancient struggle between fanaticism and pragmatism [...] Fanaticism is unfortunately an ever-present component of human nature, an evil gene, if you like [...] Very often, these things begin in the family. Fanaticism begins at home' (Oz, 2006b, 40–41, 59). 'Fanatics,' for Oz, are Jewish, Muslim, or Christian (2006b,

42); they are anti-smoking campaigners, vegetarians, or pacifists (2006b, 50); they are anyone, on the right or the left, whose convictions prevent him or her from imagining the world from someone else's point of view (2006b, 60–69). Oz's idea of 'fanaticism,' then, like Hannah Arendt's idea of totalitarianism, rejects distinctions between different kinds of commitment, opposing all such allegiances to what Arendt called the 'virtue of moderation' (1958, 191). At such moments, Oz eschews Jamesonian allegory altogether, in keeping with the 'first-world' tradition in which 'political commitment is recontained and psychologized or subjectivized by way of the public-private split' (Jameson, 1986, 71).⁴

The same kind of anti-political impulse, taking its cue from psychological and metaphysical explanations of social relations, can be found in much of the metropolitan response to Oz's fiction. His fans and critical champions have frequently represented him as a writer of the human condition whose work happens to emerge from an Israeli Jewish context, tacitly challenging those who might see its concerns as exclusively local.⁵ A. S. Byatt was an early admirer, writing of *Mikha'el sheli* (1968, Eng. *My Michael*, 1972), Oz's first novel in English translation, that it offers 'a remarkable, percipient portrait of the nature of women'; the encomium still features on the jacket of the most recent English edition. His interlocutors in the *New York Times*, which has published reviews of his work regularly since 1972, make similar claims. A review of *Kufsaḥ sheḥorah* (1987, Eng. *Black Box*, 1988) observes of the protagonists, 'In their inconstancy and inconsistency, these people are thoroughly human' (Goodman, 1988), while the reviewer of *Lada'at 'ishah* (1989, Eng. *To Know a Woman*, 1991) describes the novel as 'mercilessly domestic [...] the human condition is observed – kept watch over – with scrupulous exactitude' (Pritchard, 1991). Taken together, such assessments create a climate of reception in which Oz's fiction legitimates his status as a public intellectual, and vice versa. The persuasiveness of his literary observations of 'human' behaviour gives weight to his political statements, while his 'reasonable' political stance (Cleary, 2002, 144) associates his fiction with a humanistic 'understanding of "the other"' (Schillinger, 2009), assuring its status as 'world' literature.⁶

Yet if many metropolitan commentators view Oz as the 'conscience of Israel,' in the words of Melvyn Bragg (2000), or a 'voice of sanity,' according to Gordimer (Oz, 2006b, vii), anti-Zionist readers have found his brand of internationally exported dissent less courageous. The Israeli poet Yitzhak Laor scoffs at the idea that Oz is a 'radical' (Oz, 2006b, 93) or 'controversial' figure ('World Book Club,' 2004): 'Amos Oz has never suffered for his opinions. He has always been a favourite son of the Israeli establishment, not least the Army' (Laor, 2001, 54). Far from being a consistent voice of opposition to Israeli government policy, Oz has lent his support not only to the US-led 'peace process' – he championed both the Oslo accords and Ehud Barak's 'generous offer' to Yasser Arafat at Camp David in 2000 (Oz, 1996a; 2000) – but also to Israel's 'wars of defence,' including the invasions of Lebanon in

July 2006 (Oz, 2006a) and Gaza in December 2008, although in both cases he subsequently criticized the Israeli Defence Force for its disproportionate use of violence (Oz and Grossman, 2006; Edemariam, 2009). In many of his political essays, Oz spends at least as much time defending Zionism's legitimacy as a movement of Jewish national liberation as he does promoting 'a sad, sober, imperfect compromise' with the Palestinians (1994b, 77). For instance, in an essay originally published in the *Guardian* in 1989 – after the start of the first intifada, when perceptions of the Palestinian cause on the metropolitan left had begun to shift – Oz makes a claim that he repeats many times elsewhere:

I am not among those who are comfortable with the feeling that 'the Vietnam War rides again' and that all we have to do is pull out of our Vietnam and everything will come out right; or that ours is a case of good old-fashioned colonialism and all we need is a dose of de-colonization for everything to be fine; or that what we have here is a story of denial of civil rights [...] The occupation itself was not the cause of the war but its consequence. And the solution is not integration, but separation through self-determination: two states for two peoples. (1994b, 84–85)

Oz's rhetorical strategy here – anticipating the allegation from the anti-Zionist left that Zionism is a form of colonialism, and seeking to make this charge seem naïve or extreme in relation to his own 'moderate' analysis – has been very effective in producing an image of the Zionist left as progressive, pragmatic, and willing to cooperate with an unaccountably inflexible Palestinian national movement. If, as Patrick Williams has argued, the absence of Palestine from postcolonial studies indicates the success of Israeli efforts to persuade metropolitan academics that Zionism is not colonialism (2010, 91), this is not only because of the long shadow of the Nazi genocide, but also because of the role that Oz and other left Zionist artists and intellectuals have played in promoting the notion of a compassionate Zionism whose defenders 'shoot and cry' (*yoreh ye-bokheh*), as the Israeli adage has it.⁷ This has been especially true of the most internationally prominent Israeli novelists, whose work has helped to normalize the inherent contradiction of left Zionism, described by Edward Said as the belief that 'although it was morally wrong to expel Palestinians [in 1948], it was necessary to do so' (1998, para. 4).

This is not to deny the policy differences between the political parties that have historically been associated with the Zionist left – Labour, Mapam, Meretz – and Kadima, Shas, and Likud; Oz's Zionism is not the maximalist triumphalism of Benjamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon, or Menachem Begin. It is, however, a sign of the abbreviated spectrum of Israeli politics in the last half-century that Oz has been seen as a dissenting voice. His location in this spectrum might be understood in relation to another constellation of 'right versus right,' referring in this instance not to the competing claims of the Palestinian and Zionist national movements, but to the struggle for supremacy within Israel between 'the socio-economic liberal right of the

capitalist upper classes—called in Israel “the left” – and the ethnoreligious fundamentalist right of the labouring lower classes – called in Israel “the people” (Ram, 2001, 236). This restricted field of debate, with its squeezing out of the socialist and anti-Zionist left, derives in part from Israel’s long-term status as an American client state, as Hagnebi, Machover, and Orr noted more than four decades ago: ‘The permanent conflict with the Arab world, and with anti-imperialist trends within it, forces Zionism to depend increasingly on imperialism, and this creates a permanent pressure shifting the Zionist left to the right’ (1971, 24). Within *this* order of right versus right, Oz’s acknowledgement of the Palestinian demand for self-determination looks like a magnanimous concession, instead of an axiom of anti-imperialist politics.

Since Oz’s left Zionist or ‘liberal right’ politics are so well documented, it might once again seem boring or obvious to examine his fiction for its vision of the nation. A number of his critics have observed that his writing conjures up a separatist Zionist imaginary, devoid of Palestinians and replete with colonial imagery.⁸ Gabriel Piterberg makes the link between Oz’s fiction and essays explicit: ‘There is a perfect congruity between Oz’s contributions to Zionist ideology as a novelist on the one hand, and as a non-fiction writer and public speaker on the other [...] How anyone can see dissent in this literature, aesthetically and/or politically, is puzzling’ (2008, 228, 231). Why turn to Oz, then, when oppositional work by Jewish Israeli writers who are far more sceptical of left Zionist politics, and who seek to challenge rather than consolidate its hegemony – Shimon Ballas, Albert Swissa, Ronit Matalon – is also available to metropolitan readers?⁹ The short answer is that this is a book about Palestinian and Israeli ‘world’ literature, and none of these writers has Oz’s metropolitan reach, nor his literary and political influence. But I would also note Rose’s observation that it is not ‘a question of *placing* Oz (simply condemning, simply condoning) but of following the psychic and political tension of the writing’ (1996, 36). The assumption that because we know Oz’s politics, we know the politics of his work, tells us little about how his narratives achieve their ends: that is, how they construct an attractive and marketable Jewish Israeli nation-state, and how they naturalize a separatist demographic imaginary. Oz’s work is equally significant as an exemplar of the dilemma facing ‘dissident’ Zionist writing in general, as described in Yerach Gover’s important analysis: such writing ‘both challenges Zionist moral and political themes and, despite itself, ends up by reiterating the episteme upon which those themes are based’ (1994, 3).

Oz’s writing is in many ways a quintessential example of the literature of national narration, in keeping with the model popularized by Anderson. Most of his books, and especially those for which he is best known, conform to the conventions of Anderson’s ‘old-fashioned novel,’ providing detailed renderings of everyday life in recognizably Israeli settings: the kibbutz, the Jewish neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, the 1950s ‘development towns,’ the affluent suburbs of Tel Aviv. His casts of characters are densely populated with Israeli archetypes – domineering Palmach fathers, resistant *sabra* sons,

alluringly mysterious *sabra* women – and the conflicts between them are often ponderously allegorical, the narratives' plotlines propelled by the staging of debates about the nature of Jewish identity, the future of the Jewish state, and the relationship between the Jewish Israeli individual and the nation. Such explicit representations of individual experience as 'the experience of the collectivity itself' (Jameson, 1986, 86) can be traced from Oz's earliest work to his most recent, from his kibbutz novels to his Jerusalem memoir, and from his realist epics to his metafiction. Within these national constellations, Oz also tends to foreground protagonists who are avatars of 'the Author'¹⁰ himself, in an apparently self-conscious and perhaps self-mocking acknowledgement that his own trajectory from Jerusalem to Kibbutz Hulda to Arad, a 'development town'¹¹ near Be'er Sheva, gives him a status as 'a kind of Israeli everyman' (Omer-Sherman, 2006, 61). (This quality has not been lost on his metropolitan publishers: the back covers of his English translations often feature photos of the author looking rugged and handsome, with a distinct resemblance to the Paul Newman of *Exodus*.) This is Lukács' 'recourse to biographical form' as a circumscription of the national: Oz's experience is mapped on to that of his protagonists, which in turn is mapped onto that of the nation, restricting the "'bad" infinity' of the novel to the horizons of post-1948 Jewish Israeli experience as mediated by male, native-born, Ashkenazi, left Zionists like Oz himself. This mediated infinity constitutes a total vision of Jewish nationhood that, in my second epigraph to this chapter, Gover names as a confirmation of 'the telos of the living utopia, the Zionist's Israel' (1994, 31): it affirms the achievement of an actually existing Jewish Israeli nation-state whose internal divisions are superseded by its essential unity.

Again, such claims may seem unsurprising, since Oz's domestic and international critics have often described his narratives as producing microcosms of Jewish Israeli society (a reading that vies with their reception as universally 'human'), in keeping with the expectations of both audiences: 'the constant return to allegory [is] part of the way in which [Israeli] narratives achieve their plausibility and therefore a sense of community among readers' (Gover, 1994, 9). But it has less often been observed that Oz also anticipates and resists being read as an allegorist, using the same dismissive, knowing tone with which he anticipates and resists the identification of Zionism with European colonialism. In 1992, in an acceptance speech for the Frankfurt Book Fair Peace Prize, he said:

Our readers in Israel do not always draw the line between narrative and essay. They often read a simplistic political message into what was meant to be a polyphonic story. Readers outside of Israel also tend to read our literature as political allegory – but this is often the fate of novels which come out of troubled parts of the world. You think you have written a piece of chamber music, a tale of one family, but your readers and critics say, 'Aha! Surely the mother represents the old values; the father is the

government; and the daughter must be the symbol of the shattered economy.' (1994b, 74)

Seen in this light, the 'mercilessly domestic' scenarios of Oz's fiction are not so much a comment on the human condition as a reaction against the expectations of his readership, which is also a reaction against the burden of national representation placed on Hebrew writing in Israel since the early years of the Yishuv. His novels put forward national allegories only to cancel them, strenuously recuperating nationally resonant losses and conflicts as personal bereavements and domestic disputes.¹² The death of a father signals the demise of the 'pioneer' (*haluts*) generation, as in *Menuḥah nekhonah* (1982, Eng. *A Perfect Peace*, 1985), or of a mainstream left Zionism, as in *Black Box*, but both novels undermine such readings through their precise and moving renderings of the characters' private grief. This emphasis on the personal can be read as a challenge to a Zionist metanarrative – it refuses consolatory notions of sacrifice in the name of the nation, for instance – but it also reasserts the split between the public and the private, making Oz's exaggeratedly allegorical plots appear deeply ironic. In *Ha-matsav ha-sheleishi* ('The third state', 1991, Eng. *Fima*, 1993a), one of Oz's most comic and most self-conscious novels, Oz goes one step further by adopting a meta-allegorical mode in which the title character of the English translation, Fima, frequently comments on the relationship between everyday events and the conflict: imagining a dying dog, 'he realised that this horror too was the result of what was happening in the Occupied Territories' (1993a, 142). The effect is to make the reader question her own search for national-allegorical correspondences – Fima is a distinctly unreliable narrator – and to redirect her attention to Fima's domestic and personal circumstances, as Fima himself does at the end of the novel.

Oz's apparent rejection of national-allegorical reading and writing is complicated, however, by his own self-description as a writer, which relies on another Anderson: Sherwood Anderson, whom Jameson sardonically names as the kind of writer who tends 'to remind us of outmoded stages of our own first-world cultural development' (1986, 65) because his work so openly constructs a national imaginary, as I noted in Chapter 1. In his memoir, Oz describes his epiphany upon first reading Anderson in a Hebrew translation:

[H]ere, in *Winesburg, Ohio*, events and people that I was certain were far beneath the dignity of literature, below its acceptability threshold, occupied center stage [...] Sherwood Anderson opened my eyes to write about what was around me. Thanks to him, I suddenly realized that the written world does not depend on Milan or London but always revolves around the hand that is writing, wherever it happens to be writing: where you are is the center of the universe. (2004b, 491, 493)

As this tribute suggests, Oz takes from Anderson a commitment to psychological realism, in which the minor dramas of everyday existence are the

proper subject of literature; he also takes the notion that human experience consists mainly of interpersonal interaction within small, circumscribed communities, whether these are based in rural towns or a few densely populated streets in Jerusalem. This sentimental investment in the domestic and the local has inspired Oz's more critical readers to deride his work as 'best Bronx kitsch' (Laor, 2001, 54). Rather than simply dismissing Oz's kitchen-sink realism as 'bad' writing, however – once again bracketing the question of how it does what it does – we might instead attend to the ways in which its insistent particularity ultimately makes his novels' apparently disavowed allegories of Jewish separatism more 'palatable' (Makdisi, 2011, 238). For Oz, as for Anderson, the focus on the personal and the local is inherently unstable: the 'mercilessly domestic' register of the work 'strains for historical and social explanation,' displaying the 'inevitable slippage' from morality to history that is 'characteristic of all modern thought' (Jameson, 1971, 68). By (literally) domesticating the grand narrative of Zionist settler-colonialism and its literary correlates, Oz resists this slippage and reverses the signifying trajectory of the Jamesonian national allegory, reframing a political will to power as a private yearning. Yet the very move towards the psychological recuperates and rejuvenates the political, recasting the desire to live as a Jew among Jews as a non-dominatory expression of personal freedom. Oz's novels thus do not simply project a separatist demographic imaginary, as it might at first appear: they do so paradoxically and obliquely, by denying their investment in the representation of collectivity and encouraging their readers to sympathize with the exaggeratedly modest hopes and dreams of their fragile, fallible, and above all human characters, including, finally, their much less modest and much less private longing to live in a Jewish state.

Allegories of dissent

When Oz chastises his readers for reading the 'tale of one family' as political allegory, he asserts his distance from a practice that he had previously described more sympathetically. In the essay collection *Poh ya-sham be-'erets Yiśra'el* ('Here and there in the land of Israel', 1983, Eng. *In the Land of Israel*, 1984), Oz suggests that the correspondence between personal biography and national history is a part of Israeli life:

For us, history is interwoven with biography [...] *Private life is virtually not private here.* A woman might say, for example, 'Our oldest son was born while Joel [Yoel] was in the bunkers, during the War of Attrition.' Or, 'We moved into this apartment exactly one week before the Six-Day War.' Or, 'He came back from the States during Sadat's visit.' (1984, 238, emphasis added)

While Oz is not referring to Israeli fiction, he is describing a context in which the 'private individual destiny' is overtly bound up with the 'embattled

situation' (Jameson, 1986, 69) of Israeli public culture and society (which is indeed referred to as *ha-matsav*, 'the situation,' in Hebrew). In a 1972 essay, Oz goes so far as to suggest that all literary texts, Hebrew or otherwise, will necessarily represent their public circumstances:

It is possible to turn your back on the time and the place, to ignore the tribal problems and write what they call 'universally' about the human condition, or the meaning of love, or life in general. But, in point of fact, *how is it possible?* Surely the time and place will always burst in, however hard you try to hide from them and write about desert islands or Nebuchadnezzar in Tahiti. (1996a, 31)

This is, of course, another homage to literary localism like Sherwood Anderson's, which makes its point by invoking the Babylonian conqueror of Jerusalem and the Pacific island to which Oz transposes his exile as signs of exotic difference, but it nevertheless refuses the idea that the political can be severed from the poetic.

Yet as he became a more established figure, Oz began to resist the national-allegorical interpretation of his work more strongly. This is particularly true of his addresses to metropolitan audiences, where he seems to anticipate Brian Larkin's claim that 'the force of national allegory is released' when a text is 'translat[ed] across difference' (2009, 166). In a 1990 interview in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, from which my first epigraph to this chapter is taken, he is keen to assert that his novels do not promote particular political ideas:

It's not worth writing a whole novel about the relatively simple question of what the government should do or what the solution to the Palestine-Israel question is. I would do this if I lived in a dictatorship and had to take refuge in allegory. But I don't have to do that here. (1994b, 58)

This is, of course, a defensive response to the notion that Israeli fiction might be overly concerned with 'politics' (and so insufficiently 'literary'), as well as a blunt affirmation of the democratic character of the Israeli state. But it also indicates a continuity in Oz's self-representation across his career: he has always presented himself as someone whose writing and activism deviates from what is expected of him. If he is called upon to produce stories about the 'human condition,' as envisioned in 'Milan or London' (if not Tahiti), he will write about the particular circumstances of Jewish Israelis; but if he is expected to create Zionist allegories or fictional blueprints for the peace process, he will write a story that privileges the private lives of his subjects. The first stance refuses a private/public split, in response to the false universalism of the metropolitan canon; the second reinstates it.

These protean claims to nonconformity converge in Oz's most persistent storyline, in which a dissatisfied protagonist struggles with his (or in a couple of cases, her) alienation from an uncomprehending and complacent society. This plotline contributes significantly to his work's recognizability as national

narration, since it clearly thematizes the relationship of the individual to the collective. But it also lends itself to the conversion of public narrative to private drama that I have been arguing characterizes Oz's work. His protagonists are frequently social and political dissidents: they are troubled by Zionist triumphalism, angered by the moral hypocrisy of their elders and the callousness of their peers or their children, and haunted by their repressed knowledge of the Palestinian past. Yet this located articulation of political dissent is almost invariably transformed into an existentialist crisis of man (or woman) against society: the protagonists' principled objections are revealed as expressions of impossible idealism, immaturity, narcissism, loneliness, or even (and indeed, often) sexual desire.¹³ This shift to the psychological (and biological) gives way to a trajectory towards social reincorporation: after an episode of crisis or catharsis, the protagonist is able to abandon desires and ideals which he now understands to be unrealistic and to realize the value of the domestic and the quotidian. The novels conclude with the communal reabsorption of these formerly rebellious individuals and the reaffirmation of the community as a whole.¹⁴ This is an outcome that appears inconsistent with Oz's valorization of his own positioning as a dissident, since it privileges 'tribal' unity and consensus over critique, in sharp contrast to (for instance) Said's emphasis on the epistemological priority of exile and non-belonging. Generically speaking, however, it is perfectly in keeping with the drive towards narrative closure that characterizes Benedict Anderson's 'old-fashioned' or D. A. Miller's 'traditional' novel form (Miller, 1981). It also reflects, in formal terms, the 'enhanced sense of teleology and closure' that Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi has argued characterizes twentieth-century Zionist culture more generally. The conclusions of Oz's novels repeatedly restage the apparent 'end' of Jewish history in the land of Zion, even as they dwell on the problem of what happens to the utopian desires that fuel fiction once the 'living utopia' has been realized (Ezrahi, 2000, 6–7, 18).

Oz's characters' abortive efforts to separate themselves from their communities also signal his abiding interest in the conflict between individual desires and communal norms or, more broadly, between individualist and collectivist ideologies. This conflict is in itself national-allegorical, since it incorporates anxieties that are specific to the Israeli context, in which 'collectivism has long been perceived not as a threat to the autonomy of the individual but rather as an emancipating force' (Weiss, 2002, 5). In contrast to the liberal democratic ideal, which regards the state primarily as a vehicle for protecting the rights of the emancipated individual, emancipation in Zionist ideology takes place not when obstacles to individual achievement or fulfilment are lifted, but when the stateless condition that historically prevented Jews from achieving power as a collective is eliminated.¹⁵ A contradiction results because, as a society founded by European settlers that continues to identify as 'Western' and increasingly depends on neoliberal social and economic policies and practices, Israeli culture also maintains a liberalist investment in the primacy and autonomy of the individual.

A Perfect Peace, Oz's best-known 'kibbutz novel,' contains perhaps his most explicit rendition of this pivotal 'Israel-Israel' conflict (Piterberg, 2008, 226), which has helped to make this novel one of his most frequently analysed works.¹⁶ Beginning in 1965 and ending with the June 1967 war, *A Perfect Peace* is principally focalized through Yonatan (Yoni) Lifshitz, who is twenty-six years old, the same age Oz was in 1965. Yonatan spends most of the novel planning his escape from the fictional Kibbutz Granot where he was born and raised. Yonatan's restlessness is fuelled by his clashes with characters who also become focalizers: his father Yolek, an aging patriarch of the Palmach generation; Azariah, the same age as Yonatan, a Holocaust survivor and recent arrival on the kibbutz; and his wife Rimona, one of Oz's many passive and mysterious female characters, who has become distant and listless after giving birth to a stillborn child as a result (we are told) of complications from an earlier abortion. The novel opens with a didactic staging of the struggle between Yonatan's generation and his father's, confronting Yonatan's conviction in the primacy of his own desires with Yolek's belief that the needs of the individual are subordinate to those of the collective. When Yonatan refuses Yolek's request that he work in the tractor shed because he doesn't feel that he is 'right' (*mat'im*, lit. 'appropriate') for it, Yolek retorts, "'Tell me, once and for all, will you, what this is all about with you people – the *right* person, the *wrong* person, all this spoiled capricious nonsense of self-fulfilment [*mimush 'atsmi*], or whatever the hell you call it. What's being the right or wrong person got to do with work, eh?" (1993b, 8; 1982, 11). The national significance of this domestic argument is hard to overlook. The novel is set at a time when members of Oz's generation had begun to rebel against their elders' 'ideological derivativeness and their one-dimensional view of reality' (Almog, 2000, 16), challenging the *sabra* ideal of the physically powerful native-born Israeli whose life was devoted to the survival of the nation. By the time *A Perfect Peace* appeared in 1982, the gap between *sabra* ideology and the disillusionment of the 'state generation' who were supposed to realize its promise was a canonical conflict in Israeli culture, making the public resonance of Yonatan and Yolek's dispute instantly recognizable to an Israeli readership and to many of its metropolitan reviewers (e.g. Schulman, 1985; Spice, 1985).

Oz's representation of this second-generation expression of dissent is not, then, particularly dissident itself. But Oz also links this plotline to a more controversial public context by associating Yonatan's disaffection with the spectacle of the ruins of Sheikh Dahr, a Palestinian village next to Kibbutz Granot that was depopulated and destroyed in 1948. Yonatan has personal memories of the village's existence, from a time when its sheikh, whose name he gives as Hajj Abu-Zuheir, visited the kibbutz to negotiate land use with his father: 'The sheikh touched my cheek with a hand that was furrowed like the earth, and I could feel his mustache and his tobacco breath on my face' (1993b, 129). Although the other members of his generation seem indifferent

to this history, Yonatan is deeply troubled by the physical reminders of the village's former presence:

And now there's not a dog left in Sheikh Dahr and all of the fields, those that we quarreled about and those that we didn't, and all their sorghum and barley and alfalfa, are ours. Nothing is left now but those blackened walls on the hill and maybe their curse hanging over us. (1993b, 129–30)

Oz's recent critics have routinely read Sheikh Dahr in allegorical terms, as a site that emphasizes the discordance between Zionist national liberation and Palestinian dispossession (Omer-Sherman, 2004, 109) or, more damningly, promotes a negative form of belonging that defines the kibbutz members as Jews 'in [the site's] hostility toward them and its vengefulness against them' (Grumberg, 2011, 50). It is structurally juxtaposed to Tel Aviv, which Yolek visits in the previous chapter and finds insufferably bourgeois, but also 'intrinsically miraculous' and agonizingly precarious: 'How will it all end? What will happen if, God forbid, things take a turn for the worse. Anything is possible' (1993b, 109, 114). It is not difficult to identify a framework of 'right versus right,' in which the tragedy of the 1948 expulsion is set against the achievement of Tel Aviv, a city where Jews from Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Tunisia, and Iran live alongside one another, forming 'a mob of the strangest individuals,' Yolek reflects, 'who ever pretended to be a people' (1993b, 110).

The difficulty with reading this plotline as political allegory, however, is that its very obviousness undermines its national resonance, in a way that Jameson's model of 'conscious and overt' allegory (1986, 80) does not quite anticipate. The political readings it suggests are often voiced by the characters themselves, who tend to express them in clichés, as Yolek exasperatedly observes of Yonatan:

'In a sudden philosophical epiphany, he came to the earthshaking conclusion that life is short and that one only lives it once. Quote, unquote. And that his own life belongs to him – not to his people, not to his kibbutz, not to the movement, and not even to his parents. *Na.*' (1993b, 154)

But Yolek's disdain for Yonatan's individualism also ironically reflects a 'reductive' reading of his motivations which, in Oz's presentation, cannot account for Yonatan's depth of feeling. When Yonatan finally leaves the kibbutz, he does so in turmoil:

Get out of my way, father. Get out of my way quick before I put a clip in this rifle and do what you taught me to do with it. Just do me the favor of dying peacefully, and I'll run like a zombie to trash Sheikh Dahr all over again, or grab a hoe and root out every weed and clump of crab grass from Lebanon to Egypt until not a blade remains. I'll throw myself like a madman on any patch of wilderness. I'll plant all the trees you want. I'll marry Jewish girls from the four corners of the earth to enrich the national gene pool [...] Everything will be just as you planned. I guarantee it. Just do me the favor of dying so I can live. (1993b, 211)

While Yonatan advances a trenchant critique of labour Zionist ideology and practice, particularly in his sarcastic description of the settlers' attitudes towards the landscape, this is not where the passage gets its energy. Instead, it comes from the device of the interior monologue, which accentuates Yonatan's rage, his existential sense of futility, and his oedipal desire to murder his father, who obligingly goes into mental and physical decline at the end of the novel. This is not political argument or even moral indignation; it is primal emotion, instinctively expressed by the powerful Jewish body of *sabra* ideology, revealing that body's capacity to perform manual labour as an equal capacity to commit violence. In *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, published twenty years later, Oz uses strikingly similar language to describe the 'dark, oedipal pleasure' that he took as a boy in Zvi Livne's didactic 1938 novel *Me'al ha-ḥoravot* (*Over the Ruins*), the story of a group of children who anachronistically form their own kibbutz after Roman legionnaires slaughter their parents:

Only when they are dead will we be able to show them at last how we can do everything ourselves. Whatever they want us to do, whatever they expect from us, we'll do the lot, magnificently: we'll plow and reap and build and fight and win, only without them, because the new Hebrew nation needs to break free of them. (2004b, 463)

It is telling, in this context, that the catalyst for Yonatan's long-delayed flight from the kibbutz is not his discomfort with the Sheikh Dahr site, as Ranen Omer-Sherman suggests (2004, 109), but his sense of 'revulsion' and 'a biblical abhorrence of uncleanness' (1993b, 208) following a three-way sexual encounter with Azariah and Rimona, a rebellion that again is expressed through the body. The collective guilt over 1948 that Yonatan's reaction to the breaking of the sexual taboo might seem to signify is sublimated within his juvenile defiance and fear of his father, which culminates in the equally biblical vision of 'all of his dead forebears, coming to barrage him with a storm of stones' (1993b, 208). When Yonatan abandons his protest at the end of the novel, returning to the kibbutz and taking up his responsibilities as a father and a soldier in the 1967 war, the demand that he forget about Sheikh Dahr is only one component of the larger demand that he relinquish his all-consuming anger and participate in the common life of the kibbutz. This denouement has an air of authorial judgement to it, recalling Oz's dismissive if affectionate assessment of his character Hannah Gonen: 'What is it that Hannah in *My Michael* wants so badly? She wanted an academic for a husband, she got one. She wanted a home, she got one. She wanted a child, she had one. Ah, but she wanted to levitate into the blue distance' (1994b, 61).

It is of course possible to read Yonatan's trajectory towards 'maturity' as critical rather than affirmative, since it depicts a society in which growing up means casting off your ethical misgivings and picking up a weapon, although Oz's own frequent assertions that he is not a 'pacifist' suggest that this

reading is not one he would intend.¹⁷ Still, I would not argue, as Joe Cleary does, that the novel claims Sheikh Dahr *should* be forgotten, or that the desire to 'exhume' the past is 'macabre and grotesque' (Cleary, 2002, 171). Instead, *A Perfect Peace* simply avoids the question of how to account or atone for this history. Once Yonatan's anguish over Sheikh Dahr is marked as a symptom of his adolescent angst, it becomes a sign of 'the vertical dimension of the personal trauma'; the 'essentially social nightmare' (Jameson, 1986, 72) that it seemed to dramatize is pushed to the margins of the narrative. In Oz's later novels, after the emotional turbulence of his young adult protagonists' lives has given way to the resignation and equanimity experienced by his middle-aged characters, the privileging of the psychological becomes even more pronounced. Oz's characters reverse the structure of national allegory themselves, using the public conflict as a point of reference for understanding their own private needs and desires. In *To Know a Woman*, for instance, the widower Yoel thinks about the difficulty of living with other people in terms of 'the disagreement between Shamir and Peres: the danger involved in concessions likely to entail more and more concessions as against the need to be realistic and to compromise' (2001b, 173–74). The conflict has become a subject for small talk, a way for parents to try to bond with their adult children: "And what do you think about the peace talks?" Albert asks his son Rico, who 'mumbles some wisecrack, already halfway out the door' in *Oto ha-yam* (1999, Eng. *The Same Sea*, 2002, 13). Other characters, like Yonatan, simply let it go. When Fima's father dies, Fima finds that his opinions on 'the situation' (which are largely Oz's own) no longer seem important:

Tsvi, Nina, and Uri tried to draw him into a conversation to distract him, a light exchange about subjects dear to his heart, the situation in the Territories, the way it was presented on Italian television, which Uri had been watching in Rome, the significance of the American overtures. Fima refused to be drawn. (1993a, 288)

This plotline, through which the public conflict not only gives way to but also comes to signify the psychological and domestic arenas, is arguably the most 'conscious and overt' feature of Oz's body of work. Oz identifies it himself in an interview, citing Latin American writers like Manuel Puig and Gabriel García Márquez (who might not agree with this assessment) as his inspiration: '[I] use political materials, not in order to promote a political cause or to make a political statement disguised as literature, but as a way of observing the deeper and more mysterious dimensions of human existence and human experience' (Cohen, 1990, 188). This reversal of the representational economy of national allegory can be read, once again, as a conscious response to the expectations placed on Hebrew fiction, in which, as Gover (who is thinking of Oz among others)¹⁸ has written, '[t]he "subtexts" of Israeli Hebrew fiction [...] operate as supertexts, metatexts, there before what is read and not merely brought surreptitiously into the text as something extra [...] the "meaning" of any Israeli novel, if "meaning" is the issue, is always

outside of itself' (1994, 9). Oz's novels defiantly seek to resist such demands by bringing the 'meaning' of the text 'inside,' to what he depicts as the most profound and inexplicable urges of the individual, bypassing Freud for Jung and Spinoza.¹⁹ In order to make this move 'inside' possible, however, Oz's novels first have to find a dependable means of keeping the 'outside' conflict with the Palestinians at bay.

The Bedouin on the hillside

Much of Oz's writing, both fiction and non-fiction, repeats the structure that we see in *A Perfect Peace*: the text vividly invokes the Palestinian catastrophe, but then seeks to deflect and contain its power to disturb its readers. In Oz's memoir, for instance, he gives an impassioned account of the Palestinian 'narrative' as voiced by Ephraim, an older member of Kibbutz Hulda, who challenges the teenage Amos' casual reference to Palestinians as 'murderers':

'Murderers? What d'you expect from them? From their point of view, we are aliens from outer space who have landed and trespassed on their land, gradually taken over parts of it, and while we promise them that we've come here to lavish all sorts of goodies on them – cure them of ringworm and trachoma, free them from backwardness, ignorance, and feudal oppression – we've craftily grabbed more and more of their land [...] Is it any wonder they've taken up arms against us? And now that we've inflicted a crushing defeat on them and hundreds of thousands of them are living in refugee camps – what, d'you expect them to celebrate with us and wish us luck?' (2004b, 435)

The passage unexpectedly appears to endorse an understanding of Zionism as settler-colonialism that includes 1948, not just 1967, within its frame of reference, and to sanction a Palestinian right of resistance. Ephraim starkly describes the settlers' process of land acquisition during the Yishuv period and the devastating scale of the 1948 expulsion, and he makes an explicit link to other histories of European settlement when he notes the settlers' use of the rhetoric of the white man's burden. But he then mitigates the moral horror of this revelation by telling the astonished Amos that the Arab armies left them no choice: "they themselves made it a simple question of either them or us" (2004b, 236).

The idea that the Palestinians have compromised their moral standing through armed aggression, forcing 'reasonable' Zionists who recognize the Palestinian 'narrative' to reluctantly defend themselves, is echoed in Oz's frequent complaint that there is no 'Palestinian Peace Now' (1994b, 126) and in his scathing attacks on the Palestinian leadership, particularly Yasser Arafat.²⁰ In his 1987 essay collection *The Slopes of Lebanon* (which was re-released in English translation in 2012, two decades after it was first published in English), Oz goes further still, describing the Palestinian national

movement as 'one of the most stolid, wicked, and fanatical movements of this century' and asserting that 'their goals have consistently been the same as [Meir] Kahane: to destroy a movement and expel a people' (1991, 235–36). Oz's 'dissent' here is evidently directed against his opponents to the left, since the view he expresses was hegemonic at the time, when the Palestinian leadership were routinely referred to as 'terrorists' in Israeli and metropolitan contexts.²¹ More recently, Oz provided complimentary jacket copy for the American academic and polemicist Alan Dershowitz's book *The Case for Peace* (2005), which blames the failure of the 'peace process' on Palestinian rejectionism and also carries an endorsement from Ariel Sharon. On the publisher's website, Oz describes this deeply reactionary book as 'based not on sentimentalist wishful thinking and not on dogmatic theorizing, but on reason and empathy.'²² He has also shocked some of his allies by saying that he does not object to the West Bank 'separation wall' in principle, but that it should follow the pre-1967 border (Edemariam, 2009, para. 17; Remnick, 2004, 93), a sentiment in keeping with his approving (if erroneous) quotation of Robert Frost in *How to Cure a Fanatic*: 'Good fences make good neighbors' (2006b, 14).

The tension between these two positions – a liberal sympathy for the Palestinian 'point of view' on the one hand, and a belligerent vilification of the actual Palestinian national movement on the other – manifests itself in nearly every one of Oz's fictional works as a struggle between an admirable (if misguided) desire for rapprochement with Palestinians and a realistic (if easily exaggerated) fear of their retaliation. Although a number of critics have remarked on the absence of Palestinians in Oz's work, in fact his narratives repeatedly seek to stage *imaginary* interactions between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, though these stop well short of moments of mutual recognition between equally realized characters.²³ Instead, Oz's protagonists are troubled by signs of the Palestinian past, as in Yonatan's preoccupation with Sheikh Dahr, or, more frequently, by 'Bedouin' or 'Arab' figures who appear in the protagonists' fantasies or at the peripheries of their neighbourhoods, their lurking presence posing a simultaneous attraction and threat, as depicted most extravagantly in Hannah Gonen's violent and sexual dreams about the 'Arab twins' Aziz and Khalil Shahada in *My Michael*. These figures rarely speak for themselves, but they are key to the progression of Oz's domesticating plots: appearances of Palestinians are used to signal the protagonists' social alienation, and their communal reincorporation is enabled in part by their success in overcoming their uneasy fascination with such figures. Oz's more recent work has begun to include direct encounters between Israeli Jews and Palestinians who are non-threatening, such as the two Palestinian children that the young Amos meets in *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, or the Israeli-Palestinian adolescent Adel, who wants to be a writer, in the short story collection *Temunot mi-ḥayey ha-kefar* (2009, Eng. *Scenes from Village Life*, 2011). However, these encounters have little to do with the main storyline, and so they tend to 'rin[gl] false' (Remnick, 2004, 94): they feel perfunctory, a nod

to the politics of rapprochement or to a putative Israeli multiculturalism, rather than a new attempt to imagine Palestinian subjectivities.

Because these moments of unrealizable or abrogated encounter are so overt in Oz's writing, it seems persuasive but perhaps not sufficiently precise to identify his work as an instance of 'late imperial romance,' which, like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, 'offers a critique of imperialism but still remains complicit in its ideology' (Cleary, 2002, 148–49). Like Conrad, Oz makes knowing and explicit use of the racist clichés of colonial literature, drawing on such stock representations as the overly sexualized Arab, the itinerant Arab, the gendering of encounters between settler and native, and the equation of the figure of the native with danger and excitement. But he marshals these tropes *well past* the age of Conrad, and more to the point, well past the age of African and Asian decolonization. He thus exhibits a particular kind of knowingness about his use of these tropes, invoking them in order to challenge their relevance to the Israeli context, and to dispel the spectre of Zionism-as-colonialism by exaggerating it to the point of banality and ridicule. His fiction accordingly seeks to uphold, through irony, his frequent insistence – as referenced in the title to this chapter – that 'Israel is not South Africa, and the Israeli-Arab conflict has very little in common with imperialist and colonial histories' (1994b, 69). Oz associates colonial tropes with his characters' emotional excesses, with their desire to live their lives on an epic scale, to 'levitate into the blue distance.' As a result, the protagonists' imaginary encounters with Palestinians take on a curious and contradictory significance. On the one hand, they maintain the haunting presence of the Palestinian in Jewish Israeli society, making the definition of Israel as a Jewish state seem both dangerously provisional and (Oz's own politics notwithstanding) ethically ambiguous. But on the other hand, by amplifying these very resonances, Oz's novels seek to diminish their power, once again converting the political urgency of 'the situation' into a sign of private trauma.

The figure of the Palestinian as both dangerous and noble savage is most prominent in Oz's early work, especially in *My Michael* and in the arresting short story '*Nayadim ye-tsefa*' ('Nomads and viper', translated into English as 'Nomad and Viper'), which appears in his first collection '*Artsot ha-tan* (1965, Eng. *Where the Jackals Howl*, 1981). In 'Nomad and Viper,' the figure of the Arab 'nomad' is initially described by the first-person narrator in monstrous, sub-human terms: 'He was blind in one eye, broken-nosed, drooling; and his mouth – on this the men responsible [for his beating] were unanimous – was set with long, curved fangs like a fox's' (1992, 24). Conversely, for the kibbutz woman Geula (whose name carries the weighty meaning of 'redemption'), the nomad's ethnic difference carries a sexual charge: 'His skin was very dark; it was alive and warm. Creases were etched in his cheeks. He was unlike any man Geula had ever known, and his smell and color and breathing were also strange [...] The man was repulsively handsome, Geula decided to herself' (1992, 31). Oz confronts these two equally reductive stereotypes

with a display of the nomad's incommensurable alterity. When Geula, in a state of arousal, seeks to assert her power over him, he stops speaking to her in Hebrew, makes 'a very long and solemn remark in his own language,' and leaves her: 'The goats huddled in the dark, a terrified, quivering mass, and disappeared into the darkness, the shepherd vanishing in their midst' (1992, 34). Geula, feeling rejected, imagines that she has been raped and wishes for revenge: 'Yes, let the boys go right away tonight to their camp and smash their black bones because of what they did to me' (1992, 35). At the end of the story, Geula begins to feel remorse, but before she can act on it, she is bitten by a viper and dies as the 'boys' set off for their brutal raid on the nomads' camp.

The story is at the same time openly allegorical and defiantly subjective. Oz introduces here a device that he will use again and again: the body of the Jewish woman is aligned with the body of the nation, and the Jewish-Arab encounter is refracted through (imagined) sexual encounter. These imaginative structures are of course familiar from European imperial fiction and its inter- and counter-texts: a well-known example is the Sudanese novelist Tayeb Salih's 1966 novel *Mawsim al-hijra ila al-shamāl* (Eng. *Season of Migration to the North*, 1969), in which the protagonist takes his revenge against the British empire by seducing English women who commit suicide when he leaves them. The end of 'Nomad and Viper' makes its specific national-allegorical resonance still more explicit: with Geula's death, the Zionist dream of national 'redemption' is extinguished, as the armed Israelis wreak pointless violence on the already defeated Arabs. But the lyrical description of Geula's physicality and her private passions makes the political allegory seem almost disappointingly obvious, in contrast to the unsettling shock of the ending and the mythic (and again, biblical) resonance of Geula's punishment: the viper's fang pierces her like 'a thorn in her flesh,' and in death 'her face was very calm and almost beautiful' (1992, 38). Her desire for the 'nomad' is identified as a sign of her own distance from her community, echoing Yonatan's desire to leave the kibbutz, even as her death registers this impulse (like Yonatan's) as suicidal: 'How she longed to make her peace and forgive. Not to hate him and wish him dead. Perhaps to get up and go to him, to find him among the wadis and forgive him and never come back' (1992, 38).

This confrontation between the public and the private becomes still more pronounced in *My Michael*. Hannah's fantasies about the Arab twins are overtly linked to an impossible longing for a return to pre-1948 Jerusalem, since the twins are real people who played with her when they were children, until they were expelled from the affluent Palestinian neighbourhood of Katamon (2001a, 5). Her alienation from her present surroundings is repeatedly expressed in the language of colonial guilt. For instance, after catching sight of 'the Arab village of Shaafat dozing over the border' while attempting to socialize with other young mothers, she observes that the birds in Jerusalem 'sing songs in a language I cannot understand' (2001a, 70). Later, when her

husband encourages her to think about their future, she insists instead on drawing attention to the unspoken present, reflecting that now the Shahadas probably live in a refugee camp (2001a, 189). Brenner suggests that Hannah's melancholia, which Brenner traces to her inability to accept the trauma of 1948, signifies on a national scale: she is another of Oz's dissenting protagonists, one who refuses to accept the erasure of the tragic past and the concurrent loss of another kind of future (2003, 223–27). But by channelling Hannah's protest through her erotic and violent fantasies, the novel simultaneously pathologizes her dissidence, returning the reader's attention to the domestic plot of the bored housewife. When at the end of the novel, Hannah becomes pregnant for a second time and is confronted anew with the monotony of homemaking and child-rearing, she compensates for her unhappiness by imagining that she has sent Aziz and Khalil to carry out an attack on an Israeli water tower, with the event of the bombing taking on an explicitly sexual charge: 'Then suddenly, not suddenly, the dim thunder of the blast [... S]purting laughter bursts. Wild and throaty and stifled. A rapid hand-clasp. The shade of a lonely carob up the hill. The hut. A sooty lamp. The first words. A cry of joy. Then sleep' (2001a, 216).

In these early texts, the public and private resonances of the fantasy of violent sexual encounter operate in tandem. The imagined encounter between the Jewish woman and the Arab man clearly invokes gendered metaphors of political conquest, but it also reclaims the protagonists' experiences for the private sphere by emphasizing their basis in the psyche and, more profoundly still, in the body. In *A Perfect Peace*, however, Oz exaggerates such imagery to the point of parody. Sasha Tlallim, a gothic figure living on a remote army outpost, deliberately instils Yonatan with a physical fear of the Arabs he might encounter on the other side of the Jordanian border. Tlallim, who is described as '[u]nwashed, insane, berserk [*mitga'esh, lo shafuy, lo rahuts*]' (1993b, 330; 1982, 338), gleefully informs Yonatan what will happen to him once he crosses the border and the Atallah, a Bedouin group, track him down:

'If those demons get hold of a *krasavits* [Russian for 'beauty'] like you, a real peaches-and-cream kibbutz sweetheart [*dam ye-halav, havatselet ha-kibbutz*, lit. 'blood and milk, sand lily of the kibbutz'], they'll fall on you like darkness [*kemo hoshekh*]. Before you can reach for your gun, they'll be ass-fucking away like mad [...] And when they've fucked you fair and square, they'll kill you. But not all at once. They'll kill you piece by piece [*hatikhot-hatikhot*].' (1993b, 330; 1982, 338)

Tlallim uses a standard series of light/dark, heterosexual/homosexual, and human/animal oppositions in this passage, apparently affirming an 'impermeable racial boundary' (Cleary, 2002, 175) between Jews and Arabs. But immediately after he gives his gruesome prediction, Tlallim begins to 'shak[e] with silent mirth' (1993b, 331). Tlallim's language manipulates Yonatan's already existing fear about the Arab's desire for sexual revenge upon the body of the male Jew. His use of the word *hoshekh* ('darkness') echoes

an earlier racist use of the word by Yonatan himself upon his departure from the kibbutz, in which he describes his parents as working 'from darkness to darkness [dawn till dusk] like slaves' (*me-ḥoshekh 'ad ḥoshekh kemo 'avadim*) on the kibbutz (1982, 221, my translation).²⁴ Tlallim's laughter mocks Yonatan's fear as derived from a European iconography of xenophobia; it links his sense of colonial guilt to self-indulgent fantasy and irrationality, grounded in a horror of physical violation.

When Yonatan does briefly cross the border, there are no Arabs to be found, and his epiphany is psychoanalytical, not political. The Jordanian landscape displays an unearthly alterity, resembling the surface of the moon: 'Bright swaths of moonlight streaked the swarthy mountainsides. Ripples of the pale light eddied in the plain. Lifeless silver flowed silently over the lifeless earth. Here and there, a rock loomed' (1993b, 340). His morbid realization that he is responsible for the deaths of Rimona's two babies, which he again associates with Sheikh Dahr, culminates in a series of cathartic acts as blatant as the colonial markers in Tlallim's speech: he shoots his gun into the air, vomits on himself, and runs back to the Israeli side of the border, not stopping until, 'ringed round by cobwebs of moonlight, he fell to the ground, face down in the silvery sand' (1993b, 341). Yonatan's remorse for the events of 1948 is superseded by shame over his domestic transgressions, and his fear of Arab revenge is revealed as a sign of the terror of being cast out by one's family and community.

By the time of *'Al tagidi laylah* (1994, Eng. *Don't Call It Night*, 1995), which is set in the late 1980s, the figure of the Palestinian Arab no longer inspires such physical and mental anguish for Oz's protagonists. Instead, the novel attempts to sever this figure from its uncanny history once and for all by incorporating the 'Arab' into a new kind of Israeli multiculturalism, in which (in contrast to some of Oz's earlier novels, most notably *Black Box*) Mizrahi and Ashkenazi characters live together in relative harmony.²⁵ All of the Arab characters in *Don't Call It Night* are called 'Bedouins,' identifying them as nomads rather than people with a claim to a particular territory.²⁶ They sit idly in the centre of town as a sign of Tel Kedar's economic stagnation, and they buy kebabs from the falafel stand, suggesting a limited opportunity for interpersonal interaction within the context of monetary exchange (2004a, 27, 58). As in the earlier texts, they act as signs of the protagonists' disengagement from their surroundings, but this symbolic value is now expressed in a much less fraught register. When the female protagonist Noa watches a 'Bedouin' from her window, her interest in the figure only weakly echoes Geula and Hannah's fantasies: the 'black figure among black goats' inspires in her a 'peaceful detachment' and a desire to follow him to the 'caves in the mountains' and ask him what he dreams about (2004a, 140).

Noa's partner Theo's recollection of his encounter with 'Aatef, the tracker of his reconnaissance unit in the Negev in the early 1950s, is the only scene in the novel that presents a named and more completely described 'Bedouin' character. The memory comes to Theo in the midst of a seemingly very

different train of thought: he is wondering why he has moved to the desert to be with Noa when she does not seem to want to be with him, and then he abruptly begins to recount 'Aatef's story. Although Theo's description of the man begins by using the same vocabulary that one might use to describe a good tracker dog, he soon shifts to a more humanized, albeit still racially marked, description of him:

He could sniff sun-dried donkey or camel dung and tell us who had passed this way, whether heavily laden or not, and even from which tribe. He could say on the basis of the dried-up dung what the beasts had eaten and where, and that is how he could work out where they were coming from and where they might be going and whether they were smuggling. He was a small, wiry man, and his face was not tanned but the colour of the cold ashes of a nomad campfire. It was said that his wife and daughter had been murdered in some tribal vendetta. And that he hopelessly loved a young cripple in Ashkelon. (2004a, 117)

Theo uses all of the tools at his disposal to try to understand 'Aatef – observations of his behaviour, racial stereotyping, and rumour – but the effort is ultimately fruitless. The idea of his total alterity is driven home at the end of the passage when Theo admits that he and the other men on the mission called the tracker 'Night' behind his back, 'because the night was as bright to him as if he had the characteristics of a nocturnal creature. But we were careful never to use this name in his presence because, we reminded ourselves, in Arabic the Hebrew word for night, *layla*, is a woman's name [*Laylah be-'aravit hu shem shel 'ishah*]' (2004a, 117–18; 1994a, 129).

Theo's failure to acknowledge that the nickname 'Night' appears to be a racial slur seems particularly obtuse in light of the more nuanced description of the tracker that precedes it, and it seems equally odd that the conflation of 'Aatef's subordinate racial status with a subordinate gender should pass without comment. But Theo is not really talking about 'Aatef in this passage. Instead, the juxtaposition of Noa and 'Aatef maps the barrier of understanding between a Jew and an Arab onto an equivalent barrier between a man and a woman. 'Aatef is not mentioned again, and even the literal reference to the title of the novel, the admonishment against calling 'Aatef 'Laylah,' is transformed by the use of the feminine imperative form of the verb 'to tell' (translated as 'call'), *tagidi*.²⁷ With this change, the title becomes Theo's plea to Noa, and instead of cautioning against offending 'Aatef, it refers to the need to keep striving towards resolving conflicts within families and communities even as one accepts that a perfect resolution – a perfect peace – is unattainable. The idea that the unknowability of a lover might be very different from the unknowability of the dominated – that the divide between Theo and 'Aatef might be derived from the structural inequalities of 'good old-fashioned colonialism,' to repeat Oz's dismissive phrasing in the *Guardian*, rather than some essential difference between them – is emphatically repressed.

Resolution and recuperation

The division of public from private, and of Jew from Arab, is formally confirmed by the endings of Oz's novels, which tend to restore and to cautiously endorse the existing social order. Oz has described the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a number of occasions as a tragedy which can be resolved in one of two ways: as in Shakespeare, in which 'the stage is strewn with dead bodies,' or as in Chekhov, in which 'everybody [is] disillusioned, embittered, heartbroken, absolutely shattered, but still alive' (1994b, 113). Not surprisingly, Oz tends to invoke the Chekhovian resolution, with its attendant compromises and concessions, in the conclusions of his own novels; Chekhov even appears to one of Oz's protagonists in the denouement of *The Same Sea* (2002, 150). These resolutions generally take the form of a kind of truce between Oz's warring characters, as several of Oz's critics have noted (Balaban, 1993, 179–85; Cleary, 2002, 178–81; Mazor, 2002, 1–5, 42–43). Estranged families begin a wary rapprochement, clashing kibbutzniks find a way to live together, and disruptive individuals are removed from the scene or, more often, revealed to be not so disruptive after all. Even as Oz's protagonists retreat from the public conflict into the private sphere, then, his plotlines preserve (self-consciously, even self-deprecatingly) the metonymic relationship between domestic conflict and domestic *national* conflicts: the son against the father, the Mizrahi against the Ashkenazi, the soldier who 'shoots and cries' against the soldier who simply shoots. It is these doubly 'domestic' or 'internal' conflicts that achieve temporary resolution at the end of his novels through the explicitly national-allegorical trope of the surrogate family, which two of his protagonists describe as an instantiation of an 'urban kibbutz' (2001b, 234; 1993a, 255). In the process, his fictions consolidate a moral order – and a demographic imaginary – that is based on an inherent sense of shared identity and desire among Israeli Jews, in a striking contrast to the positional and coalitional models of Palestinian national identity that I discussed in the last two chapters.

Lior Libman, in an important analysis of the 1950s kibbutz novels that Oz's work resurrects and revises, argues that the persistence of static, pastoral-utopian images of the kibbutz in these texts sought to effect a post-traumatic 'closure' to the moral agonies of the 1948 war, thus 'sentenc[ing] that trauma to a compulsive repetition' (2012, 124, 133). This seems an equally useful way of understanding the almost wilful tidiness of Oz's conclusions, of which he has written, 'I like my readers to be able to smile about it all at the end' (1994b, 63). As I have been arguing, this sense of optimism is made possible only by displacing the 'external' conflict with the Palestinians beyond the parameters of the narrative, and so beyond imaginative resolution. Yet this displacement appears to enact its own kind of repetitive trauma. Oz replicates these conclusions again and again, returning the history of the Palestinian defeat to the margins of the narrative only to have it resurface in his next novel, each time a little more reduced but still not quite extinguished.

At the end of *A Perfect Peace*, for instance, the narration shifts from the perspective of the protagonists to an omniscient narrator, who describes the ease of Yonatan's reincorporation into the kibbutz: 'Two days later, as evening began to fall, Yonatan Lifshitz returned. The next day he was back in the tractor shed in his work clothes as if he had never been away' (1993b, 369). The figure of the menacing Arab has been reduced to a feature of the landscape: 'On the fourteenth of May, our watchman shot and killed an infiltrator by the perimeter fence. On the seventeenth, the barley harvest ended and the wheat harvest began' (1993b, 368–69). In the skeletal description of the 1967 war that follows, this presence has been so well assimilated that there is no mention of the Arab armies, making it sound as if Israeli troops fought the war alone: 'In late May, both Yoni and Azariah were mobilized. Soon after, the war predicted by Azariah broke out. Israel won and pushed forward its front lines' (1993b, 373). There is, once again, a knowingness evoked by the impassiveness of this narration, as if Oz himself is mocking the ease with which Yonatan's reconciliation with the social order has taken place. Yet it is hard to rid oneself of the suspicion that Yonatan is the butt of the joke. The 'subtle, hesitant steps towards moderation and accommodation' that Yair Mazor sees at the ends of Oz's novels are not simply symmetrical 'exchanges between the two sides' or camps (2002, 2–3), for the balance of power in these final compromises remains tightly controlled. The hegemonic communal position on one or two points of contention is, by the end of the narrative, somewhat softened: in *A Perfect Peace*, the kibbutz members come to accept Yonatan's non-traditional family arrangement, and in *Don't Call It Night*, the mayor of Tel Kedar, Batsheva, agrees to use the money for Noa's controversial drug addiction clinic to computerize the local schools. But for the dissident protagonists, the required concessions are more extreme. Yonatan, Noa, and Theo are compelled to relinquish their sense of disquiet and to forget their interest in the figure of the Palestinian, as their expressions of dissent are absorbed by an apparently tolerant and accommodating community.

In the conclusion to *Don't Call It Night*, the residual Arab presence in Tel Kedar is not entirely eliminated, but it is neutralized through the ostensible inclusion of the town's Arab residents in a celebratory account of the present and future civic order. The town's vibrancy is demonstrated in both demographic and economic terms, through the description of the crowds that come to Batsheva's mother's funeral – 'Through the door that was permanently open flowed the whole of Tel Kedar' (2004a, 190) – and through the account of the town's expansion. Noa observes: 'Heavy bulldozers are roaring from six in the morning to nightfall and raising a cloud of dust at the end of Eshkol Street; they're connecting it at last to Ben Zvi Boulevard by a new road that runs round to the west' (2004a, 192). The references to Levi Eshkol and Yitzhak Ben Zvi, David Ben-Gurion's successor as prime minister and Chaim Weizmann's successor as president, respectively, aligns the survival of Tel Kedar with the survival of Israel's state institutions. Arabs

appear in the form of 'the Bedouins from round about' (*'min ha-sevivah,* 'from the vicinity') at the funeral, who are listed separately from the extended family members and neighbours (*shekhenim*) in attendance (2004a, 190; 1994a, 208). Though the Bedouins' presence at the funeral includes them as part of the community, they are separated from the other guests both spatially – they are from the 'vicinity' rather than the 'neighbourhood' (*shekhunah*) – and through their identification as a separate group. Despite the pressure that the reader might expect Oz to put on such a manifestation of actually existing utopia, the novel gives little indication that the Zionist dream of creating a new Israeli people capable of absorbing Jews from anywhere in the world has not been realized, though the unproblematic integration it depicts is in stark contrast to the situation described by many Mizrahi and Palestinian Israeli citizens, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6.²⁸

Oz has described his vision of Israeli diversity in a similarly utopian vein elsewhere: for instance, he claims in an interview that a German intellectual and an Ethiopian villager both 'will have read and studied certain books, and they will both have been persecuted for being Jewish' (1994b, 54). This is a revealing statement, for it suggests that what binds Jews in Israel together is the textual record of their shared religion (Oz's own secularism notwithstanding) and their shared history of oppression, which is portrayed not simply as particular to Jewish experience but unique to it, or to use Hallward's terms, as singular rather than specific (2001, xii). Oz links the lessons of this history to his own anti-political pragmatism. The conclusion of *A Perfect Peace* shifts focus from Yonatan to Srulik, Yolek's replacement, whom Oz has described as an autobiographical character:

One of my characters is, in some ways, closer to me than any others I've ever written about: the second kibbutz secretary, Srulik, in *A Perfect Peace*. In some respects, he is my mouthpiece. He wants to protect people from pain or at least teach them how to accept and live with pain. How to avoid fanaticism. How to realize that everything is very relative. (1994b, 63)

Srulik is a conciliator and an anti-idealist; he believes in making the best of things, putting the problems of the moment into a larger perspective, and refusing to allow oneself to wallow in one's own pain: 'There's no reason to despair. We've been through worse times, and thank God we're still here. There've always been crises and there always will be, but don't think for a minute we've reached the end of the road' (1993b, 178). He is also a reluctant Zionist. Srulik, like Oz, articulates his Zionism in relation to the history of Jewish persecution in Europe, which he sees as an indelible legacy: 'I never did believe a Jew could really and truly assimilate. That's what turned me into a Zionist' (1993b, 236). This sentiment echoes one of Oz's own pronouncements: 'I am a Zionist because I do not want to exist as a fragment of a symbol in the consciousness of others' (1996a, 81).

Both of these statements, in their assumption that there is something essentially inassimilable about Jews, are derived from a late nineteenth-century

Eastern European Zionist argument that Boaz Evron identifies, in an appraisal reminiscent of Fanon's critique of *négritude*, as 'an instance of the uncritical way in which Zionism echoes anti-Semitic claims, without examining their validity' (1995, 71). The implication of Srulik's assertion that 'we've been through worse times, and thank God we're still here' is not that the characters' suffering should be placed in comparison with universal suffering, as the maxim might suggest, but in comparison with Jewish suffering throughout the ages, such that '[t]he most recent Jewish oppression becomes yet another demonstration of that telos of total history that transcends the suffering of mere others and any history that such others might, on their own behalf, create' (Gover, 1994, 31).

Against this defence of the Zionist 'living utopia,' Gover counters that the 'synthesis of morality and politics [...] is progressive only if the inclusive referent is a universal humanity rather than a segment of a population. It is regressive and reactionary if the posit of a living utopia is particularized and sectarian' (1994, 7). By overtly excluding Palestinians from his fictional rehearsals of conflict resolution, Oz fails to extend the kind of imaginative empathy that 'a sad, painful, inconsistent compromise' (1994b, 69) in the public realm will require of the regime in power. Oz's novels provide a wealth of evidence supporting the extent to which contemporary Israeli identity is defined not only by a shared history of Jewish persecution, but also by the shared legacy of the Palestinian defeats in 1948 and 1967, and by the ongoing Palestinian catastrophe. Yet instead of following these ideas to their full conclusion, Oz's novels mock and undermine them, defiantly rejecting the notion that the 'external' conflict with the Palestinians might not simply be a sign of Israel's 'internal' conflicts, but their most important cause. For a writer with as enormous a following as Oz, this is surely a missed opportunity; for a self-described humanist, it is a defeat.

Intersectional Allegories: Orly Castel-Bloom and Sahar Khalifeh

I discovered that our political defeat was the result of our cultural defeat. I could see very clearly that the debacle of 1967 was the fruit of a rotten tree that needed a cure – the internally defeated do not triumph. The cure must start with our households and those in power, with our social values and ties, with the fabric of the family, with the rules and basic upbringing of the individual at home, in school, and at university, and then progress to the street. Mothers can be both the dough-baker and the steel-maker of nations. Mothers are the nation because they are the source and the cornerstone.

– Sahar Khalifeh, 'My Life, Myself, and the World' (2002)

The point of intersectional analysis is not to find 'several identities under one' [...] Instead, the point is to analyse the differential ways in which social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities.

– Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics' (2006)

In one of the most famous scenes in Orly Castel-Bloom's 1992 novel *Doli sifi* (Eng. *Dolly City*, 1997), the protagonist, Dolly, carves a map of Israel into the flesh of her adopted infant son. Dolly does this because she has an extreme case of 'Jewish mother'-hood, or so she has been diagnosed by several of the novel's critics (Hoffman, 1997, 63): she feels compelled to cut open her son's chest to check on his heart, to give him chemotherapy in case he has cancer, and, in one of the novel's most disturbingly comic episodes, to travel to Germany to steal kidneys from German orphans when she decides that her son needs a kidney transplant. Dolly narrates:

I took a knife and began cutting here and there. I drew a map of the land of Israel – as I remembered it from the Biblical period – on his back, and marked in all those Philistine towns like Gath and Ashkelon, and with the blade of the knife I etched the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River which empties out into the Dead Sea that goes on evaporating for ever.

Drops of blood began welling up in the river beds cutting across the country. The sight of the map of the land of Israel amateurishly sketched on my son's back gave me a *frisson* of delight. At long last I felt that I was cutting into the living flesh. My baby screamed in pain but I stood firm. (Castel-Bloom, 1997, 44)

The scene graphically connects Dolly's violent possession of her son's body to the Zionist claim to historical Palestine, which in Dolly's maximalist rendering stretches all the way to the Jordan River. Yet this allegory, even more so than in Amos Oz's novels, is so 'conscious and overt' (Jameson, 1986, 80) that it is hard to know how to understand it. *Dolly City*, like much of Castel-Bloom's work, is an eccentric parody of what Yael Feldman has called the 'masked autobiography' genre typical of modern and contemporary Israeli women's writing, 'reflecting – in different degrees of displacement – [the] authors' struggles with the question of the female subject' (1999a, 27). This genre parody is the main way in which the novel anticipates and subverts the expectations placed on it by its author's gender. If what you want is the confessions of a struggling single mother, the novel suggests, then that's what you'll get, in the form of a literal confession of extreme violence, made humorous by the deadpan style of Dolly's narration and the ludicrousness of her actions. The appearance of the map of Israel in this scene can be read in similar terms; that is, not as a serious attempt to represent the 'embattled situation' (Jameson, 1986, 69) of Israeli society, but as a send-up of the expectation that all Israeli writing should be 'about' the nation.

Castel-Bloom's work responds, then, to not one but two intersecting kinds of readerly expectation, which are faced in comparable if distinct ways by both Israeli and Palestinian women writers. The domestic and international reception of women's writing from Israel/Palestine, like the reception of women's writing from many other places, tends to privilege these writers' gender over their national location, on the assumption that women's writing will necessarily subvert the presumptively masculinist structures of national interpellation. Thus, although this work is still read as 'political,' it is because it is read as 'women's war writing' emphasizing the suffering of women and children in wars fought by men; as 'feminist' writing concerned with women's oppression and coercion by nationalist or religious structures; and/or as a document of the private sphere that opposes a 'masculine' focus on the public.¹ This tendency is especially pronounced in the metropolitan reception of Palestinian women's writing which, like other Arab women's writing, tends to be seen as evidence of the inveterate sexism of Arab-Islamic culture (Saliba and Kattan, 2000, 88). However, it also influences the reception of Israeli women's writing, in keeping with Israeli feminist scholars' efforts over the last

several decades to challenge the 'myth of Israeli women's liberation' under socialist Zionism, as represented by the iconic figures of female agricultural labourers and female soldiers (Hazleton, 1977, 21).²

The trouble with these kinds of gender-attentive readings is that even when they are used, commendably, to challenge ideas of the nation that relegate women to reproductive or symbolic roles, they can fail to acknowledge the nation's status as the principal political desire of Palestinian and Israeli life. Here, as in other national struggles, it is extremely difficult to separate the demand for gender equality from the demand for national self-determination; the nation remains the framework within which the struggle for women's liberation will necessarily take place. The scene from *Dolly City* vividly illustrates how these intersectional imperatives are 'enmeshed and constructed by each other,' as Yuval-Davis puts it in the epigraph above (2006, 205), in ways that are often conflicting and contradictory.³ On the one hand, this scene confirms the proposition that Israeli women's writing seeks to challenge the primacy of the idea of the nation: it is irreverent about the idea of a national literature, and it represents the national struggle as counter to women's interests by hinting at a more sober critique of Israeli women's incorporation into the nation as soldiers and mothers of soldiers. Another way of understanding this scene, however, is to take it at its word, and to recognize Dolly's agency in physically transmitting the idea of the Israeli nation from one generation to the next by 'cutting [its borders] into [her son's] living flesh.' Her act, in its theatrical literality, reminds us that women are not only victims of the nation-building process; they also participate in the production and transmission of the idea of the nation and in the enforcing of its boundaries.

This reading does not preclude an authorial or readerly critique of Dolly's interpellation by the state, of course, but neither is it clear that the scene requires a rejection of Zionism as such. On the contrary, Castel-Bloom has said recently that she wants to 'refresh' Zionism, 'like the process when you press refresh on the computer' (Pervos, 2008, para. 10), and this scene can quite easily be read as a reformist critique of a militarist Zionism that might be tempered by empowering the nation's female members politically, instead of encouraging them to 'embrace a romanticized notion of their role as victim' or 'appropriat[e] violence as a tool to control territory and their body' (Starr, 2000, 230).⁴ The scene questions Dolly's uncritical acceptance of Israeli expansionism and of the biblical narrative of Jewish sovereignty over the land, and it rejects the violence that is fuelled by these ideas, but it still holds on to the possibility that Dolly could be psychologically healthy in a less belligerent Jewish nation-state, an outcome which the scene's allegorical linking of citizen and state figures as partly within her control. Indeed, when Dolly's sister later takes the baby away from her, promising to return him 'when you return to the '67 borders' (Castel-Bloom, 1997, 127), the suggestion that Dolly *is* Israel (again, in a more 'conscious and overt' use of national allegory than Jameson perhaps had in mind) self-consciously

engages the idea – itself allegorical – that Zionism is a collective pathology (Rose, 2005) which can be ‘cured’ (or ‘refreshed’) by ending the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Castel-Bloom’s work is particularly suggestive for thinking about the expectations placed on women’s writing from Israel/Palestine because of her prominence within the Hebrew literary establishment. Born in 1960, Castel-Bloom has been identified as the most significant Israeli writer of either gender to emerge in the last thirty years, making her the first woman in Hebrew literary history to be treated ‘as an important Hebrew writer – as opposed to an important *female* Hebrew writer’ (Hasak-Lowy, 2008, 108n13). She has won a number of literary prizes in Israel, and her work has been translated into eleven languages, most commonly French, in which she has seven books. Thus far, only three of her novels – *Dolly City*, *Ḥalaqim ‘enoshiyyim* (2002, Eng. *Human Parts*, 2003), and *Teḳṣtil* (2006, Eng. *Textile*, 2013) – have appeared in English, out of a total of thirteen novels and story collections in Hebrew (Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 2012c). Castel-Bloom’s relatively low profile in English, in contrast with her domestic popularity, provides a useful point of comparison with the reception of the work of the Palestinian writer Sahar Khalifeh. Khalifeh is a generation older (she was born in 1941), and she has a greater international profile than Castel-Bloom, being often named as the most frequently translated Palestinian writer after Mahmoud Darwish. Five of her ten novels have been translated into English, and a range of texts has also been translated into Hebrew, Korean, and various European languages (‘Sahar Khalifeh,’ n.d.). She has been awarded several Arab and European literary prizes, including the Naguib Mahfouz Medal (2006), of which Mourid Barghouti is so far the only other Palestinian recipient. Unlike Castel-Bloom, Khalifeh is regularly described as a feminist writer, a label that has surely contributed to her international visibility. However, Khalifeh’s outspoken criticism of Arab social structures and the Palestinian Authority – the latter is a particular target of her post-1994 writing – has also made her a controversial domestic figure, and despite her international prominence her work has not received the same degree of local approval as Castel-Bloom’s (Saliba and Kattan, 2000, 90–91, 93–95).⁵

Castel-Bloom, then, has garnered accolades that tend to overlook her gender, while Khalifeh’s recognition (and to a certain extent, her restriction) as a writer has depended on it, in relation to the different contexts of their circulation and canonization. These responses are overdetermined by their respective national locations, as well as their distinct stylistic affiliations: Castel-Bloom’s work is postmodernist satire, while Khalifeh’s is historically and psychologically realist. Nevertheless, my claim in this chapter is that their writing is linked by their shared preoccupation with intersectionality as a literary strategy. Their novels strive to depict the nation, however compromised, as a still-valid means of social organization, while also representing gender equality as a desire and a political goal. Far from

being anti-nationalist, then, Castel-Bloom and Khalifeh's work demonstrates an attempt to articulate the complementarity of (respectively) Israeli and Palestinian women's national and gender interests. This is a claim not just about authorship, but about the relationship between authorship and audience, since it depends on the ways in which these writers anticipate and challenge their likely reception as chroniclers of a feminine private sphere.

These imperatives are linked to the particular history of feminist politics in Israel/Palestine. The contestatory relationship between feminism and nationalism is by now a political and critical commonplace. For Deniz Kandiyoti, the 'Janus-faced' character of nationalist discourses' claims to embody both tradition and modernity (Nairn, 1981) are encapsulated in their approach to women's roles in national movements. On the one hand, such discourses

invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as 'national' actors: mothers, educators, workers, and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms set by nationalist discourse. (Kandiyoti, 1996, 8–9)

This conjuncture is particularly pronounced in Israel/Palestine which, as a highly militarized society, is also highly masculinized. The 1964 PLO charter describes 'the Palestinian character' as a trait passed from fathers to sons, and bases national membership on descent from a Palestinian father (Amireh, 2003, 754), while Yitzhak Rabin, in his speech at the Oslo signing ceremony in 1993, referred repeatedly to an Israeli 'we' defined as the men who fight and die on the battlefield in defence of the women and children at home (Sharoni, 1995, 24). Women, in these constructions, are the nation's objects, not its subjects.

Yet, like their counterparts elsewhere, women in Israel/Palestine have also embraced their respective national struggles as a means of promoting their 'gender interests.' The organizers of the women's committees formed in the West Bank in the 1970s believed that strengthening women's roles in the Palestinian national movement would improve their social position, and women took active roles as demonstrators and community organizers during the first intifada (Dajani, 1994, 39–43). In contrast to the prioritization of national liberation over women's liberation during the Algerian war of independence – 'We will not be another Algeria!' was a common cry of female Palestinian protesters during the first intifada – the Palestinian national movement during this period included women's organizations who were increasingly 'willing to challenge patriarchal values and authority' (Gluck, 1997, 101, 113). This effort has been incomplete: most women's lives were 'reprivatized' following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (Gluck, 1997, 121; see also Abdo 1999) and, as Joseph Massad has argued, the masculine 'still reigns supreme in Palestinian nationalist thought' (2006,

53). This is partly, as Nahla Abdo points out, because the degradation and deprivation that Palestinian women continue to experience at the hands of the Israeli state create 'favourable conditions for prioritising nationalism over gender issues, for making me more a "Palestinian" than a gendered being, a woman' (Abdo and Lentin, 2002, 9).

From the time of the pre-state Yishuv, a considerable number of Jewish and later Israeli women have also been both feminists and nationalists, in part because the socialist ethos of labour Zionism promised an end to gender inequality. However, the 'myth of Israeli women's liberation,' which has its roots in this period, has meant that Israeli women's full equality with men has been perceived as already realized, which has hampered the development of an organized feminist movement. Israeli feminist scholars began to document the institutional inequalities between Jewish Israeli men and women in the 1980s, most notably their unequal treatment in the religious courts which regulate marriage and divorce, and to theorize the relationship between 'the discourse of war and the gendering of the nation' in the 1990s (Fuchs, 2005, 3). A number of Israeli feminist activist organizations, such as Women in Black (*Nashim be-shaḥor*), have broadened their critique of Israeli militarism to include opposition to the occupation, but few have contested the exclusionary basis of Zionism itself, and most Israeli feminist activists, like most Israeli women writers, remain 'both Zionists and feminists' (Feldman, 1999a, 19).

This dual commitment points to the nation's continuing centrality in Israel/Palestine as 'an unforgoable site of liberation struggle' (Lazarus, 2011a, 106), bearing in mind once again the very different meanings of this liberation for Zionists and Palestinian nationalists. Its persistence challenges the notion that Palestinian and Israeli women's experiences as women make them better able than men to 'transcend' their identifications as national subjects and engage in processes of rapprochement. Although the idea that Palestinian and Israeli women are necessarily 'linked by the roles assigned to them' (Young, 1992, 70) recognizes the historical importance that some of the region's organized feminist movements have had in the articulation of anti-militarist positions and in the promotion of strategies for reconciliation (Emmett, 1996), it also depoliticizes the relationship between Palestinian and Israeli women by placing them 'under the universalizing banner of global sisterhood' (Sharoni, 1995, 5). This ostensibly feminist formulation risks overlooking not only the specific practices through which Palestinian and Israeli women are differently subjected to gender discrimination, but also their profoundly unequal positions of power with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In reading Castel-Bloom and Khalifeh's texts 'relationally,' then, it is not my intention to suggest that there are 'more similarities than differences between Israeli (Jewish) and Palestinian nationalisms [... because] nationalism is conceived by and for men' (Abdo and Lentin, 2002, 9); I am not implying that these writers' shared subject position as women automatically gives them common ground or a common outlook. Instead, the pairing of these

writers allows me to approach intersectionality as a literary as well as a political problem, one that is closely related to the notion of national allegory as a reading and writing practice. These texts are distinct from the other works I have been discussing in that here the 'very different ratio of the political to the personal' (Jameson, 1986, 69) is primarily articulated through the intersection of gender and nation. Motherhood, the home, and the family are figured as institutions that oppress women as individuals and as a group, but which also have obvious national-allegorical resonances that persist alongside the attention to gendered forms of exclusion, as Khalifeh's epigraph to this chapter suggests. Women's bodies become 'the site of the public sphere's penetration of private life' (Grumberg, 2012, 162), signalling the personal costs of survival in a violently unequal society. Yet instead of defending the private sphere as a retreat from the public, both Castel-Bloom and Khalifeh show, in different ways, that no such retreat is possible. Each writer seeks to 'make gender visible' (Sharoni, 1995, 14) within the existing structure of the nation, and so to articulate the need for a new demographic imaginary divorced from patriarchy, however provisional or incomplete this vision might be.

Life imitating art imitating life

When Orly Castel-Bloom's interlocutors first began to introduce her to an English-language audience, more than a decade ago, they almost invariably emphasized her critical reputation and her literary ingenuity over her gender. She was described as 'the most eminent and prominent Israeli writer in recent years' (Kubovy, 2000, 244), 'the most revolutionary and original literary voice to emerge in Hebrew literature in the last decade' (Ginor, 2005, 235) and 'by far the most audacious, innovative, and prolific among the group that has made its appearance since the late 1980s [... her voice] has already left its mark on Israeli prose fiction' (Feldman, 1999a, 229). She was also not normally introduced as a Mizrahi writer, though her parents were Francophone Egyptians and her work often features Arabic-speaking Israeli Jews: a notable example is her 1990 story '*Ummi fi shughl*' ('My mother's at work'),⁶ in which the protagonist is accosted by an elderly woman hiding under a park bench who claims, in Arabic, to be her mother (cf. Ginor, 2005; Hochberg, 2007, 1–2).

There are several possible explanations for this unusual and in some ways salutary reticence, but for me the most persuasive is that it stems from Castel-Bloom's reliance on a postmodern stylistics which, in the predominantly social realist field of modern Hebrew literature, appears to distance her from her ethnic and gendered location.⁷ Castel-Bloom is known for her use of *śafah razah* (lean language) and 'flat,' undeveloped characters; her mockery of grand narratives, including Zionism and the idea of the 'New Hebrew Woman' (Feldman, 1999a, 229); and her use of

surreal events and scenarios.⁸ She is classed, like her near-contemporary Etgar Keret, with the literary 'generation without dreams' of the 1980s, in which the word 'dreams' signifies 'the dreams of Zionist history' (Shaked, 2000, 242). To write 'without' such dreams (though this seems an inaccurate account of Castel-Bloom's relationship to Zionism, as I discuss below) is also, apparently, to write without history, as one of her blunter assessors suggests: '[r]eality is vehemently ignored [and] [t]he human condition of the characters is not examined in a national or political context' (Kubovy, 2000, 248). Castel-Bloom's association with this cohort comes from, among other things, her use of non-realism and parody which, as I noted above, is usually at the expense of stereotypes of women's writing. Ginor observes that all of Castel-Bloom's novels draw on the most 'obvious elements' of feminist fiction: 'her protagonists are women; they are victims of love, family life, and motherhood; Bovaryesque escapism becomes the primary source for survival; and irrational behavior is the modus operandi and a means to psychological revenge' (2005, 239). Readers looking to glean a political message from this apparent evidence of women's oppression and resistance are impeded by Castel-Bloom's explicit use of such tropes, which anticipates and mocks a feminist interpretation, even as her narratives raise important objections to the myth of Israeli women's equality.

Castel-Bloom is perhaps best read, then, as a writer who seeks to challenge the clichés of feminist literature as a category, but who is nevertheless invested in finding better ways to represent the marginalization of women in Israel, as the consistency of her subject matter suggests. The same might also be said of her representation of the idea of the nation. *Dolly City* and *Human Parts* in particular engage explicitly and often sardonically with the conventions of national allegory, but they also seek to widen the scope of the Zionist national imaginary by challenging Ashkenazi male hegemony (as represented by figures like Amos Oz) and seeking to recover the voices and perspectives of Mizrahi women in Israel (Starr, 2000, 221–22). Castel-Bloom's emphasis on her characters' social alienation may appear to advance an anti-nationalist individualism: she mocks 'the purported collectivization of Israeli society' (Grumberg, 2011, 84) and highlights her protagonists' profound isolation, even and especially at moments in which they are interpellated by the nation and the state. At the same time, however, this emphasis also denotes the desire for a different kind of collectivity, which in the absence of any characters besides Israeli Jews, and indeed the almost total absence of men, is based in the shared needs and interests of Jewish Israeli women.⁹ This is not to suggest that the prospect of female solidarity is ever actualized in Castel-Bloom's work, or that her Mizrahi women are idealized as more moral beings than Ashkenazi men. On the contrary, as Karen Grumberg notes, she 'refus[es] to grant her characters a reprieve from hypocrisy. Even those with whom the reader is most likely to sympathize are guilty' (2011, 118): they are guilty of self-pity, jealousy, selfishness, ethnic and class prejudice, and emotional and physical violence. However, since the obstacles faced by

these women are experienced in common *across* their isolated locations, they negatively figure the possibility of a more egalitarian mode of social organization within the bounds of Jewish Israeli society. This perpetually deferred Israeli pluralism is depicted in a far less celebratory manner than in Amos Oz's depictions of an already existing Jewish communality, but the longing for it nevertheless drives Castel-Bloom's plots.

Human Parts (HP), my point of focus in the discussion that follows, perplexed Castel-Bloom's critics because it is in many respects a realist novel, unlike any of her previous work: it features an omniscient third-person narrator and a more or less plausible series of events. Yet the preoccupations of her earlier texts, including *Dolly City*, are still very much in evidence. *Human Parts* is set almost entirely in a real Tel Aviv, in 'the year 20__' (HP, 9), during a rash of Palestinian suicide attacks against Israeli civilians. As Castel-Bloom has confirmed in interviews, the setting is a thinly disguised portrait of Israeli life at the beginning of the second intifada, when such attacks were frequent enough to create the general feeling of a state of siege (Hasak-Lowy, 2008, 99–101). A number of critics suggested that Castel-Bloom's shift to mimeticism meant that daily life for Israelis had finally become 'Castel-Bloomian' (Shiffman, 2002, qtd. Hasak-Lowy, 2008, 100), 'a case of life imitating art imitating life,' as one American reviewer put it (Freedman, 2002).

The novel's painstakingly diverse cast of characters further heightens the appearance of historical realism, yet its exaggerated representativeness also undermines it. The three female protagonists represent a range of Jewish Israeli ethnic and class locations, bringing together the 'three major social divisions' of intersectional analysis (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 201): Iris is an upper middle-class single mother, Kati is a cleaner of Iraqi origin living in poverty with her husband and four children, and Tasaro is an Ethiopian fashion model. (The spectrum of the nation's female citizens is truncated, however, since there is no Palestinian Israeli character.) These women occasionally feel threatened by the suicide attacks, but mostly they are absorbed in their efforts to earn money, care for their children, and find emotional fulfilment. The protagonists' apparent apathy has prompted Adia Mendelson-Maoz to describe them as 'media-controlled robots' who refuse to try to 'overcome or conquer history,' focusing instead on their own survival and satisfaction (2006, 170). This is distinct from Dolly's problem in *Dolly City*: though Dolly is similarly incapable of challenging the national consensus, she is an active participant in nationalist politics, while the characters in *Human Parts* appear to be uniformly politically indifferent.

In his reading of this novel, Todd Hasak-Lowy argues that by exaggerating the idea that Israelis live under a 'state of siege,' Castel-Bloom confirms a national narrative of Jewish Israeli victimization at the hands of faceless Palestinian 'terrorists' (2008, 97–98). *Human Parts* thus offers troubling evidence not only of Castel-Bloom's self-confessed 'temporary' turn to the right in response to the second intifada, but also of a 'post-post-Zionist' shift in Israeli culture more generally, which renews the language of eternal

Jewish suffering that post-Zionist thinkers have sought to refute (Hasak-Lowy, 2008, 100, 102). However, this particular national-allegorical reading is undermined by the emphasis on the three female protagonists, who are victimized not by 'terrorists' but on the basis of their race, class, and gender, and by Castel-Bloom's history of genre parody. This is not to say that Castel-Bloom's shift to realism should be 'viewed as incidental or mere coincidence' (Hasak-Lowy, 2008, 97), but rather that *Human Parts* can be read as a satire of the genre of the social realist novel itself, and thus as a critical commentary on the broader cultural shift that Hasak-Lowy describes instead of a passive reflection of it.

The novel's parodic distance from its own premise is most explicitly signalled in the opening scenes, which fictionalize the idea of a 'state of siege' by exaggerating it. To the real history of civilian attacks, Castel-Bloom adds record-breaking winter weather conditions and a deadly 'Saudi flu' that gets its name from the suspicion that it is a form of bio-terror launched by the Saudis. Though these two forms of natural disaster can certainly be read as 'resonating with the ostensibly unprovoked' Palestinian violence against Israelis (Hasak-Lowy, 2008, 111n48), the very obviousness of this resonance and the exaggeratedly nationalist language used to evoke it challenge this interpretation. The description of the winter weather makes blatant use of the language of Zionist national allegory: we are told that 'raindrops the size of olives came down in quantities' (*HP*, 10) and that the snowdrifts were so thick that 'trees planted by the pioneers [*ha-ḥalutsim*] early in the previous century [*be-reshit ha-hityashvut*, lit. 'in the beginning of settlement'] fell to the ground' (*HP*, 11; 2002, 11). These images draw on the standard Israeli (and Palestinian) nationalist iconography of olives and trees, but the symbols of the nation are transformed into harbingers of disaster, hyperbolically implying that the Zionist conquest of the land of Palestine is itself under threat. If we allow for some distance between Castel-Bloom and her narrator, the nationalist clichés employed here read more like pastiche, bringing the novel into line with Castel-Bloom's previous work.

Castel-Bloom also comments explicitly on the idea of Jewish victimization in the context of the 'Saudi flu.' We are told that the taxi drivers of Tel Aviv believe that the government's 'policy of restraint' towards the Palestinian Authority is to blame for the outbreak because it has led to a 'sharp deterioration in the population's immune systems' (*HP*, 26). This ventriloquism not only mocks the idea that the government's 'restraint' is bad for Israeli Jews, but also tacitly questions whether any such restraint exists. The flu is then linked to contemporary invocations of the Nazi genocide:

A doctor from the settlement of Elkana, who had a regular program on the local radio for the Sharon region two afternoons a week, said, in an attempt to reassure his listeners, that there was no comparison between the Saudi flu and the Spanish influenza, which had killed 24 million people at the beginning of the twentieth century. Any such comparison was

morbid and hysterical, the doctor stressed. But the nerves of his audience were so frayed that the mere mention of that epidemic was enough for them to come to frightening conclusions about the similarity between the two strains of flu. (*HP*, 27)

The analogy is difficult to overlook: Castel-Bloom's Israeli public cannot help but link the Saudi flu (or intifada) to the spectre of the Spanish flu (or Holocaust). A few paragraphs earlier, we are told, ostensibly as an aside, that 'the inhabitants of the Palestinian Authority' (*toshavey ha-rashut ha-falestinii*) are also dying from the Saudi flu, and that the rest of the Middle East is also suffering from a hard winter (*HP*, 27; 2002, 31). Far from supporting a sense of Israeli exceptionalism, then, these passages satirize the idea of the perennial victimization of the Jews and present counter-evidence to it. It is significant that the level-headed doctor is ironically identified as a resident of Elkana, a real West Bank settlement; the allusion to the settlements further undermines the idea that Palestinian violence against Israelis is unprovoked.

As for the apathy of the protagonists, an intersectional reading of the novel would take into account the significant degree to which their behaviour is determined by the limits placed upon them by their gender. Iris, for example, thinks constantly about how to earn more money, but not for the pleasure of consumption: she plans to spend it on a washing machine, school trips, and dental work, which she needs because her three pregnancies have given her a permanent toothache. Kati and Tasaro are doubly restricted by their gender and their ethnicity. Kati grew up in poverty, left school early, and married Boaz, an Ashkenazi man who was disowned by his family for marrying her. Tasaro's professional success as a model – she becomes the first black woman in Israel to present the winning lottery numbers on television – is qualified by her shame about her family, who live in public housing and speak little Hebrew, and by her disappointment at her boyfriend Adir's refusal to marry her because he fears attracting attention as an interracial couple. The despair voiced by these characters is not the nihilist sense of alienation attributed to the 'generation without dreams,' but a reasonable response to their material and personal circumstances. Faced with an unpayable bill at the launderette, Iris, '[l]acking any desire to live, but without any alternative either [...] stared at the washing going round and round' (*HP*, 55), while Kati, having been dropped by the media after a week of television appearances as the face of Israeli poverty, feels

a heavy weight pressing on her chest [*mu'akah gedolah hištare'ah ba-ḥazeh*, lit. 'a great oppression extended across her chest'], and she was afraid to peep into the future. She knew only too well what it looked like: work, Boaz, home, rissoles, yelling, floor rags, bleach, detergent, stairwells, copybooks for school, six shekels each. And a great weariness. (*HP*, 95; 2002, 111)

The parody of feminist narratives of domestic drudgery that is at work here notwithstanding, these scenes offer a compelling account of the limitations these women face because of their children's demands on their money and time, their restricted employment prospects, their financial and emotional dependence on men, and their competition with other women. While Castel-Bloom sometimes mocks the women's elevated sense of injustice – Iris, whose biography most closely matches Castel-Bloom's own, is a particular target – she also represents them as victimized, not by Palestinian 'terrorists' but by Israeli patriarchy.

Castel-Bloom is calling attention, then, to the ways in which an Israeli national identity grounded in the idea of Jewish victimization obscures other forms of oppression and exclusion that take place within Jewish Israeli society. Indeed, the protagonists' sense of their victimization as Jews often seems to heighten their sense of victimization on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or class: they feel themselves to be besieged from all sides, and in this regard their location as Israeli Jews is just one more source of torment, one more form of the *mu'akah gedolah* that presses on Kati's chest. This is, as I have already suggested, a negative figuration of national and women's liberation; it defines liberation as freedom *from* the social and psychic limitations imposed by exclusionary and unequal ideas of corporate identity, but it does not actually produce an alternative form of collectivity, even as it constantly invokes the desire for an end to the protagonists' isolation.

The title of the novel suggestively aligns this problem, which we might describe as a problem of situational consciousness, with the idea of the human. *Human Parts* has a double meaning in both English and Hebrew: it literally refers to the dismemberment of Israeli bodies in suicide attacks, but it also describes the novel's Robert Altman-esque collocation of stories about a group of loosely connected individuals. This dual significance might seem to invoke a grim 'sense of national unity' through the 'accumulation of fragmented lives and severed bodies' (Hasak-Lowy, 2008, 101): the disparate stories of these female Israeli citizens are 'regathered,' much as the body parts of Israeli soldiers or civilian victims are regathered for burial (Weiss, 2002, 124). However, this reading is undermined by Castel-Bloom's deliberate engagement with the Zionist appropriation of Jewish bodies, most notably in her sardonic representation of Boaz's death at the end of the novel at the hands of Palestinian gunmen, which ensures that he receives a state funeral. Kati herself participates in the nationalization of his death, solemnly telling a radio audience that 'They have to carry on and keep going. We have no other country [*ein lanu 'erets 'aheret*],' in a banal reference to the title of a popular song by the singer Corinne Alal, '*Ein li 'erets 'aheret*' (I have no other country) (*HP*, 229; 2002, 266).

Boaz's death is structurally aligned with the death of another minor character, Liat, who is killed by the Saudi flu at the beginning of the novel. Liat dies alone in the hospital after her married lover hangs up the phone on her: she is 'engulfed by a torrent of jealousy [*nahshol shel kin'ah*], but

this time she suffered cardiac arrest and died. The last word she said was 'Mother' (*HP*, 35; 2002, 41). The scene is primarily comic, given the rather absurd circumstances of Liat's death – to have a character die of jealousy is an obvious send-up of the conventions of an earlier era of popular women's fiction – and the exaggerated sentimentality of her final utterance. Boaz's death, however, is described in a more journalistic idiom:

Boaz heard hailstones hitting his car, very loudly and decisively, and he automatically turned on the windshield wipers.

But it wasn't hail. It was a terrorist ambush [*tseror me-ha-ma'arav*, lit 'an ambush burst (of gunfire)']. The gunmen had hidden behind a snowdrift and emptied forty bullets on him. Boaz died instantly [*Bo'az met ba-ma'qom*, lit. 'Boaz died in that place/on the spot']

[...] The security forces arrived a few minutes later, with an ambulance. A doctor pronounced Boaz dead. A policeman from border patrol turned off the windshield wipers. (*HP*, 218–19; 2002, 254)

The two scenes are connected not only by their subject matter, but also by their parallel imagery: a 'burst' (*tseror*) of gunfire, a 'torrent' (or wave) (*nahshol*) of jealousy. But in contrast to the various state rituals and media accounts used to mark Boaz's death, neither the state nor anyone else is interested in commemorating Liat's. Her brother Adir (who is also Tasaro's boyfriend) sits *shiva* mainly by himself, and most of the food he has paid Iris to cook for the mourners ends up in the bin. Adir concludes that no one has come because '[p]eople were fed up with death,' an explanation he finds both 'convincing' and 'impenetrable' (*HP*, 94). The point here is not just that Boaz's death fits more easily into national narratives of sacrifice and victimization. It is also, in a novel that is centrally concerned with the limits on Israeli women's freedom, that Liat is rendered expendable because of her gender.

It would seem, then, that in order to read *Human Parts* as a nationally affirming 'accumulation' of Jewish victims, it is necessary to render the gendered inequalities that it exposes invisible once again. The 'human parts' of this novel are not created equal: some fit into the masculinist narrative of a Zionism whose defenders die in the national struggle, and many do not. Such a reading also fails to account for the novel's downbeat conclusion. The final scene takes place in the form of a flashback: the weary Israeli president, exhausted from attending funerals, remembers visiting his daughter at her apartment in Boston the year before. The last line of the novel is spoken not by any of the major characters, but by the previously unseen daughter, who tells her father, 'Wait until you see the amazing view from the windows' (*HP*, 230). The daughter voices a sense of freedom and possibility that no other female character has expressed, which she is only able to find outside of Israel. This particular intersection of gender and nation suggests that, to paraphrase Susan Moller Okin (1999), Zionism, as currently constituted, is bad for Jewish Israeli women. The sense of lament for a different kind of Zionism that permeates this scene – more egalitarian, less militarized, less

defensive – suggests the limits on Castel-Bloom’s intersectional thinking: her projection of a desired national imaginary attends to the particular situation of classed and ethnicized Jewish women in Israel, challenging Zionism’s claims to collective representation without contesting its exclusion of non-Jews. Nevertheless, it is in this light that Castel-Bloom’s shift towards realism in *Human Parts* should be seen: not as a ‘temporary’ capitulation to the Zionist right, and still less as a liberating vision of an Israel/Palestine that includes all of its ‘human parts,’ but as a partial, provisional effort to counter the myth that all Israelis are in it together.

Like the martyrs and victims of all ages

In marked contrast to Castel-Bloom’s parodic and ambivalent invocation of the expectations placed on Israeli women writers, Khalifeh’s work seems almost to embrace the terms of its reception as ‘women’s writing,’ veering between documentary and confession in its portrayal of the poverty, degradation, and violence that define her female protagonists’ lives. Khalifeh’s own life story has played an important role in establishing her reputation as a feminist writer, as Suha Sabbagh suggests in an essay published not long after Khalifeh’s first work in English translation: ‘In her private life, Sahar Khalifeh has shown the same courage manifested in her inquiry into the role of women’ (1989, 70). Married at eighteen to a man chosen by her parents, Khalifeh famously left her husband in 1972, after thirteen years of marriage, in order to pursue her writing career. Khalifeh has described the marriage as ‘miserable’ and ‘devastating’ – her husband went so far as to tear up her writing (‘Sahar Khalifeh – An Interview,’ 1998) – and she decided to leave him, she writes in an impassioned autobiographical essay, ‘when I was certain that I knew what I wanted and what I was going to do: I wanted [the editor] Hilmy Murad’s prophecy [that she would be a great novelist], I wanted words and ideas, I wanted color, my wings, and music’ (Khalifeh, 2002, para. 8).

At the same time, Khalifeh has also shown herself to be acutely aware of the politics of her reception as a woman writer. She has described her breakthrough second novel, *Al-Ṣabbār* (‘The cactus’, 1976, Eng. *Wild Thorns*, 1985) variously as ‘pre-feminist’ (Sabbagh, 1989, 71) and as a deliberate effort to write a ‘man’s novel’: ‘I wanted to be successful in portraying the suffering of my people like a man, because women usually have portrayed their own suffering as women, and I wanted to prove that as a woman, I can do better than men’ (Saliba and Kattan, 2000, 90). The novel, which remains Khalifeh’s best known, is a classic example of the ‘conscious and overt’ national allegory: its three male protagonists embody three conflicting responses to the occupation, enabling a representative portrait of the field of Palestinian public discourse at the time the novel was written (Siddiq, 1986, 145, 149–50). Female characters are peripheral and undeveloped – they get more attention in the sequel, *Abbād al-shams* (‘Sunflower’, 1980),

which has not been translated into English – and the suffering of the male protagonists is explicitly figured as representing the suffering of the nation. Yet *Wild Thorns* is also concerned with the dilemmas that the protagonists face because of the expectations that are placed on them as men, whether as economic providers or participants in armed resistance. Instead of portraying its protagonists as national heroes, it emphasizes the costs of ‘the masculinist – if conflicting – articulations’ of the Palestinian struggle (Harlow, 2002, 122) for Palestinian men themselves.

Although Khalifeh’s next four novels after *Wild Thorns* continue to engage with national themes, formally they resemble the ‘masked autobiography’: they feature first-person female narrators and are centrally concerned with the oppression of Palestinian women by Palestinian men. A 1996 survey of female Palestinian university students found that Khalifeh was the only one of five ‘transnational’ Arab women writers who was identified (by the 24% of respondents who had heard of her) ‘as more concerned with women’s social issues than with [Palestinian] nationalism’ (Saliba and Kattan, 2000, 93–95). Some of her critics have seen this conjunction differently: Amal Amireh, for instance, argues that Khalifeh is *too* enmeshed in masculinist nationalist discourse. While she praises Khalifeh for ‘dar[ing] to imagine an alternative Palestinian community that includes even prostitutes’ in her novel *Bāb al-sāḥa* (‘The door of the courtyard’, 1991), she also accuses her of reproducing a symbolic order in which national dispossession and defeat are represented in sexual terms as rape and as a loss of male virility, and women’s bodies are seen as particularly vulnerable to cooptation and assimilation by the occupying power. In this regard, Amireh argues, Khalifeh’s work is symptomatic of the limitations of a Palestinian feminist discourse that recycles patriarchal nationalist representations of Palestine as ‘a female body possessed by others’ (2003, 750–53, 764–66). Yet, as with some of the more critical responses to Castel-Bloom, the possibility that Khalifeh might be staging these gendered narratives of nation in order to interrogate them remains unexplored. It is also worth noting that even in these ‘masked autobiographies,’ Khalifeh’s female protagonists are not simply the narrators of their own lives, but the primary chroniclers of contemporary life in the West Bank. By privileging Palestinian women’s accounts of their society, Khalifeh indicates the inadequacy of the private/public divide (or the feminist/nationalist divide) to describe the entire network of interactions that take place within a given community, offering ‘a compelling argument for the reciprocities of the conversations that build communities and the diplomacies that establish states’ (Harlow, 2002, 126).

However, it is in her seventh and eighth novels, *Ṣūra wa-‘ayqūna wa-‘ahd qadīm* (2002, Eng. *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, 2008) and *Rabī’ ḥārr* (‘Hot spring’, 2004, Eng. *The End of Spring*, 2008), both published since the start of the second intifada, that Khalifeh’s figuring of a necessary connection between national liberation and gender liberation takes on its greatest urgency. These texts revisit some of the preoccupations of *Wild Thorns* by

returning to male protagonists and to a more overt engagement with the conventions of national allegory. This shift is particularly evident in *The End of Spring* (ES), which is set at roughly the same historical moment as *Human Parts*, and gives an account of the 2002 siege of Jenin from the perspective of a teenage boy. Ahmad is a delicate soul, ‘an artist by nature’ (ES, 2): ‘spring flowers fi[ll] his heart with delight’ (ES, 22), he has a gift for drawing and photography, and as a small child he used to cry whenever he heard any kind of music. All of this displeases his father, who accuses him of acting like a girl, or of having a girl’s ‘soft heart’ [*bi-qalb khari’ ka-qulūb al-banāt*]. He believes that the boy needs to develop a ‘thick alligator skin and a hard heart and alert, unblinking eyes’ if he is to survive as a young man living under the occupation (ES, 7; 2004, 15). However, the opposite turns out to be the case: Ahmad is duly hardened by a stint in an Israeli prison, but his ‘masculinization’ leads inexorably to his death. In the novel’s dramatic final scene, Ahmad drives an ambulance into a crowd of Israeli soldiers, who fire rounds of bullets at him as he approaches. The narrative switches from the past to the present tense, and the reader is told, ‘His soul flies up like a kite, like ozone. His father cries, “My son has been martyred!” The next day we heard what they said on the news. “Terrorism,” they said. “Terrorism”’ (ES, 276).¹⁰

This plotline identifies the novel as a ‘dissensual *Bildungsroman*’ (Slaughter, 2007, 181–82), one that subverts the conventions of the genre by reversing the standard trajectory of the development of the individual. Instead of learning to appreciate art and culture, Ahmad must learn to suppress the sensitivity to beauty that is his ‘by nature’ and to develop his physical and mental capacity to carry out armed resistance as part of the national struggle. His violent death completes this process of *Bildung*, since by becoming a ‘martyr’ (or a ‘terrorist’) he fulfils the expectations that some of the armed resistance movements and the international media set for young Palestinian men. He is thus integrated into a militarized male social sphere in a way that would not have been possible if he had remained in the thrall of music and flowers.

Khalifeh’s critique of this trajectory can be read in both feminist and nationalist terms. By presenting Ahmad’s ‘feminine’ traits as innate, Khalifeh challenges the narrow definition of masculine behaviour which contributes first to Ahmad’s emotional death and then to his physical death. The novel sometimes mitigates this constructivist view of gender identity with an essentialist approach: Ahmad’s father and brother are the primary critics of his ‘feminine’ behaviour, while women like his mother and the surrogate mother figure Umm Suad tend to encourage it. Yet the standpoint of the male characters is not monolithic or unchanging. Even Ahmad’s father, in the wake of Ahmad’s release from prison, comes to regret his early mockery of his son:

Hadn’t he made fun of the boy for being like a girl and having no muscles?
[...] The man imagined his two sons carried upon shoulders, wrapped in

flags and flowers like the others, like the martyrs and victims of all ages [...] *They're playing a death dirge and we must dance to it.* Was this going to be his children's future? Was this going to be the future of all the children? (*ES*, 112–14)

This passage explicitly connects Ahmad's story to the collective trajectory of the 'lost generation' of the second intifada (Erlanger, 2007). By choosing one of these 'angry young men' (Farsoun and Aruri, 2006, 385) as her protagonist, Khalifeh situates her critique of a militarist and patriarchal Palestinian nationalism as part of a broader investigation of the changes that Palestinian nationalist discourse has undergone after the disappointments of the Lebanese civil war and the Oslo accords, most importantly in the increased use of human rights discourse as part of the rhetoric of national liberation. In her analysis of this shift, Laleh Khalili argues that although the foundational narrative of Palestinian nationalism is the 'heroic liberationist narrative,' which is in turn part of the larger body of third-world liberationist thought, since the defeat in Lebanon the idea of Palestinian national liberation has competed with a 'tragic discourse' that emphasizes the suffering and victimization of Palestinian individuals (2007, 21, 34). Importantly, these two narratives are differently gendered: the hero of the liberationist narrative is a valiant and virile man, while the protagonist of the 'trauma drama,' as Khalili terms it, is 'a suffering woman carrying a limp child' (2007, 37).

The End of Spring belongs more obviously to the second category of narrative than the first. The novel's coherence and momentum is derived from its enumeration of the injustices that Ahmad, who is figured as both a child and a martyr, suffers at the hands of his family and the Israeli military and legal system, while the figure of the male heroic liberator is represented chiefly as a deflated and pernicious myth. Yet Khalifeh makes a concerted effort to subvert the gender stereotypes that are linked to both frameworks. One of her most interesting formal innovations in *The End of Spring* is the inversion of the woman-as-victim narrative, a plot associated with the masked autobiography as well as the prototypical account of human rights violations. Ahmad is not, it transpires, the only male character subject to 'sobbing like a girl' (*ES*, 192): his brother Majid, an unnamed recruit from Gaza, and an Israeli soldier all cry in moments of terror or duress. Each of these instances suggests, as Majid responds when Arafat himself rebukes him, that these young men are crying not because they are weak (or 'feminine') but because they are human (*ES*, 168): the many atrocities that they are compelled both to witness and to perform are deserving of tears (or perhaps, and more damningly, are an instance of 'shooting and crying,' as discussed in relation to Israeli militarism in Chapter 4). The younger men are interpellated as soldiers in every context they inhabit: the Israelis they encounter make no distinction between civilians and fighters, and the Palestinian resistance movements see them only as potential recruits. The novel's female characters

are also subject to the indignities of the occupation, but the male characters, in their dual role as targets and perpetrators, are its most desperate victims. Conversely, we are introduced to a number of female 'heroes,' most notably the stalwart Umm Suad, who is called not, as is customary, by the name of one of her sons but by the name of her daughter Suad, and who counsels and comforts several of the male characters.

Yet even if Khalifeh does manage to loosen the gendered associations of the 'heroic' and 'tragic' narratives of Palestinian nationhood, making both potentially more egalitarian, it is still possible to argue – as a number of left critics of human rights discourse have – that any use of the language of victimization represents a kind of defeatism, since it transforms the Palestinian individual into a 'victim subject' (Khalili, 2007, 36–37) who is defined by his or her suffering. Palestinians are thus compelled to perform 'Palestinianness,' an identity whose only content is abjection, for the rest of the world (Khalili, 2007, 211), in a manner that bears some affinities with representations of Jewish suffering after the Holocaust. Seen in these terms, human rights discourse enforces Palestinian passivity: it 'smuggles in a depoliticization of action and agency' by abdicating the responsibility for action to the international community, and by leaving local and international power structures unchanged (Khalili, 2007, 38; Brown, 2004).

However, Khalifeh's redeployment of the gendered language of heroism and tragedy also represents a strategic shift in tactics. By drawing on a narrative of Palestinian victimization, Khalifeh links *The End of Spring* with a globalized emergent body of literature that appeals to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As Sidonie Smith and Kay Schaffer have noted, beginning in the 1980s and '90s, writers of fictional or, better yet, autobiographical narratives about human rights abuses have been able to find publishers 'only too ready to invoke the story told in order to exert pressure on non-compliant nations to address, justify, and modify their human rights record' (2004, 1). The proliferation of such narratives in contemporary fiction is not simply an effect of the global spread of human rights discourse, but also a key part of its operation. This has been especially true, of course, of the burgeoning market for Palestinian literature in English and English translation during the past decade, which has also often featured juvenile or female protagonists. At the same time, however, *The End of Spring* can also be classed as part of a broader though not hegemonic effort, in the wake of Lebanon and Oslo, to represent Palestinian victimization in the occupied territories as a nationally defining experience. Although human rights discourse is often taken to task for its myopic focus on the individual, much Palestinian human rights activism, as practised by groups such as Al-Haq, has not been a rejection of collectivist or nationalist politics, since its aim has been to advance Palestinian national self-determination by challenging the 'patently unrepresentative nature of [the] occupation' (Hajjar, 2001, 26).

The climax of *The End of Spring*, a documentary-style account of the siege of Jenin itself, emphasizes the potential complementarity of nationalism,

feminism, and human rights discourse in this effort. Ahmad disappears from the narrative almost entirely in the final part of the novel, emphasizing the incorporation of the story of a Palestinian individual within the story of the collective, which is divided in turn into sections narrated by other, mostly female individuals, including Suad and Umm Suad. This shift towards polyphony is mirrored in the narrative's generic transformation from *Bildungsroman* to human rights report. Khalifeh offers instances of many of the acts classified as human rights violations that were committed by the IDF during the siege, including unlawful civilian killings, the use of civilians as human shields, direct attacks on medical personnel, the denial of access to medical care for the wounded, and disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force, of which the chief example is the bulldozing of homes and other civilian infrastructures (Human Rights Watch, 2002). *The End of Spring* includes at least one instance of most of these violations, the most harrowing of which is a crowd scene in which loudspeakers placed on top of minarets announce, 'People of Nablus! All you whores! We're coming to fuck you!' (ES, 194); this tactic inspires a panicked mass exodus in which people run '[b]arefoot, naked, with slippers, with sandals, with children and without children, old people and the handicapped and the wounded' (ES, 201). The final scenes, which include a demonstration against the separation wall as well as the death of an international activist called Rachel (almost certainly a reference to the American activist Rachel Corrie), extend the scope of Israeli human rights violations beyond the events of the spring of 2002: both the construction of the wall and the Israeli investigation into Corrie's death have been criticized by Human Rights Watch (2004, 2005). The novel also includes violations committed by Palestinians, though these are less pervasive: Ahmad witnesses a friend's execution as a collaborator (ES, 205); Suad condemns the 2002 suicide attack in Netanya, which killed thirty Israeli civilians (ES, 117); and in his own suicide attack against the Israeli soldiers Ahmad describes himself as moving 'like a rocket' (*mithl al-šārūkh*) (ES, 275; 2004, 373), recalling Palestinian rocket attacks on Sderot and other Israeli towns.

The apparently conflicting teleologies of the novel might thus be understood as a staged confrontation between the heroic and tragic narratives of Palestinian nationalism. On the one hand, Ahmad is successfully incorporated into a particular kind of Palestinian collective by progressing from a marginal position as a physically and emotionally fragile, 'feminine' child to a central position as a physically and emotionally strong, 'masculine' adult capable of inflicting violence on his enemies, thus fulfilling the 'demarginalizing' promise of the *Bildungsroman* and the heroic narrative of Palestinian liberation (Slaughter, 2007, 134). On the other hand, the suppression of Ahmad's artistic sensibilities leads to the disintegration of his 'natural' personality, rather than its development or fulfilment, signalling his exclusion (as in other 'postcolonial *Bildungsromane*') 'from an ostensible global order of human rights' (Slaughter, 2007, 28): in other words, his 'dehumanization.' The second trajectory is clearly privileged over the first, as Khalifeh's overt troping of

Ahmad's loss of 'humanity' suggests: Umm Suad describes him as a 'hyena,' lamenting, 'They killed his heart. They killed his mind. He had lost his feelings and logic' (ES, 203). By privileging the framework of dehumanization, the novel offers a powerful demystification of the heroic narrative – which is also the official narrative – of Palestinian nationalism. However, because Khalifeh emphasizes the collective dimensions of Ahmad's private tragedy, she does not do away with the heroic narrative completely, though the novel clearly rejects its glorification of masculinized military resistance. Instead, she shows how the pessimism and passivity of the tragic narrative might be mediated by the emancipatory aspirations of the heroic, and reformulated as a strategy for achieving national self-determination.

Khalifeh's effort to establish a connection between national and women's liberation or, better yet, both women and men's liberation, relies on this local appropriation of human rights discourse. When Ahmad's brother Majid tells Yasser Arafat that he is crying because he is human – *'Li-'annī 'insān'* (ES, 168; 2004, 230) – he is implicitly articulating his resistance to two different forms of coercion: Arafat's masculinist military ethos *and* the Israeli military and legal establishment's treatment of Palestinians as *'relative humans,'* to use Omar Barghouti's term (2006, 1537). Although the emancipatory possibilities of Majid's declaration go unrealized within the space of the novel, this scene suggests that if the liberational potential to which Palestinian nationalism lays claim is to be fulfilled, it must be in the Fanonian sense, in which the humanist goal of a more just society is a central tenet of the national struggle (1963, 316). Even as the novel's pessimistic conclusion shows how remote this ambition now seems in the occupied territories, Khalifeh's commitment to the emancipatory capacity of the idea of the human signals her refusal to concede the prospect of its realization.

Far from suggesting that Khalifeh and Castel-Bloom have *'nothing else* to narrate' besides the national 'experience' (Ahmad, 1987, 9), the work of both writers foregrounds the complex relationships between national history and identity and other forms of social and political belonging, above all gender. Yet it is crucial to recognize that in each of the texts I have been discussing, the nation remains the privileged form of narrative and social order. It determines the text's spatial and temporal organization, and it offers a deferred but explicit resolution to the characters' problems, which are never simply bracketed as private but always linked to the collective predicament. I do not think that Khalifeh and Castel-Bloom's critiques of patriarchal forms of nationalism are equally emancipatory, not least because Castel-Bloom's intervention cannot quite free itself from the settler-colonial vision of a treacherous landscape populated by hostile natives. Nevertheless, I would still contend that each text offers a provisional response to Sharoni's provocative question: 'What sorts of transformations in assumptions about gender identities and relationships between women and men may contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict?' (1995, 31–32). There is no private or domestic space in these novels that is not bound up with the public

conflict, no gendered experience or practice that is not also an experience of national belonging or exclusion. If there is a 'dialogue' between these texts, it comes in the form of a reminder that the parameters of any negotiation of intersecting social divisions 'should be determined by common political emancipatory goals' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 206). Khalifeh and Castel-Bloom may not share a vision of national liberation, but their means of representing its relationship to gender liberation are unexpectedly complementary.

‘An Act of Defiance Against Them All’: Anton Shammas’ *Arabesques*

The State of Israel defines itself as a Jewish State (or even ‘the State of the Jews’) and demands that its Arab citizens fulfill their citizenship. But, when they do so, it promptly informs them that their participation in the State is merely social and that for the political fulfillment of their identity they must look elsewhere (i.e., to the Palestinian nation); when they do look elsewhere for their political identity, the State at once charges them with subversion, and needless to say, as subversives they cannot be accepted as Israelis – and so on, in circles, ad infinitum.

– Anton Shammas, ‘Kitsch 22’ (1987)

In September 1985, on the occasion of the Jewish new year, a young, relatively unknown writer named Anton Shammas published a piece in the Jerusalem weekly *Kol ha-ir* which charged Israeli society with excluding non-Jewish citizens like himself from participation in the common life of the state (Shammas, 1985, 13–18). While the basic premise of this claim was hardly unprecedented – debates about the social and legal status of the ‘Arab minority’ had been going on since Israel’s founding, and had become increasingly heated since the 1970s – Shammas went beyond the demand for political and civic equality for Israel’s Palestinian citizens. He offered a more radical proposal: that Israeli nationality be divested of its automatic equation with Jewishness, and that ‘Israeli-Palestinians’¹ be included in a genuinely pluralist definition of the Israeli nation.

A number of high-profile cultural figures, including the Iraq-born novelist Sami Michael, responded angrily to Shammas’ appeal, but the leading novelist A. B. Yehoshua’s reaction was the most vehement. Yehoshua’s notorious challenge to Shammas went as follows: ‘If you want your full identity, if you

want to live in a state with a Palestinian character, an original Palestinian culture, arise, take your belongings, and move one hundred meters east, to the independent Palestinian state that will exist alongside Israel' (Yehoshua, 1985, 11). Shammas retorted that he had no intention of leaving 'my motherland and my father's home, for the country Yehoshua will show me' (Shammas, 1986b, 45), and indeed Shammas and other members of the Israeli left argued that Yehoshua's suggestion was not significantly different from the extremist Knesset member Meir Kahane's call for the organized expulsion (or 'transfer') of all non-Jewish citizens.² Shammas and Yehoshua's debate was well publicized in Israel and abroad, most notably in the transcription of a 1992 exchange facilitated by the novelist David Grossman, which brought their different definitions of Israeli 'identity' into sharp relief. Yehoshua, as a secular Zionist, insisted that "Israeli" is the authentic, complete, and consummate word for the concept "Jewish" (Grossman, 1993, 253): to separate the two is to negate the historic achievement of Jewish national sovereignty in the state of Israel. Shammas countered that the idea of 'Israeliness' should reflect the state's actual demography: '[T]he minute we determine that *the country is an entity that exists in a certain territory*, then everyone who is in that territory is an equal part of it, and then an Arab in Jaljulia is Israeli just like A. B. Yehoshua' (Grossman, 1993, 257). Yehoshua was eventually persuaded of Shammas' contention that Israeli identity cards should not distinguish between a person's Israeli 'citizenship' (*ezrahut*) and his or her Jewish or Arab 'nationality' (*le'umiyyut*), but he was unwilling to go any further: "Anton wants 'Nationality: Israeli,' and I'll give it to him," Yehoshua said [...] "But without identity! Identity, no!" (Grossman, 1993, 276).

I begin my discussion of Shammas' celebrated novel *'Arabesqot* (1986, Eng. *Arabesques*, 1988) (A, 1990) with this well-known exchange because it so clearly shows the political and cultural stakes of Shammas' decision to write a Hebrew-language novel in which Israeli Palestinians, not Israeli Jews, are the protagonists. With this novel, Shammas moves the question of the relations between these two groups from the margins of the Israeli national 'narrative,' where it remains in virtually all works of post-1948 Hebrew literature, to its centre, confronting the conflation of ethnic and political identity in Israel with an alternative vision based on a non-ethnic and non-sectarian civic belonging. Shammas was not the first Palestinian Israeli citizen to publish a novel in Hebrew; that distinction belongs to Atallah Mansour, whose 1966 novel *Be-'or hadash* (Eng. *In a New Light*, 1969) tells the story of a Palestinian Israeli who seeks to gain membership in a kibbutz. Nor is he presently the best known: Sayed Kashua, who is a generation younger, has published three Hebrew novels since 2002 and is the creator of a popular television show, *'Avodah 'aravit* (Arab Labour, 2007–present), which is the first mainstream programme on Israeli television to feature Arab protagonists speaking Arabic as well as Hebrew.³ Yet it is *Arabesques*, Shammas' only novel, which has had the most significant impact on critical discussion about Palestinian

Israeli writing in Hebrew, not least because the novel grapples so openly with its own biographical and cultural positioning. Of the texts discussed in this book, *Arabesques* offers the most artistically and politically ambitious response to the expectation that Palestinian and Israeli writers will 'narrate' the nation, from the perspective of a narrator, also named Anton Shammas, who is situated at once within and apart from the two national formations.

Despite (or because of) the controversy surrounding its author, *Arabesques* gained a warm reception from its domestic and international critics, including Arab critics who read the novel in English or French translation (Kayyal, 2008, 37, 44). The *New York Times* named it as one of the best books of 1988, commending 'a hunt for a heritage that rivals anything in Dickens' ('Editor's Choice,' 1988), and Amos Oz famously asserted that the novel was a 'triumph' for Hebrew: 'If the Hebrew language is becoming attractive enough for a non-Jewish Israeli to write in it, then we have arrived' (qtd. in Hever, 1987, 48). As this comment suggests, the success of *Arabesques* among certain audiences, and its rapid translation into multiple European languages, depended in part on the perception that it demonstrated an already existing Israeli multiculturalism (Alcalay, 1993, 9, 286n21). The novel has also received significant critical attention in the decades since its publication.⁴ It has remained in print in English for most of this period: after its initial American release by Harper & Row in 1988, it was published as part of the Penguin International Writers series in 1990, and re-released in 2001 by the University of California Press. A key aspect of the novel's appeal for some (though not all) of this group of readers is its seeming amenability to interpretation through the lens of 'identity,' specifically Shammas' own 'hybrid' identity as an Israeli-Palestinian, Shammas' anti-identitarian stance in his confrontation with Yehoshua notwithstanding.⁵ These differently motivated popular and critical readings converge in the assumption that the novel's political significance derives from its author's cultural location. The first sees the existence of Shammas' 'Palestinian' narrative in Hebrew as a vindication (and absolution) of the Zionist enterprise; the second, in keeping with the 'politics of being,' equates Shammas' ethnicity with political oppositionality, without necessarily specifying the form or content of that opposition.⁶

As I explain below, I read *Arabesques* as a challenge to both of these assumptions. However, it is true that the novel anticipates and even invites identitarian readings. *Arabesques* is in many respects openly autobiographical. The narrator Anton Shammas was born, like the real Shammas, in 1950 in Fassuta, a Christian village in the Galilee close to the Lebanese border.⁷ They also share more specific biographical details: both live in Jerusalem (as Shammas did at the time)⁸ and write in Hebrew; both have attended an international writers' programme at the University of Iowa;⁹ their fathers share the same profession;¹⁰ and both come into conflict with an Israeli novelist named Yehoshua.¹¹ In this regard, the novel appears to satisfy its domestic and international readers' desire for 'information' about the 'experience' of the Israeli-Palestinian subject, which seems authentic because

of the reader's extratextual knowledge of the author's own location. The appeal of such readings was borne out by the number of readers who saw the novel as a representation of Shammas' own 'identity crisis,' as marked by its use of a 'fragmented past and present autobiographical I' (Brenner, 1993, 433).¹²

Yet the documentary effect of this technique is undermined before *Arabesques* begins by the novel's epigraph: 'Most first novels are disguised autobiographies. This autobiography is a disguised novel.'¹³ It is further complicated by the novel's division into two formally and contextually antithetical narratives, 'The Tale' (*ha-sipur*, or 'the narrative') and 'The Teller' (*ha-mesaper*, or 'the narrator'), which ostensibly denote the two parts of the narrator's 'divided' identity. 'The Tale' recounts various quasi-magical anecdotes of the narrator Shammas' childhood in Fassuta and the lives of his extended family in Fassuta, Haifa, Ramallah, Syria, and Lebanon; 'The Teller' is set in Paris and Iowa and focuses on the narrator's relationships with the fictional Jewish Israeli novelist Yehoshua Bar-On and several Jewish and Arab women. On a first reading, these two alternating narratives seem to work against one another. 'The Tale' is a folkloric, non-linear, and non-realistic portrayal of a 'Palestinian' narrative; 'The Teller' is its literary, chronological, and socially and psychologically believable 'Israeli' opposite.

Structurally and stylistically, this formal division makes for a narrative that appears to be deliberately difficult, in a manner reminiscent of high modernism: it is episodic, fragmentary, and disorientating. Yet the intricacy of the novel's plotting also recalls the visual artistic tradition invoked in its title: the two narratives are gradually 'plaited into one another, embracing and parting, twisting and twining in the infinite arabesque of memory' (A, 226). The divide between 'oral Arabic' and 'scribal Hebrew' (Brenner, 1993, 440) becomes destabilized, and the convergences between the oral and modernist narrative conventions of each section are brought to the fore. While it is possible to read this process of narrative integration as a *Bildungsroman*-esque realization and affirmation of the narrator (or author) Shammas' 'hybrid' location, the dialectical synthesis of the novel's multiple oppositions is more compellingly read on the collective plane. It suggests that just as Shammas can marry seemingly incongruous narrative styles and forms to produce a dynamic whole, so too may the various competing histories of Israel/Palestine be brought together to create a multifaceted and fully inclusive account of the region's present and future. This reading of the novel sees Shammas as *creating* a non-sectarian national vision, not simply embodying the contradictions and exclusions of the existing dispensation or endorsing an Israeli 'multiculturalism' divorced from an egalitarian politics.¹⁴

The remit of this project is in some ways particular to its historical moment: the novel was published just before the first intifada, at a time when the idea of a two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders was becoming increasingly prominent, but had not yet been officially endorsed by the Palestinian leadership. Shammas' interviews of the period suggest

that his main objective in the novel was to attempt to imagine a basis for relations between Palestinians and Jews within Israel, not to link Palestinians 'inside' Israel (*fī al-dākhil*) and 'outside' (*fī al-khārij*) of it. This emphasis distinguishes the novel's project from current imaginings of a single secular state that would encompass Israel and the Palestinian territories, and it may account for the ongoing absence of an Arabic translation of *Arabesques*. Nevertheless, the novel shares with these more recent visions the effort to articulate a definition of the nation that is based not on a common identity, but on a common political status. Moreover, as I discuss at the end of this chapter, there is also some indication in *Arabesques* that Shammas also seeks to account for Palestinians in the West Bank and the diaspora, and to include them in the 'farther goal' (Parry, 2004a, 60) of a single polity in Israel/Palestine.

To read *Arabesques* as a conscious projection of a desired national imaginary is in keeping, to a point, with the frequent observation that the novel is an example of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's 'minor literature,' following the Israeli critic Hannan Hever's early and influential analysis (1987), because it is written in a majority language by a member of a subordinate minority group.¹⁵ Like Jameson, Deleuze and Guattari (whose book on Kafka and minor literature was translated into English in the same year that both *Arabesques* and Jameson's 'Third-World Literature' essay were published) assert that in works of 'minor literature' everything is political, and everything has a collective value, though the terms of their analysis are rather more utopian: 'literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation [... it can] express another possible community' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, 17–18; see also Hever, 1987, 70–71). However, by repeating Hever's claim that *Arabesques* seeks to 'deterritorialize' Hebrew, critics of *Arabesques* have tended to associate the novel with an anti- or post-nationalist politics, which goes against the terms of Hever's reading (and my own).¹⁶ Hever does not stop at the moment of deterritorialization; instead, he contends that the novel also seeks to *reterritorialize* Hebrew 'as the language of the *Israeli*' (Hever, 1987, 70) through the syncretizing narrative structure of the arabesque.

In making this argument, Hever cites Jameson's essay, identifying the formal complexity of Shammas' novel as an explicit rebuttal to the Zionist national allegories of the Hebrew canon:

[Shammas] is suspicious of the validity of the Israeli national allegory, both for the Israeli Jew, with his uncertain identity as master, and for himself as a half-slave whose role and identity are no less uncertain; and his suspicion finds expression in the novel in a heterogeneous and discontinuous arabesque of allegorical patterns [... The novel] refus[es] to see itself as a national allegory [...] Shammas's paradigm concedes the importance of the concept of a nation state, but only as articulated through the arabesque: not as an absolute and rigid notion, defined once

and for all, but in a much more critical and flexible sense, as something evolving and responsive to the dialectical process. (Hever, 1987, 69–70, 72)

If Hever is reluctant here to actually name *Arabesques* as developing its own counter-allegory, this seems to be because he understands allegory in what Jameson calls its 'traditional' sense, as 'an elaborate set of figures and personifications to be read against some one-to-one table of equivalences' (Jameson, 1986, 73). Accordingly, he sees the figure of the arabesque, 'with its freedom from any myth-based symbolism' (Hever, 1987, 69), as an anti-allegorical device that can oppose the non-dialectical fixity of Zionist allegory. But if we accept Jameson's contention that 'the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous,' as I noted in my discussion of Said's memoir, then it is possible to approach Shammas' appropriation of the arabesque (and its Orientalist patrimony) as a form of allegory in itself, one that fully 'embraces the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogenous representation of the symbol' (Jameson, 1986, 73). The arabesque signifies the impossible situation Shammas describes in my epigraph, in which the state's demands lead the Palestinian Israeli citizen 'in circles, ad infinitum,' but it also constructs a new framework for a nation that has not yet been realized, "'forg[ing] the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" [...] from the existing, contradiction-ridden inventory of present-day Israeli reality' (Hever, 1987, 71, citing Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, 17).

My claim, then, is that *Arabesques* is neither anti-national nor anti-allegorical, but rather the result of a particularly self-conscious engagement with national allegory as a reading and writing practice. On the one hand, *Arabesques*' resistance to certain kinds of allegorical interpretation can be seen in its knowing references to its likely reception as a novel about 'identity,' perceived through Jameson's 'random, minute, or isolated' glimpses of national or ethnic difference (1992, 5). 'The Tale,' for instance, anticipates those readers who expect an 'Arab novel' to be 'Arab-esque' by drawing profligately on 'traditional' and 'Oriental' genres: scheherazadian storytelling, magical realism, the quest, the romance, dynastic history,¹⁷ and, in a more contemporary vein, 'Arab soap opera' (A, 58). 'The Teller,' by contrast, anticipates metropolitan and left Zionist readerships who might see a Palestinian novel in Hebrew as constructing an allegory of Jewish-Palestinian 'dialogue,' as signalled most explicitly by the scene in which a Dutch writer in Iowa declares that Shammas and Yehoshua Bar-On 'constitute a schizophrenia, two faces of a single person' (A, 145). The idea that the two men are indistinguishable or inseparable is by no mean the book's own stance; this is the 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict' of the metropolitan media, in which both parties are perceived as equally recalcitrant and equally culpable.

The weakness of these particular allegorical readings is that, like Yehoshua's insistence that 'Israeli' is synonymous with 'Jewish,' they are based on identitarian assumptions, confirming what readers already 'know.' They take it as given that an 'Arab novel' will tell its readers about 'Arab culture,'

that a novel from Israel/Palestine will reveal something about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that a novel by an 'Israeli Arab' will explain what it is like to be a non-Jewish Israeli citizen, all of this 'information' corresponding to the reader's preconceptions.¹⁸ In place of such allegories, which assume a 'one-to-one' equivalence between a fixed and essential 'identity' and its literary representation, Shammās constructs a national-allegorical framework that is much more daring in both structure and scope. The novel's exaggeratedly representative cast of characters extends a network of relationships well beyond the borders of the Israeli state, generating unexpected affiliations and antagonisms that cannot be predicted by the behaviours or ideologies associated with the characters' ethnic locations. *Arabesques* does something similar with the multiple styles and genres it invokes, drawing out their surprising affinities and their shared capacities for imagining alternative historical outcomes. Within this literary space of possibility, Shammās aspires towards a comprehensive account of the geographies, events, and experiences that make up the modern history of Israel/Palestine. It is this monumental effort that makes *Arabesques* the 'most Israeli novel yet written,' as Shammās himself is said to have claimed (Gluzman, 2004, 325; Hever, 1987, 50). It is also what allows the novel to promote the most radical demographic imaginary of any of the texts addressed in this book, in its attempt not simply to combat, but also to connect, the 'two narratives' of Israel/Palestine in one visionary national narration.

Two faces of a single person

Of all the encounters between characters that take place in *Arabesques*, the meeting of the narrator Shammās and Yehoshua Bar-On in 'The Teller' carries the greatest burden of allegorical expectation. Their encounter is characterized by mutual curiosity, but also by mutual suspicion and self-interest, which trouble readings of their interaction as either a belligerent confrontation or a dialogic rapprochement. Bar-On claims to be attending the Iowa writers' programme for the sole purpose of observing the narrator, whom he wants to use as the model for the character of an 'educated Arab' in his next novel. He informs an astonished Shammās: "I don't think I'll ever have this kind of opportunity again – to be under the same roof with a person like that in ideal conditions of isolation." When the narrator replies wryly, "I'm just another 'intellectual,' as you call your educated Jews," Bar-On laughs and then apologizes: "All I want is to get to know you from up close," he said, "while at the same time preserving a certain amount of aesthetic distance between us, for the sake of objectivity, you know." The narrator responds: "I shall try not to disappoint you" (A, 137).

The author Shammās' most obvious target in this encounter is the Hebrew literary establishment, which by the 1980s had shifted away from representations of 'savage' Arabs, like the nomad in Oz's 'Nomad and Viper'

or the mute Arab in Yehoshua's novella *Mul ha-ya'arot* (1968, Eng. 'Facing the Forests,' in *Sleepwalkers and Other Stories*, 1999), in favour of more sympathetic, or 'educated,' Arab characters, such as Na'im in Yehoshua's novel *Ha-me'ahev* (1977, Eng. *The Lover*, 1980).¹⁹ But Bar-On's pronouncement is also overtly allegorical, invoking the entire population of Palestinian and Jewish Israelis who live, not only territorially but also juridically, 'under one roof.' His interest in 'get[ting] to know' Shammas is self-serving, recalling the 'experts' in 'Arab affairs' that have long been a mainstay of the Israeli security apparatus (Eyal, 2006), while his control over the means of Shammas' representation signals the absence of Israeli-Palestinians from hegemonic Israeli culture as well as the state's claim to 'represent' this population through democratic political structures. Yet while this private interaction ostensibly 'reflects' or 'encodes' the larger sociopolitical context, it also tests its readers' assumptions about the structural relations that it portrays, since here the tables have been turned: it is in fact Shammas the Palestinian Israeli, as both author and narrator, who is 'representing' the Israeli Jew. The author Shammas simultaneously refutes the allegorical significance of this encounter and reinstates it: he foregrounds the limits of his characters' representability through their ethnic locations at the same time that he draws Bar-On into his all-encompassing national imaginary.

Shammas' reviewers in the Hebrew press almost unanimously preferred 'The Tale,' in which Bar-On does not appear, to 'The Teller,' deeming the former a more 'authentic' narrative.²⁰ Shammas' *New York Times* reviewer, the American novelist William Gass, also noted that the sections set in Paris and Iowa were 'markedly less rich,' but with approval: 'they should be, because the narrator's life in those places is necessarily more superficial' (1988, 1). In seeing the 'Arab' sections of *Arabesques* as more 'authentic,' however, both responses fail to note that this effect is *produced* through the stark contrast between the sensuous, otherworldly ambience of 'The Tale' and the prosaic events and pared-down stylistics of 'The Teller.' The first section of 'The Teller,' 'Père Lachaise,' is narrated almost entirely through interior monologue, alternating between the perspectives of four alienated individuals in Paris: the narrator, his cousin Nadia, his fellow writer Amira (an Egyptian Jew who reappears in the Iowa sections), and Bar-On. Bar-On's is the only section narrated in the first person, emphasizing Shammas' control over his character even as Bar-On's internal focalization gives the impression of psychological verisimilitude.

Bar-On's first words are: 'The reception clerk tells me that my Jew has not called and there are no messages for me. At the foot of the spiral staircase I watch the smoke rings curling out of my pipe and think about what he would say if he knew that in speaking to myself I call that proud Palestinian-Arab-Israeli "my Jew"' (A, 80; 1986a, 72). This opening statement is simultaneously sympathetic and aggressive, setting the tone for the encounters to come. Bar-On mocks Shammas' claim to Israeli 'identity' by inserting the exaggeratedly politically correct label 'Palestinian-Arab-Israeli' (*'aravi-falastini-yisra'eli*)

between two instances of the shorter, shocking epithet 'my Jew' (*ha-yehudi sheli*), which he uses to refer to Shammas throughout 'Père Lachaise.' As Hever points out, 'my Jew' is an internally contradictory phrase. On the one hand, it registers Bar-On's 'feeling of genuine empathy with a fellow-minority,' yet on the other, it represents 'the racist stance of a superior majority, revealed in the unconsciously derogatory use of the phrase "my Jew"' (2002, 185). The phrase thus registers the possibility of a rapprochement between Shammas and Bar-On while simultaneously negating it.

Contrary to Hever's second assertion, however, Bar-On does not seem to be oblivious to the phrase's racist implications, and at times he even appears to take pleasure in his power to exclude Shammas from the Jewish Israeli consensus (Hochberg, 2007, 83). When Bar-On ponders how the character he plans to create might achieve 'a place of honor (ah, honor) in the studies that are being produced on "the figure of the Arab in modern Hebrew literature,"' he reflects:

This time I'm going to sculpt a well-rounded character. A nice hefty Arab, human and warm [*aravi 'agalgal* (rounded), *'enoshi ve-ham*]. A demitasse [*siflon*] of cardamoned coffee, with all that it implies. Cardamoned, and not 'bitter,' an adjective that lacks aroma and has negative connotations. My Jew happens to drink *thé au lait*, as if he were ducking me and blurring his tracks. But he does not know that it is difficult to blur his aromas, if not impossible. Not only the clothing is soaked with them, but also the skin. And I have a very keen sense of smell [*'ein 'ani tatan*]. (A, 82; 1986a, 73–74)

In this passage, Bar-On pointedly supplants an affiliational definition of culture – signified by Shammas' preference for *thé au lait* – with an assertion of the indelibility of his 'ethnic' traits. The cup of coffee with cardamom draws on the iconography of the exotic Arab, metonymically representing Shammas' irrevocable difference. Yet the only characteristic 'implied' by this fixed symbol is its smell, which Bar-On imagines 'soaks' Shammas' clothes and skin, associating him with the foul-smelling natives of the literature of imperial adventure. In the Hebrew original, the line '*'ein 'ani tatan*' (literally, 'I don't have anosmia') simply indicates that anyone (or at least any non-Arab) who can smell can detect Shammas' different odour. In the English translation, however, Bar-On's olfactory skills, which stand in for his skills as a writer, make him especially suited to the task of ferreting out Shammas' ethnic difference.

Far from being an expression of unconscious racism, Bar-On's racism in this passage is self-conscious to the point of satire. Bar-On seems convinced that his desire to create a 'human and warm' Arab character can only descend into racial caricature, a stance which recalls Amos Oz's insistence that he is unable to write about the Palestinian intifada from 'an oppressed Arab's point of view,' no matter how much he would like to do so (Mazor, 2002, 191). This, then, is the dilemma of 'left Zionism' as staged in 'The Teller': Israeli-Palestinians are recognized as an oppressed minority, and therefore

deserve to be championed in honour of the memory of Jewish persecution in Europe, and yet the very recognition of their subordinate status paradoxically reifies their absolute difference from Israeli Jews. Rather than attributing this contradiction to the institutional exclusion of Israeli-Palestinians from Israeli society, the explanation that seems to appeal most to Bar-On is the idea that the narrator Shammas' experience is essentially incommensurable with his own. Bar-On's stance recalls the simultaneous fascination with and retreat from 'difference' which has dominated the postmodernist strand of postcolonial studies, making it possible to 'establish a neutral, ideology-free zone from which the social dissension and political contest inscribed in the antagonist pairing of colonizer/colonized have been expelled' (Parry, 2004b, 65). Bar-On's effort to identify Shammas' essential difference from himself similarly resists the idea that their most important difference might be political. His imagination of Shammas coincides perfectly with what Yerach Gover has identified as the Arab's role as the 'antifigure' (1994, 74) of Hebrew literature,

exist[ing] only in the formlessness of a nonsubject assimilated to the generally negative category of the *other than us* and its concomitant moralistic evaluation – *unable to be us* [...] What cannot occur is the recognition of a moral other in whose gaze the Jew would find him- or herself suddenly objectified as a Jew. (1994, 29, 32)

The difficulty with accepting the Bar-On of 'Père Lachaise' at face value, however, is that Shammas' representation of this character openly strives to achieve the reverse objectification of 'the Jew' that Gover deems to be impossible in Hebrew fiction. In Bar-On's first appearance at the start of 'Père Lachaise' (and in many appearances thereafter), he is smoking a pipe, which for Israeli readers immediately identifies him as a cliché of a writer of the 'Palmach generation' associated with Israeli independence. A few pages later, Shammas makes his deployment of this stereotype explicit when an expatriate Israeli whom Bar-On derisively refers to as a *yored*, or 'descender' (in the Hebrew, this reads '*yored bein yoredim*,' meaning an Israeli emigrant who is also the child of Israeli emigrants) teases him about the pipe: 'Why do you insist on this image of the Palmach generation, which is still visible in those pictures they publish of its writers in anthologies and literary supplements? Pipe in one hand, the other thoughtfully supporting their chin as they gaze at posterity' (A, 85; 1986a, 76). The same character also accuses Bar-On of displaying 'the notorious gluttony of Israelis' (A, 85) for ordering oysters out of season, and then reinforces the stereotype by asking for an extra plate himself. Later, when Shammas tells Bar-On that he is unable to meet him in Paris because he has to visit his Lebanese relatives, Bar-On decides that 'relatives from Lebanon' is 'probably another way of saying PLO [*sokhen zar*, lit. 'foreign agent']' (A, 100; 1986a, 90). Bar-On is an establishment figure suspicious of both Arabs and diaspora Jews; greedy for food, and by metaphorical extension, for land; and exceedingly attached to cultural

signifiers of masculinity and intellectualism derived from the founding of the state. The joke, of course, is that this portrait of a Jewish Israeli is as formulaic as Bar-On's fantasies about Shammás, creating a Russian doll-like cliché within a cliché through its depiction of a 'stereotype of the Jewish writer engaged in stereotyping the Israeli Arab' (Siddiq, 1988, 2).

In a further twist, the author Shammás underscores his own role as Bar-On's creator when the narrator Shammás reveals that he and Amira have been spending their time writing 'the first draft of a piece that we called "Père Lachaise" and attributed to Yehoshua Bar-On' (A, 167). With this revelation, the authority of all of the sections narrated by the first-person Bar-On is undermined, and the only portrayal of Bar-On that can be taken as 'true,' within the confines of the novel, is the record of his actions in the 'Mayflower' sections of 'The Teller.' Like Shammás and Amira's creation, in the scene cited above the Bar-On of 'Mayflower' announces, with a puff 'at his extinguished pipe,' that he is planning to observe Shammás as a model for the protagonist in his novel (A, 137); he also delivers grandiose Zionist pronouncements like '[i]t took my parents two thousand years to get to the land of Israel' (A, 145). However, many of his actions are less easily assimilated to the narrator Shammás' assumptions about him. Most surprising is Bar-On's sudden declaration, several weeks into the writers' programme, that he is no longer interested in using Shammás as a model; instead, he has chosen another writer, a Palestinian from Nablus. Keeping his arm around 'Paco' (Shammás never reveals this character's given name), Bar-On declares that the Palestinian writer

'forces me to respond and take a stand toward him. You have to bear in mind that he is still a pure Palestinian, whose strength resides in his simplicity and his lack of cynicism [...] I feel much close to *this* Palestinian. Perhaps I'll be proven wrong, but my instinct tells me I can make good use of him.' (A, 168)

To his surprise, Shammás finds that he feels 'betrayed' by Bar-On's decision, particularly when the friendship between Bar-On and Paco takes on 'the look of a close friendship and r[ises] to the top of the International Writing Program's public relations charts' (A, 169). This episode has an obvious resonance as political allegory: in the international arena, these two men stand in for the main players in the conflict, and Shammás is left out of their interaction just as the Israeli-Palestinians have been excluded from serious consideration in the peace process (El-Haj, 2002). However, the moment also functions as a profound disruption of expectations. Bar-On's interest in Paco seems less complex than Shammás and Amira have imagined his interest in Shammás to be. His desire to use Paco to enhance the quality of his writing seems selfishly commercial in a way that the 'Père Lachaise' character's desire to create a real Arab protagonist does not, his sarcastically expressed dreams of critical recognition notwithstanding. Moreover, there is no indication that

this Bar-On possesses the broader historical perspective that would allow him to think of either Shammas or Paco as 'my Jew.'

Bar-On's more enigmatic actions further emphasize the fallibility of what the narrator thinks he 'knows' about Bar-On. Near the end of the novel, Bar-On loses his temper and attacks Amira when she tells him not to light his pipe in an Amish household; ten days later, he leaves Iowa 'without saying goodbye to anyone' (A, 204–5). This behaviour has no obvious extratextual referent: the symbol of the pipe has taken on a life of its own, as has the fictional stereotype of the belligerent Jewish Israeli novelist. Thus, even within the apparently realist world of 'The Teller,' a recognizably anti-realist destabilization of narrative authority is at work, for Bar-On's character functions in part as a technical device used to expose the limits of Shammas' narration. Although 'Père Lachaise' lampoons Bar-On's belief in Shammas' absolute difference from himself, 'Mayflower' revisits this idea more sombrely, since neither the narrator Shammas nor Bar-On's efforts to 'imagine' or 'represent' one another brings them any closer to mutual understanding. Indeed, Shammas eventually cuts off the possibility of any kind of 'dialogue,' telling Bar-On that 'it looks as if each of us will have to deal with the problem separately, from his own point of view.' Privately, however, he rejects even this modest proposal, pessimistically concluding that each of them '*knew* the gap between us would widen until there was no way of bridging it' (A, 170, emphasis added).

This plotline stages the rejection of the Zionist national allegory, in its left Zionist guise, that Hever sees as the author Shammas' main endeavour: it rebuffs the paternalism of Bar-On's desultory efforts to imagine Shammas as a fellow citizen, even as it suggests that the narrator's efforts to return (or satirize) the favour are equally reductive. Yet, despite the narrator's own cynicism about the future of his relationship with Bar-On, their repeated encounters contest the idea of the unbridgeable gap or incommensurable difference that each 'knows' to exist. There are a number of moments in 'The Teller' in which Shammas' connection to Bar-On supplants his links with the other characters. In 'Père Lachaise,' for instance, Shammas meets his Lebanese cousin Nadia in Paris and goes with her to the Père Lachaise cemetery, where they just miss catching a glimpse of the fabled rooster Ar-Rasad from Fassuta (A, 106–9). But in the 'real' narrative, in Shammas' diary in 'Mayflower,' Shammas is unable to meet Nadia in Paris because she is undergoing surgery. Instead, he meets Bar-On and goes with him to the airport (A, 136). In the 'fictional' version of this encounter in 'Père Lachaise,' Bar-On gets annoyed with Shammas for asking him for a ride: 'so much for the taken-for-granted Arab, who in earlier circumstances would have gone to the trouble to order a taxi and would have called to tell me that everything is all arranged and that I need to do nothing but wait in my room' (A, 99–100). In 'Mayflower,' by contrast, Shammas does pick up Bar-On, and they share the cost of the taxi (A, 136). Of the characters Shammas encounters in 'The Teller,' Bar-On's is the only constant presence: he 'attache[s] himself'

to Shammās when they first arrive in Iowa (A, 142), he spies on Shammās' first encounter with Amira (A, 148), and he attempts to sit next to him on the bus long after having abandoned him for Paco (A, 203). When Bar-On leaves Iowa, the narrator Shammās admits that he 'felt a few mild pangs of conscience, for perhaps I should have gotten closer to him – however unlikely that was – instead of spending my time trying to match my life with that of Michael Abyad, who had appeared and vanished like a flash of lightning.' Yet the narrator rebels against this possibility: 'But then the bitter taste Bar-On left in my mouth would arise again and overwhelm everything he had left behind' (A, 203; 1986a, 182). In both the Hebrew and the English versions of the text, Shammās uses the same word here, 'bitter' (*mar*), that the Bar-On of 'Père Lachaise' decided not to use to describe Shammās when comparing him to a cup of coffee. Here, it is not cultural 'difference' that prevents their rapprochement: it is Bar-On's refusal to acknowledge Shammās' past and present grievances, and his reluctance to conceive of Shammās as a fellow Israeli. Bar-On's symbolic order of incommensurability is replaced with the allegorical possibility of political reconciliation, but only on the basis of a genuinely common civic belonging.

This self-conscious invocation of the grounds for resolution is prefigured in the scene immediately preceding the drive to the airport, in which Shammās, walking through the Père Lachaise cemetery alone, notes the proximity and nearly identical appearance of the gravestones of Marcel Proust and Mahmoud al-Hamshari, a PLO representative assassinated in Paris in 1972 by Israeli agents in retaliation for his suspected involvement in the murders of eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. 'It must have been the French sense of humor,' the narrator Shammās reflects, 'that granted both of them, the man of the lost country and the man of the *temps perdu*, nearly identical graves [...] two simple layers of shining black marble' (A, 135–36). Though 'fifty years separate the two lost times, the two darkneses,' the 'Jew of Time' and the 'Arab of Place' (A, 136), as he describes these two figures, are connected even in death by their association with a shared history/time and a shared land/place. This is not a sentimental observation: as Yael Feldman points out, this 'oft-cited (but erroneously interpreted)' (1999b, 383) scene ends with the conclusion that 'apart from the almost matched graves and the avenue of trees reflected in the smoothness of the black marble,' Proust and al-Hamshari appear 'to share nothing at all' (A, 136). However, although the finality of this pronouncement echoes the despondency of the narrator's last encounter with Bar-On, it is not clear that the 'ostensible analogy' between the two men is 'finally rejected' as Feldman suggests (1999b, 383), for it is not simply the visual similarity but the physical closeness of the two graves that is paramount here. The fact that the two otherwise unconnected figures share the same burial ground echoes Ilan Pappé's assertion that the history of Israel/Palestine remains the history of one place (2004, 2). Whether or not Bar-On and Shammās constitute 'two faces of a single person' (A, 145), the psychological and identitarian aspects of the relationship between Jewish

and Palestinian Israelis are ultimately subordinate to the practical problem of being able to live together in a relationship of equality. 'The Teller' emphasizes the limitations of an exclusively 'dialogic' approach to this task, but without fleshing out an alternative method for imagining it. For such an alternative, it is necessary to turn to 'The Tale.'

The winding chambers of the arabesque

In order to begin to construct this counter-imaginary, Shammas moves from the antagonistic intimacy of the Israeli-Palestinian present to the losses and catastrophes of the Palestinian past. 'The Tale' reverses the trajectory of 'The Teller': instead of bringing together a diverse group of individuals who seek to forge a new 'possible community' (a goal alluded to by the title 'Mayflower,' the name of the writers' dormitory in Iowa, which also ominously connects the histories of American and Zionist settlement), 'The Tale' begins with a group defined by biological filiation, the Shammas family, and narrates the tragic story of that family's dispersion and disintegration. Yet, at the same time that 'The Tale' narrates a progression from social cohesion to collapse, the form of the narrative moves in reverse, weaving a series of apparently unrelated episodes into a connected whole through the use of recurring phrases, characters, and symbols. Unlike 'The Teller,' then, in which continuity and meaning are maintained by the use of a linear chronology and psychologically realist character development, 'The Tale' relies upon the ritual repetition of oral narrative.

One of the main effects of this strategy is that the creative and deliberate intervention of the narrator overtly assumes precedence over the 'information' that the readers of 'The Tale' might hope to glean from its story, in a manner reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's account of the work of the storyteller (1999). While the realist narrative of 'The Teller' only gradually exposes the narrator Shammas as unreliable, in 'The Tale' the reader immediately learns that despite the vividness of his narration – '[t]he soft-footed wail of the plane seemed to leap over the shavings curling from the wood, to [...] rub themselves like abandoned cats at my grandmother's feet' (A, 3) – Shammas was not actually present at the narrative's opening scene, nor did he witness many of the other events he recounts. However, 'The Tale' introduces standards for judging Shammas' narrative authority on grounds other than his own 'experience' through the character of Uncle Yusef, the family storyteller (*al-ḥakawāti* in Arabic). Yusef is both the source of much of the family history which Shammas did not personally observe – 'Uncle Yusef, who told me this story, was not to be fully trusted in matters having to do with mosques' (A, 11); '[i]t was my uncle Yusef who first told me about my name' (A, 13) – and the inspiration for Shammas' decision to tell his family's story in the first place: '[E]ven now as I sit at my desk in Jerusalem and write these things down I feel with one hand the chill of the windowsill and

with the other hand I count the parts of the plow, as a prayer of sorts to the memory of Uncle Yusef" (A, 64). Yusef's narratives are thus aligned with collective memory and counterposed against official history, privileging the imaginative act of retelling an event over the event itself.

By assuming Yusef's role as the family storyteller, Shammaas also inherits his method. The novel's own reference to the arabesque as a narrative structure, cited above, comes from an extended description of Yusef's narrative technique:

His stories were plaited into one another, embracing and parting, twisting and twining in the infinite arabesque of memory. Many of his stories he told again and again, with seemingly minor changes, while other stories were granted only two or three tellings during the whole of his lifetime. All of them, however, flowed around him in a swirling current of illusion that linked beginnings to endings, the inner to the external, the reality to the tale. (A, 226–27)

As if to drive home the author Shammaas' conscious use of this trope, the word 'arabesque' appears five times in 'The Tale.' It is used to describe a mode of storytelling, in this passage and in the description of Yusef's metaphors as 'meandering arabesques' (A, 181); it is used to signify irresolution, when one of Shammaas' Aunt Jaleelah's suitors anxiously observes the 'arabesques in the mind of the Shammaas family' over his suitability (A, 209); and it is used to represent the process of narrative retrieval, in Shammaas' description of his role as an attempt to follow 'the course of this winding arabesque' to the mouth of a 'cave' housing the 'winding chambers of the arabesque [...] behind which lies another story that will invent itself in a different way' (A, 226–27). In each instance, the idea of the arabesque stands for a cyclical and repetitive narrative structure which allows multiple storylines to coexist. The chronological arabesques of 'The Tale' call particular attention to its subversion of official historiography, a profusion of dates marking births, marriages, emigrations, and deaths, making it difficult to ignore the narrative's pronounced non-sequentiality.²¹

Though the concept of the 'arabesque' has its origins in Orientalist scholarship on Islamic visual art, Sandra Naddaff has argued that it is intrinsically related to the structure of canonical Arabic narratives such as *Alf layla wa layla* (*A Thousand and One Nights*), since both forms seek to avoid fixed (or one-to-one) modes of representation (1991, 113, 117). The cyclicity of 'The Tale' echoes that of many of the story cycles of *A Thousand and One Nights*, in which narrative repetition 'is an attempt to destroy its own essence, to kill the natural movement of linear time, to turn time back on itself, to make time repeat itself, reflect itself, do anything but continue its unimpeded advance' (Naddaff, 1991, 94–95). The narrator Shammaas also makes explicit reference to *A Thousand and One Nights* in a reflective aside on the nature of his task: 'I never imagined that I would find myself, like the heroes of *A Thousand and One Nights*, confronted by an infinite number of doors, and that every door

concealed behind it additional doors' (A, 72). The reference can be attributed in part to the knowing auto-ethnographic impulse of 'The Tale.' Shammas aligns the *ḥakawāti* Uncle Yusef's narrative style with an Arab cultural artefact that, for Shammas' Hebrew- and English-language readers, is profoundly mediated through Orientalism; he thus anticipates and exaggerates the reception of 'The Tale' as a document of Arab 'identity.' Yet this reference is also recuperative, as Shammas has suggested elsewhere. It challenges the Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky's pronouncement that 'the arabesque is not at all a special, independent artistic conception, but only a retarded art form' with a masterful demonstration of its syncretic capabilities: it is 'the summation of all possible symmetries in two-dimensional space, the product of a thousand years of mathematics, a magnificent finality [...] the perfect finish' (Shammas, 1987, 25–26, citing Bronowski, 2011, 131–36).

The reference to *A Thousand and One Nights*, whose existence as a written text in Arabic dates back to the ninth century (Reynolds, 2008, 270), also undermines the opposition between 'oral Arabic' and 'scribal Hebrew' that is apparently established by the structural divide between 'The Tale' and 'The Teller.' This opposition is maintained even by sensitive readers of *Arabesques* like Hever, who argues that Shammas needs 'both oral and written narrative [...] the atemporal, arabesque rhythms of the oral tradition serve as a touchstone for evaluating the nondialectical attitude towards time found in Israeli public discourse' (2002, 191–92). Yet 'The Tale' makes reference to modern writing in Arabic from its very first pages. Shammas mentions an '1874 volume of the Lebanese journal *Al-Jinan*' which contains 'the complete text of the law on growing tobacco' (A, 7–8); 'the Egyptian magazine *Al-Hilal*' (A, 64); a page of an 'old religious journal' which carries 'the end of an article in praise of the Inquisition' (A, 16); and a 'skeptical and detailed article' about his mother's psychic gifts in her youth, published in the journal of a monastic order (A, 19). Thus, at the same time that the structure and tone of 'The Tale' appears to locate Palestinian and Arab history entirely within the oral tradition, Shammas also offers a glimpse of a vast textual archive in Arabic. This archive attests to an autonomous and heterogeneous literary tradition established many centuries before the founding of the Israeli state, even if it has been profoundly disrupted within Israel's borders since 1948.

These invocations of the arabesque do more than assert its specific political and artistic value: they also demonstrate its convergences with Euro-American (and subsequently, Hebrew) literary modernism.²² The arabesque is invested in the fragmentation of literary and conceptual unity, producing disunities of character, plotline, and setting; it emphasizes the production of meaning through form, since the form of the narrative is inseparable from its overall effect; and it invokes mythic paradigms by virtue of its links to Islamic art and history, an effect which is enhanced by Shammas' use of Christian and folkloric imagery. What David Trotter describes as modernist fiction's insistence on describing events 'in relation to, and only in relation to, a perceiving mind' (1999, 71) parallels Shammas'

emphasis on the narrator as the organizing consciousness behind a shifting and elusive narrative. Most importantly, perhaps, both traditions are deeply concerned with the problem of representation. Literary modernism did not hold that representation was impossible, only that existing methods needed to be rethought or abandoned, while the non-figurative visual arabesque was originally devised out of the conviction that true representation was indeed possible, but that it was immoral. The narrative arabesque's refusal of representational authority echoes both of these traditions. It challenges the historical accuracy and morality of one-to-one symbolism and cause-and-effect chronology, striving towards a more prolific but also more provisional mode of signification that continually reminds the reader of its own inadequacies.

One of the more explicit demonstrations of the anti-identitarian inclusivity that this multiply engendered mode of history-making makes possible takes place in the narrator Shammas' encounters with Laylah Khoury. Though Laylah's character is mentioned in passing early in the narrative, Shammas only becomes interested in her after reading a Hebrew-language newspaper report in which a woman named Surayyah Sa'id describes how Israeli soldiers entered her home north of Ramallah, barked orders at her two deaf-mute sons, and spilled two jars of her olive oil on the floor. Something in her words reminds Shammas 'of the dialect of Fassuta,' even though this impression is based 'on just a few reluctant and evasive words, translated into Hebrew' (A, 35) – like 'The Tale' itself – and he becomes convinced that she is Laylah Khoury, a family servant expelled from Israel in 1948. By tracking the woman down, Shammas hopes to find 'the key to certain enigmas in my family's past' (A, 36). The story is broken off and restarted several times before the two finally meet at Surayyah Sa'id's home in the village of Silwad. Surayyah does turn out to be Laylah, though she has become a Muslim and changed her name, and she immediately upsets Shammas' narrative of his own origins by revealing that the cousin Shammas is named after did not die in infancy as the family has always believed, but instead was stolen by a wealthy Beirut couple and is living in America under the name Michael Abyad. After this disturbing disclosure, Shammas abruptly negates the entire story by claiming that 'in fact I never set foot in the village of Silwad, and the whole trip to see Surayyah Sa'id is just a tale' (A, 60). However, a journalist friend then tells him the same story, and Shammas is astounded to discover that 'what I had imagined to have been only a web woven upon the warp of reality with the woof of fantasy was no longer obedient to its maker, that the net of memory that had been cast had caught the fisherman' (A, 72).

It is tempting to dismiss this story as an 'Arab soap opera,' as the narrator Shammas himself does (A, 58). However, the main features of the episode – the missing person, the baby-snatching, the discovery of a buried past – evoke not only soap opera, but also the suspicion of the notion of fixed origins that is common to modernism and the arabesque. Moreover, when Shammas discovers that he has single-handedly caused life to imitate art, he alludes on

the one hand to a fantasy world in which the divide between the real and the invented is very tenuous, invoking *1001 Nights*, and on the other to his angst-ridden self-consciousness about his role as the story's creator, invoking modernist metafiction. Though Shammas tells himself that the story of the baby-snatching must have been an act of 'delayed revenge' on Surayyah/Laylah's part (A, 72), he soon finds conclusive proof that Michael Abyad exists: a photograph in the September 27, 1982 issue of *Time* magazine that shows him looking at victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacre (A, 73). Like the turn-of-the-century Arabic journals Shammas refers to, here the printed word and the photograph substantiate the presumed inventions of the oral record. The authority of the photograph is enhanced by the fact that it is an extratextual referent from the issue of *Time* that was actually published on that date, though the author Shammas has inserted a fictional character into the real picture (Feldman, 1999b, 381).

At the end of 'The Tale,' Shammas meets Laylah for a second (or first) time, and here, as elsewhere in the second half of this storyline, Shammas resists the cyclical structure's pull towards meaninglessness by incorporating the fragments of his account into a more complete narrative. The meeting begins the same way as the earlier version: Surayyah Sa'id is building a fire when Shammas arrives, a black goat wanders by and butts her legs, and her twin sons are inside her house eating. 'Up until this point,' Shammas says, 'our meeting had gone as I imagined it' (A, 243). However, several details of their interaction have already been slightly altered, most significantly Surayyah Sa'id's reaction to Shammas' name. This time, when he tells her who he is, he does not see a '*djinni* [of alarm] burst out of her sealed face and hover in the space of that room' (A, 53); instead, Surayyah/Laylah smiles, for she has been expecting him following his journalist friend's visit (A, 241). This minor change signals the more dramatic revision that is to come, for instead of revealing a secret about Shammas' past, she tells him about her own: 'Sometimes I can't believe that I've managed to live through all this, that I really am that little girl who was orphaned in Fassuta and passed through Beirut and then returned to her village and from there was expelled to Jenin and then from there to here' (A 243-44). She recounts a harrowing story about being sexually abused by *Sitt Sa'da*, the woman who brought her to Beirut; about her doomed love for 'Michel-Anton' (Michael Abyad); and about her deportation to Jenin in 1948 after Shammas' relative Fareed Mikha'eel reportedly told the Israeli soldiers where she and other villagers were hiding (A, 57, 246-47).

This version of Shammas' meeting with Surayyah Sa'id cannot simply be read as a whimsical repetition of events, for the differences in Surayyah's 'real' story allow the reader to align her tale with a larger historical narrative in a way that her 'imagined' story does not. As Feldman observes, '[w]hat is perceived early in the novel as mythic memory, on the same level as oriental fantasy about gold-filled caves and magic roosters [...] resurfaces later as a dry and hard political history' (1999b, 382). What the import of this 'hard'

history might be, however, is not immediately obvious. In Feldman's reading, the shift towards historicization in 'The Tale' 'decenters the politically all-consuming "colonial" discourse between Arabs and Jews,' replacing it with an alliance between Jews and Christian Arabs, the "'Jew[s]" of the Arab world' (1999b, 382–83). She supports this argument by calling attention to Shammas' references to the decades of conflict between the Fassutans and the Muslim residents of the nearby village Deir El-Kasi: the Fassutans 'were subject to persecutions and torture' at the hands of the Muslim villagers in the early part of the century (A, 11), and during the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 they 'were persecuted by their Muslim neighbors for refusing to play the nation-building game' (Feldman, 1999b, 384).

Although Feldman is right to raise the issue of Muslim-Christian conflict in the novel – which, as she says, has been neglected by most critics – she is too quick to discount Shammas' protest against Jewish Israeli hegemony by identifying his novel as a document of 'Arab Christian nationalism' (1999b, 382). In fact, the acts of injustice depicted in 'The Tale' are not always carried out by Muslims. Surayyah Sa'id tells Shammas that her husband never asked her to convert to Islam, but that 'after what the Christians did to me, he didn't need to ask' (A, 244), while the Fassutans are revealed to have escaped expulsion in 1948 because they were able to bribe the Jewish commander; the eviction order for Fassuta was duly rescinded, while the residents of Deir El-Kasi were dispersed and their village renamed Moshav Elkosh (A, 11, 126).²³ 'The Tale' is less a partisan account of intra-Arab sectarian violence than an attempt to represent the role that 'corruption and weakness,' infighting, and greed played in the 'drown[ing of] the rebellion' (A, 190) in the 1930s and the Palestinian defeat in 1948. Both Surayyah/Laylah's story and the larger 'Tale' lament what they portray as the Palestinians' short-sightedness and passivity in the years leading up to 1948, recalling the many narratives of the Holocaust which deplore European Jewish communities' compliance with Nazi deportations. In the beginning of 'The Tale,' when the narrative is still narrowly concerned with Shammas' own family background, Surayyah Sa'id's story concerns only Shammas himself; by the end of the novel, he is able to absorb and produce a narrative of a larger community.

Shammas' effort to recover this collective history through a framework that simultaneously invokes European/modernist and Arab/oral forms insists on the resonance of Surayyah/Laylah's story beyond its immediate context. If 'The Tale' can be read as both a modernist narrative and an arabesque, then literary modernism did not represent the total break with the past that it claimed, but instead had unconscious roots in or unacknowledged affinities with older, non-European traditions of thought. Its practitioners were able to imagine it as a complete departure in part because of their ignorance of such traditions; however, many of the movement's foundational precepts, including the question of how reality might best be narrated, are questions that are fundamental to the idea of narrative itself. Analogously, according to the logic of Shammas' narrative, neither the Zionist idea that Jewish settlers

could bring Palestine into the modern age nor the post-*nakba* Palestinian idea of the gulf between a Palestinian past and the 'bad modernity' (Cleary, 2002, 89) of the Israeli present are correct in their assumption of an absolute temporal and cultural divide marked by the year 1948. Though 'The Tale' initially reflects the lived experience of fragmentation, it ultimately seeks to return 1948 to its rightful place in a more comprehensible narrative of political and economic conflict located in neither 'tradition' nor 'modernity,' but in a struggle over land and resources. This narrative is necessarily partial and unfinished, but as Shammas' father tells the 'sorcerer' Al-Bi'nawi, '[t]o know a thing by halves is better than complete ignorance' (A, 224). Against the empathetic impasse of 'The Teller,' 'The Tale' suggests that a more dynamic and heterogeneous narrative of the Israeli/Palestinian past has the potential to change its heirs' understanding of the present.

Which of the two of us has written this book I do not know

As my discussions of 'The Teller' and 'The Tale' should make clear, neither narrative is complete on its own: the past and present must be brought together overtly, so that the reader cannot overlook the deliberateness and difficulty of the task. Although *Arabesques* begins to alternate more frequently between the two narratives as the novel progresses, they remain discrete until the penultimate scene. The engine of their delayed synthesis is Michael Abyad, who is the only character in *Arabesques* apart from Shammas to appear in both narratives. Like Bar-On and Surayyah/Laylah, Abyad conspicuously represents a particular socio-ethnic group – in his case, the Palestinian 'bourgeois diaspora' (Bowman, 1988, 36) – but while the other characters are present in their respective sections of the novel from the start, Abyad eludes the narrator Shammas in both, becoming the object of his contemporary quest. Abyad's long-deferred arrival has an obvious allegorical resonance, since the most important drawback to a territorial model of civic belonging in Israel/Palestine, which the narrator's encounters with Bar-On and Surayyah Sa'id struggle to envision, is that it excludes the millions of Palestinians who are compelled to live elsewhere. But Abyad is also explicitly marked as a blank screen for the projection of a life Shammas might have lived had he not been born an Israeli citizen: his surname means 'white' in Arabic, and he wears all-white clothing (A, 246, 255). The final revelation of the two men's complicated and ambiguous relationship to the story told in *Arabesques* is at the heart of the novel's attempt to create an inclusive demographic imaginary: it implicates all Palestinians, not just Palestinian Israelis, in the creation of a Hebrew-language narrative of the history of Israel/Palestine.

At the beginning of 'The Tale,' the reader learns that Shammas was named 'Anton' after his dead cousin (A, 12–13); Surayyah/Laylah's revelation that this cousin is not dead after all comes later in the same section (A, 56–58). After Shammas sees his photograph in *Time* magazine in 1982, Abyad vanishes from

the narrative until the third section of 'The Teller,' when he resurfaces as a friend of Shammas' hosts in Iowa who wants to meet Shammas (A, 176). Although in 'The Tale,' Shammas learns about Abyad either in the beginning or the middle of April 1981, depending whether he met Surayyah Sa'id in person or heard her story from his journalist friend (A, 41, 59, 71), in 'The Teller,' the discovery is delayed. On the third of October, when Shammas' hosts tell him about Abyad, Shammas writes in his diary: 'Michael Abyad? Who is he?' (A, 176). It is only at the end of the novel that we hear Abyad's side of the story, which has undergone a number of changes from the versions Shammas has heard previously. The revelation that he was adopted takes place in 1949 instead of 1948; his family did not live in Beirut during his childhood, but only after fleeing Haifa in 1948; and Shammas' aunt Almaza was a family servant whose son Anton did die in infancy after all, but Abyad loved so her much that he imagined her as his mother (A, 255–58).

These chronological, geographical, and biographical differences in Abyad's story export the lessons of the arabesque from 'The Tale' to 'The Teller': they reiterate the provisionality and instability of any narrative of 'origins,' even and especially Shammas'. But Abyad's most surprising revelation goes further than this. Abyad claims that *he* has written 'The Tale' as his own 'fictitious autobiography,' after having collected information about Fassuta from a cousin of Shammas' whom he met while working at the Palestinian Centre for Research in Beirut (A, 257–59). He says:

'I decided to write my autobiography in your name and be present in it as the little boy who died. A piece of the Palestinian fate that would confuse even King Solomon [...]

'I came back to America and I began to write my fictitious autobiography. I didn't tell anyone about it. I locked it all up in the closet after I'd come out of it myself, you might say. And then a few days ago Larry told me that the members of the International Writing Program were going to be visiting him. I glanced absently at the list of members, and I saw my fictitious name there. Which is also your name. Take this file and see what you can do with it. Translate it, adapt it, add or subtract. But leave me in.' (A, 258–59)

Abyad's claim to the story invalidates the reader's most basic assumptions about the relationship between *Arabesques'* two narratives. Far from being a first- and second-hand account of the narrator Shammas' family history, 'The Tale' is the invention of a Palestinian-American who has never set foot in Fassuta. For Abyad, Fassuta/Palestine is literally an 'imagined community,' an imagined and virtually imaginary village which he invents as the geographic centre of the diaspora in which he lives. The picturesque scenes of village life, the episodes of magical realism, and even the 'hard history' of its final sections – the defeats of the Arab rebellion, the expulsions of 1948 – are the products of the imagination of an outsider, someone not of that place. 'The Teller,' however, is unaffected by Abyad's revelation and remains a plausibly

'factual' narrative. The reader is invited to conclude that it is the quotidian experience of life as an Israeli-Palestinian depicted in 'The Teller,' not the nostalgic and elegiac 'Palestinian/'Arab' narrative of 'The Tale,' that is the 'real' story of contemporary Palestinian Israeli experience.

Even this reading, however, cannot be taken as definitive. The reader has already been given a hint that the narrator Shammas may have had a hand in the authorship of 'The Tale' after all, when Abyad gives him permission to take the manuscript and 'see what you can do with it.' Then, in a final flourish of arabesque/modernist subversion, Shammas follows Abyad's revelation with a revelation of his own:

If Michael were the teller, he would have ended it like this: 'He opened a drawer and took a pencil and wrote on the file: My Tale. He frowned at this a moment, then he used an eraser, leaving only the single word Tale. That seemed to satisfy him.'

But maybe, out of polite arrogance, he might have finished with a paraphrase of Borges: '*Which of the two of us has written this book I do not know.*' (A, 259, emphasis added)

It now appears that because Abyad is not the 'teller' of 'The Teller' section, the only authority the reader has that the conversation between Abyad and Shammas can be taken as 'real' is that of the omnipotent narrator Shammas. The narrator Shammas' revelation thus has a circular and even disillusioning effect, for outside the world of the novel, of course, the book *is* the work of the omnipotent Shammas who is its real author. Yet the declaration also emphasizes that within the confines of the narrative, both scenarios remain equally plausible, and so the mystery of which character the novel makes responsible for its own existence cannot be resolved.

This structural upheaval relies on the work of two authors from the Euro-American modernist canon. The first reference inverts a passage from Willa Cather's 1918 novel *My Ántonia*, which reads: 'He [...] wrote across the face of the portfolio the word 'Ántonia.' He frowned at this a moment, then prefixed another word, making it 'My Ántonia.' That seemed to satisfy him' (Cather, 1995, 2). This passage has already been quoted in the original in 'The Teller,' when the narrator Shammas claims that it was an Arabic translation of Cather that inspired him to go to Iowa (A, 138–39). Its reappearance extends the arabesque's strategy of ritual repetition while also demonstrating the form's convergence with modernism's allusive intertextuality. The appropriation of these particular lines plays on the name 'Anton,' adding Shammas' narrator to the roster of the protagonists of world literature, while the erasing of the word 'my' before the word 'tale' draws the reader's attention to his narrative's collective construction and resonance, performing an inversion not only of the source text, but also of the more typically modernist emphasis on individual consciousness and autonomous self-invention. The second reference is to Jorge Luis Borges' 1957 short story, '*Borges y yo.*' The story famously posits a separation between 'Borges,' the

author's public persona, and 'I,' the 'real' Borges. The 'I' of the story laments the public Borges' 'perverse custom of falsifying and magnifying things' while at the same time conceding that it is only through the public Borges that the private one can be immortalized. However, the final line of the story, which the passage from *Arabesques* paraphrases, reads 'I do not know which one of us has written this page' (Borges, 1964, 247), reminding the reader that her only access to the 'real' Borges is through narrative and language, and that this is also the real Borges' only means of representing himself. Shammas' citation of this world-canonical writer comments wryly on the convoluted strategies of self-representation in his own text, and it complicates Borges' conceit still further by expanding his 'autobiography's' list of creators, adding the fictional Shammas and his diasporic double to the 'real' Shammas' public and private personas.

'The Tale' thus becomes the creation and the legacy of Abyad and Shammas, the Palestinian-American and the Israeli-Palestinian; it is collaborative in a way that neither Bar-On's nor the narrator Shammas' unilateral efforts to 'represent' one another manage to achieve. It is in this scene that Shammas' attempt to 'un-Jew' Hebrew literature and language, to use his own term (1989b, 10), asserts its most radical claim: that 'the cultural space of Hebrew *already* includes the Palestinian and his past, present, and future dreams' (Hochberg, 2007, 93). Shammas thus advances an *already existing* demographic imaginary in Israel/Palestine that includes not only the 'non-Jewish Israeli,' but all Palestinians, at a time when the single-state vision endorsed by the PLO had come to seem unachievable, and current articulations of a 'one-state solution' had not yet begun to emerge. In making this claim, *Arabesques* refuses the notion that the plight of Israeli-Palestinians can be addressed in isolation from the larger question of Palestine. The narrator's abiding connection to Abyad insists, as Judith Butler has recently written, that in Israel/Palestine 'the relation between the quasi citizen, the subject of colonial occupation, and the exile are internally linked and that mechanisms exist for the conversion into ever more extreme forms of dispossession' (2012, 212). Shammas' fellow Palestinian Israeli novelist Sayed Kashua has portrayed this existential precarity starkly in his novel *Ya-yehi boker* (2004, Eng. *Let It Be Morning*, 2006), in which the residents of the village of Tira wake up one morning to learn that they have been denationalized and transferred to the new Palestinian state: 'I think we're Palestinian now,' the narrator says blankly to his wife (2006, 266). But Abyad's view from the Palestinian diaspora is also a reminder, as Butler also argues, that there is a homology between the contemporary Palestinian experience of statelessness and dispossession and the Jewish history of *galut* (exile). Both make it possible to extrapolate from specific histories of collective persecution and displacement to a principled commitment to the protection of the rights of all minorities and refugees (Butler, 2012, 214–15). In this regard, Bar-On's sardonic use of the phrase 'my Jew' to describe the narrator Shammas invokes Abyad just as much as Shammas. By including all three of these protagonists in the hard work of

creating a history, Shammas allows their 'narratives' to exist alongside one another, and he allows them their mutual antagonism and discord, just as their 'narrators' must have in any fully inclusive and democratic future polity.

At the same time, by demonstrating that an ethno-religious understanding of what it means to be an Israeli (or a Palestinian, as Shammas makes clear in Grossman's transcript of his debate with Yehoshua) need not, and indeed, already does not determine the demographic make-up of the state, Shammas makes it possible to replace that understanding of the nation with a more inclusive and horizontal definition based on political consent, not biological descent (Sollors, 1986). This is something that none of the other authors considered in this study, no matter how utopian their vision, have been able to articulate. Yet for Shammas, his position is simply the logical extension of Israel's self-description as a democratic state. In a 1983 essay, citing a Knesset proposal to reward 'positive elements' of the Israeli-Palestinian community while punishing the 'negative ones,' he writes, 'If the attitude towards the Arabs of Israel has been fixed along the gun-sights of that committee, why then was my generation deluded into imagining that we were to be the bridge to coexistence?' (1983, 38, 40). Through the act of narration, Shammas asserts his place as an Israeli writer with as much right to speak out about the Israeli society that is his home ground as any figure at the centre of Jewish Israeli culture. This is a position, A. B. Yehoshua finally admits, that he himself is not yet willing to take up. His final assessment of Shammas seems almost wistful:

Anton is a kind of bird that has come here from some period fifty years hence [...] a soul born too early that passed by us on his way. It could be that what he's saying now will then be much more relevant and comprehensible to us, and I'll seem outdated, living in the past. I can only hope it will be so. (Grossman, 1993, 275)

In the decades since *Arabesques*' publication, its conclusions may seem even more 'disappointingly' utopian, as Feldman puts it, than they once did (1999b, 376). Yet the failure of its realization should not be seen as an invalidation of its vision. *Arabesques* seeks to imagine a different kind of Israeli/Palestinian polity, one in which the already existing relationality of Palestinians, Israelis, and Palestinian-Israelis is affirmed, and more equal ways of living together can be openly pursued. The Israel/Palestine that *Arabesques* imagines is analogous to the archway of the classical Arab house, as Shammas describes it: it 'binds and consolidates all the elements of structure into one entity, from which the removal of a single component part may jeopardize the whole' (Shammas, 1987, 23). In this sense, *Arabesques* is a nationalist novel, though the nation it champions does not yet exist.

Notes and references

Notes to Introduction

- 1 I am referring to Gayatri Spivak's well-known use of the phrase (Spivak, 2003, 61; 2006, 359).
- 2 See Philo and Berry (2011) for an excellent empirical study of popular perceptions of the conflict in the UK and US.
- 3 I use the name 'Israel/Palestine' throughout the book to refer collectively to the region comprising Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza from the founding of the Israeli state in May 1948 to the present day.
- 4 In the years after Said wrote these lines, many memoirs of the siege of Beirut were published, and some of them were translated into English: Mahmoud Darwish's *Dhākira lil-nisyān* (1987, Eng. *Memory for Forgetfulness*, 1995) is perhaps the best internationally known.
- 5 I am drawing on Fredric Jameson's (1986) use of the term 'third-world,' as I discuss in more detail below and in Chapter 1.
- 6 I use the word 'metropolitan' throughout this book to refer to what is colloquially described as 'the West,' meaning the global metropolises of Western Europe, especially Britain, and the United States. This usage excludes Israel, in contrast to Jameson's designation of the country, with South Africa, as 'new kinds of metropolitan centers' (1990, 48). While I agree that the Israeli state functions as a metropolitan centre in its local context, on a global scale it serves as a 'client regime' of American empire (Abu-Manneh, 2006, 44), rather than a global metropole in its own right.
- 7 On the reception of Steven Spielberg's *Munich* (2005) and *Waltz with Bashir*, see Salaita (2011). These films are part of a recent upsurge in the production and circulation of documentary and fictional films about Israel/Palestine in the metropolitan countries. For an overview of Palestinian and Israeli film history, see Dabashi (2006) and Shohat (2010), respectively.
- 8 Small presses publishing PROTA and other translations from Arabic include al-Saqi, Interlink, Three Continents, and Garnet; university presses include

- Texas, California, Columbia, and the American University in Cairo. On the Oslo-era politics of Jayyusi's 1992 anthology, see Hassan (2003).
- 9 For a comprehensive list of Arabic writing in translation to 2005 and an overview of the increase in translations from Arabic since the 1980s, see Altoma (2005) and Tresilian (2008, 25–29).
 - 10 Some 5,000 people were killed or wounded between 2000 and 2004, most of them civilians, and more than 80% of them Palestinians (Khalidi, 2006, 204–5). On the post-9/11 'counterterror' links between Israel and the US, see Khalidi (2002), Mansour (2002), and Hajar (2006).
 - 11 These memoirs might be considered a subset of a broader category of autobiographical narrative from and about Palestine, which in this instance emerges from a Palestinian professional class. There are also several collections of Palestinian refugee testimony published in English, including Lynd, Lynd, and Bahour (1997), Slyomovics (1998), and Peteet (2005), as well as numerous memoirs and diaries by international activists based in Palestine, such as Corrie (2008) and Arrigoni (2010).
 - 12 See, for instance, Bragg (2000). For a challenge to Oz's reputation as a man of the left, see Laor (2010), and Chapter 4, this volume.
 - 13 For an overview of the publication history of the translation of Hebrew texts into English in the UK and Ireland, see Donahaye (2011). It is worth noting that the group of internationally circulated writers that I am describing is not perfectly coincident with those that are most domestically popular. For instance, Meir Shalev, who was voted Israel's favourite writer in a 2005 poll conducted by Ynet – although Grossman, Oz, Yehoshua, Keret, and Castel-Bloom all appeared in the top ten (Menhaim, 2005) – has nothing like Oz's metropolitan profile, and much of his work has not been translated into English.
 - 14 For a comprehensive discussion of Darwish's significance and legacy, in the context of Palestinian, Arabic, and world poetry, see the essays collected in Nassar and Rahman (2008) and Bernard and Elmarsafy (2012). On Kanafani, the most important analysis in English remains Siddiq's (1984).
 - 15 The only writer from a Mizrahi background that I include is Orly Castel-Bloom, who is not normally identified in these terms (her parents were Francophone Egyptian Jews). Several novels by Israel's best-known Mizrahi writers, the Iraq-born Sami Michael and Shimon Ballas, are available in English, but for the most part Mizrahi writing has not attracted the same degree of metropolitan attention as the texts considered in this book; most work remains untranslated from Hebrew, or, in the case of the Iraqi-Israeli writer Samir Naqqash, from Arabic. Ammiel Alcalay's excellent anthology of Mizrahi writing in English translation, *Keys to the Garden* (1996), is an important exception to this rule: it includes poems and prose by Albert Swissa, Erez Bitton, Sami Shalom Chetrit, and others.
 - 16 See, for example, the discussions of national narration in Loomba (2005, 156–76) and McLeod (2010, 80–89).
 - 17 For a summary and critique of influential theorists who have promoted the idea of nationalism as a dominatory formation – Spivak and Bhabha foremost among them – see Hallward (2001, 126–32) and Chrisman (2004, 188–92). Notable efforts to theorize the idea of national narration less pejoratively

- include Sommer (1991), Schwarz (1992), Lazarus (1990) and (1999), Larsen (2001), and Szeman (2003).
- 18 For a concise assessment of the 'materialist turn,' see Murphy (2007, 181–89). The case for the continuing relevance of the idea of the nation for literary and cultural studies has been powerfully articulated by Brennan (1997), Chrisman (2004), Gopal (2005), Larsen (2001), Lazarus (1999), and Parry (2004b), among others.
- 19 López and Marzec claim, in the course of this argument, that postcolonial studies has privileged 'explicitly oppositional or nativist fictions' by writers like Chinua Achebe and Aimé Césaire over texts that have 'a more cosmopolitan and even ambivalent relationship to the colonial,' like the work of V. S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott (2010, 680). Yet this claim hardly matches my own sense of Naipaul and Walcott's prominence in the field, and it also fails to acknowledge these writers' canonical status in the wider literary field as Nobel Prize winners. More seriously, by resorting to the charge of 'easy binary thinking,' López and Marzec disregard Brennan's reminder, more than a decade previously, that the 'dichotomy and binary almost universally deplored' is better thought of as 'a careful exclusion' in anticolonial nationalist struggles; it does not 'emphasize the disparate because it would not then, in that project, have led to more than the impossibility of doing' (1997, 2–3).
- 20 On Zionism as a settler-colonial movement, see Shafir (1996), Masalha (1997), Pappé (2004), and Veracini (2006) and (2010), among others. On the alliance between Zionism and American imperialism, see Abu-Manneh (2006) and Khalidi (2013), among others.
- 21 On the 'boom' novelists' responses to the literature of Latin American independence, see Sommer (1991, 1–7). Priyamvada Gopal points out that in fact, *Midnight's Children* incorporates both metafictional and historiographical features, but critics have tended to privilege the former at the expense of the latter: 'much less attention has been paid to *Midnight's Children's* sense of itself as a historical account, a committed historiography of India that offers a serious and *substantive* alternative to official histories of the subcontinent' (2009, 101).
- 22 Chaudhuri is presumably referring to James' description of *War and Peace* as a 'large, loose baggy monster' (1962, 84).
- 23 See George (1999, 117). The phrase, as George notes, is Partha Chatterjee's (1986, 51).
- 24 See Stein (2008, 10–11, 33–34) on the significance of the *tiyyul*. The Sinai was under Israeli control from 1967 to 1979; the novel's action in the Sinai takes place during the 1973 war.
- 25 Shehadeh (2007) and Weizman (2007) offer two very different but equally powerful accounts of Israeli control of space in the West Bank, while Shafir and Peled (2002) and Yiftachel (2006) provide useful accounts of the 'stratification' of citizenship (Shafir and Peled, 2002, 7) in Israel and the Palestinian territories. For a detailed analysis of the representation of spatial division in Hebrew literature, see Grumberg (2011).
- 26 For uses following Lockman, see Pappé (2004, xx, 12); Stein and Swedenburg (2005, 9); Beinín (2005, 20); Krämer (2008, xi); and Stein (2008, 15). Ella Shohat also draws on the concept of 'relationality,' but she conceives of it in terms of processes of cultural translation, travelling theory, and transnational solidarity

- (2006b, 2), rather than the localized histories of interactions between groups that Anderson and Lockman are describing.
- 27 On the case for the 'one-state solution,' see Tilley (2005) and Abunimah (2006).
 - 28 See, among others, Hagnebi, Machover, and Orr (1971), Rodinson (2001 [1973]), Kimmerling (1983), Said (1992), Shafir (1996), Abu-Manneh (2006), and Veracini (2006).
 - 29 For overviews of the history of the Palestinian nationalist movement, see Khalidi (2006) and (2010), Farsoun and Aruri (2006), and Sayigh (1999).
 - 30 On the relationship between Palestine and postcolonial studies, see Hassan (2001), Williams (2010), and Ball (2012). Scholars who have contributed to the visibility of Israel/Palestine in postcolonial studies include Gil Hochberg, Smadar Lavie, Joseph Massad, Ella Shohat, Rebecca Stein, and, of course, Edward Said.

Notes to Chapter 1: Reading for the Nation

- 1 Huggan is responding to the same passage from Ahmad (1992, 217), which was written in response to a tendentiously interpreted excerpt from Said's essay 'Figurations, Configurations, Transfigurations.' Said argues that 'our philological home is the world, and not the nation or even the individual writer [...] it is little short of Panglossian to assume that the careful reading of a relatively small number of works designated as humanistically, professionally or aesthetically significant is much more than a private activity with some slender public consequences' (1990a, 15). Ahmad would seem to be more in agreement with Said than he lets on.
- 2 For an account of 'world literature' as a combined and uneven 'literature of the world system,' see the work of the Warwick Research Collective: <<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/collective/>>.
- 3 See Bhabha (1994, 236), Hall (1993, 401). Here I am summarizing an argument made by Rebecca Stein, who lists examples of several other writers who make similar moves, including Anne McClintock (Stein, 2005, 331). See also Hassan (2001, 29–34). Joseph Massad, who identifies Bhabha with the 'right wing of postcolonial studies,' lambasts him for disavowing Said's politics after his death (2010, 40–42).
- 4 Otherwise comprehensive overviews of the field that make little or no mention of Palestine include Loomba (2005), McLeod (2007, 2010), and Schwarz and Ray (2004). Robert Young mentions Palestine five times in his work *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001), but in each instance it is as part of a list of examples, rather than a case study in its own right. A notable exception is Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (1987), which grounds its argument in the work of Ghassan Kanafani. Recent work by Ball (2012) and several other scholars is also beginning to counter this trend.
- 5 The great British-Lebanese historian Albert Hourani wrote about him more than a decade before Said, in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (1981, 193–234); Said cites his account (1994a, 299). An exception is the chapter devoted to Antonius in Geoffrey Nash's *The Arab Writer in English* (1998).
- 6 For an account of the formation of this group and its challenge to Zionism as

- a form of colonialism, which developed under the influence of the Palestinian Trotskyist Jabra Nicola, see Greenstein (2011, 39–44). For English translations of the group's work, see Bober (1972), Rothschild (2001), and Machover (2011).
- 7 For discussions of the response to Anglo-American postcolonial theory in the Israeli academy, see Shohat (2006a) and Pappé (2010).
 - 8 See also Williams, who describes its exclusion from the field as 'one of the triumphs of the Israeli propaganda machine in convincing postcolonial scholars that they are not in fact witnessing a particularly brutal, if belated, form of colonialism' (2010, 91).
 - 9 See Massad (2006, 13–40) and Shohat (2006a), among others.
 - 10 The following section draws on the introduction to my essay 'Reading for the Nation: "Third-World Literature" and Israel/Palestine' (Bernard, 2011).
 - 11 For some of the critical responses to Jameson that followed Ahmad, see George (1999, 101–30), Prakash (1990), and Spivak (2003, 55–56).
 - 12 Joseph Slaughter also distinguishes between national allegory as a reading and writing practice, though in somewhat different terms, arguing that the latter practice has the potential to become 'a legitimate novelistic institution of republican representation' (2007, 268). For a related argument, see Brennan (1990). The distinction between the two is also germane to the history of allegory proper: Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck argue that while the Greeks saw allegory as a mode of interpretation only, in the Roman period '[a]llegoria came to denote a form of writing as well as a form of reading' (2010, 4).
 - 13 I am extrapolating from a point made by Nicholas Brown, who writes: 'In fact, the mode of reading recommended by Jameson for Third-World literature as "social allegory" (85) is not substantially different from the mode of interpretation as "socially symbolic act" that he recommends for European texts in *The Political Unconscious*. Rather, the difference is one of consciousness, which Jameson's invocation of the master-slave dialectic is meant to establish as largely the positional matter of where one stands in relation to Capital' (2005, 8).
 - 14 Interestingly, Michael Gluzman argues that turn-of-the-century Hebrew literature written in Europe can be read as 'Third World,' since it is marginalized in comparison with dominant European literatures of the period (English, French, German). Gluzman offers the usual criticisms of Jameson's generalizations, but insists that the idea of national allegory is 'immensely useful for describing Hebrew literature's route to modernity' (2003, 30).
 - 15 This includes 'left Zionist' (Oz, Grossman) and anti-Zionist writers (Oz Shelach, Shimon Ballas), though the latter respond much more antagonistically to this demand. For the purposes of the comparison I am making, writing by Palestinian citizens of Israel (most famously Emil Habibi, Anton Shammas, and Sayed Kashua) might sometimes be described as responding to the challenge of representing a Palestinian national consciousness, and sometimes a non- or anti-Zionist Israeli one, depending in part on the language in which they write (Arabic for Habibi, Hebrew for Shammas and Kashua). I address this issue in more detail in my discussion of Shammas' work in Chapter 6.
 - 16 There are notable exceptions. For instance, Shimon Ballas' novel *Ye-hu 'aḥer* (1991, Eng. *Outcast*, 2007) does not refuse the notion of collectivity, but instead represents it outside the framework of Zionism: the action is set in Iraq in the 1940s and '80s, and the novel is narrated by an Iraqi Jew who is an Arab

- secular nationalist, not a Zionist. See also Gluzman on the resistance among turn-of-the-century Hebrew writers to the idea of a committed literature (*sifrut meguyyaset*), which he notes derived more from the Russian than the French context, even as the production of Hebrew literature was seen as an essential part of nation building (2003, 6–7).
- 17 Jarad Zimler points to 'the view, predominant in the South African literary field, especially during the later years of apartheid, that literature was not literature unless it was politically committed; unless, that is, it engaged with and critiqued the injustices of the apartheid regime. If it was not political in this way, literary production could be regarded at best as an exercise in escapism and irrelevance' (2009, 604). See also Attridge (2004).
 - 18 Imre Szeman makes this point in more general terms, citing Jameson's 'Third-World Literature' essay: 'literature that is *explicitly* nationalist [... is] not just 'conscious and overt' in comparison with the 'unconscious' allegories of first-world cultural texts (TWL 79–80), but *conscious of this consciousness*' (2003, 60).
 - 19 On the academic currency of the new, see Elliott (2006). Another form of disavowal is to describe work one disagrees with as 'bad scholarship': American scholars whose work on Israel/Palestine has been attacked on these grounds include Norman Finkelstein, Nadia Abu El-Haj, Joseph Massad, and, of course, Edward Said.
 - 20 A number of works of scholarship on Israel/Palestine published in the last decade present an emphasis on 'dialogue' and 'complexity' as a new critical approach: see, for instance, Brenner (2003) and Rotberg (2006). For a critique of the critical fetishization of 'complexity,' see Brennan (1997, 71, 105–9). On the renunciation of antagonism in postcolonial studies, see Parry (2004b), especially the essays 'Signs of the Times' and 'Liberation Theory.'
 - 21 Sternhell makes no reference to the work of the Israeli Socialist Organization (*Matzpen*), whose members, as I noted above, wrote extensively about Zionism as a form of colonialism in the 1960s and '70s. He instead makes the common error of crediting this idea to the 'post-Zionist' academics of the 1980s (see also Abu-Manneh, 2006, 36–37).
 - 22 Norman Finkelstein has recently argued that the American public *has* reached a tipping point in what they 'know' about Israeli human rights violations, which is reflected in decreasing levels of support for Israel among Americans and especially American Jews (2012). For a sceptical response to the political optimism of this argument, see Shalom (2013).
 - 23 Said makes a similar point two years later in *After the Last Sky* (first published in 1986): 'For it is not as if no one speaks about or portrays the Palestinians. The difficulty is that everyone, including the Palestinians themselves, speaks a very great deal. A huge body of literature has grown up, most of it polemical, accusatory, denunciatory. At this point, no one writing about Palestine – and indeed, no one going to Palestine – starts from scratch [...] Yet, for all the writing about them, Palestinians remain virtually unknown' (1999a, 4).
 - 24 See, for instance, Jeffrey Michels' 1994 essay 'National Vision and the Negotiation of Narratives: The Oslo Agreement,' which seeks to refute Said by arguing that the Declaration of Principles 'legitimizes the Palestinian narrative and paves the way for future reconciliation' (30). The ten-page essay uses the word 'narrative' seventy-eight times.

- 25 Interestingly, since Rotberg has published extensively on Southern Africa, his proposal undercuts the South African precedent of undergoing a process of cultural reconciliation *after* a settlement is reached – as suggested, incidentally, in the unofficial Israeli-Palestinian Geneva accord of 2003 ('Geneva Accord,' 2004, 101). Ali Abunimah makes a similar point: 'Peace cannot require Palestinians to acquiesce to the denial of what was done to them. Neither can it require Israeli Jews to view their own presence in Palestine as illegitimate or change their belief in their right to live there because of ancient historical and spiritual ties' (2006, 8).
- 26 For a fuller version of this argument, see Bernard (2012).
- 27 For an exploration of how this idea of the state might be put to use in contemporary literary criticism, see Marx (2008) and (2011).
- 28 This is not to say that the idea of American citizenship goes uncontested in contemporary fiction. On the contrary, texts that emphasize the plight of ethnic and other minority citizens and non-citizen immigrants in the US explicitly seek to redefine existing legal and social norms of citizenship, as a number of recent books have shown: see Knadler (2010), Jun (2011), and Russell (2011).
- 29 Influential theorists behind this shift include Benhabib (2004), Butler (2004), and Hardt and Negri (2001). For an overview of the idea of 'global citizenship,' see Cabrera (2010).
- 30 Davis is adding to T. H. Marshall's classic trio of rights: 'material rights' means access to the resources of the state.
- 31 Arendt's work on Zionism is collected in *The Jewish Writings* (2007); see especially 'Antisemitism,' 'The Crisis of Zionism,' and 'Zionism Reconsidered.' Judith Butler argues that the displacement of Palestinians in 1948 compelled Arendt to develop a 'more comprehensive account of statelessness,' one not limited to Europe or to European Jews (2007). On Arendt's critique of Zionism, see also Piterberg (2008), Rose (2005; 2007).
- 32 Slaughter notes that Marx made the same observation a century before Arendt in 'On the Jewish Question,' by noting the split, in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, between the individual member of civil society and the juridical person (Slaughter, 2007, 12–13).
- 33 See Benhabib (2003), Piterberg (2008), Raz-Krakotzkin (2001), Rose (2005; 2007), among others.
- 34 For a fuller account of the ethnic stratification of Israeli citizenship, see Shafir and Peled (2002); for a more radical analysis that names Israel as an 'ethnocracy,' see Yiftachel, who explicitly positions his work as a rebuttal to that of Shafir and Peled (2006, 85–99).
- 35 See, among many other organizations, the work of al-Haq (www.alhaq.org).
- 36 The Israeli-Palestinian legal organization Adalah, in their 'Democratic Constitution,' names this as the 'primary constitutional question' of an Israeli constitution (2007, 3). See also Butler (2007).
- 37 This meaning of citizenship continues to hold sway in Israel, where in March 2011 the Knesset passed a law that makes it possible to revoke the citizenship of Israelis convicted of espionage, treason, or aiding the enemy, an act that was correctly seen as targeting Israel's Palestinian citizens (the original proposal was that any citizen who challenged the definition of Israel as a Jewish state could be stripped of his or her citizenship). It has been deployed somewhat

- differently by the Palestinian Authority, which, in the absence of a sovereign state, has used Palestinian citizenship as a ceremonial form of recognition for international supporters, including the activists on the 2010 Gaza flotilla, the Italian activist Vittorio Arigoni (assassinated in Gaza in April 2011), and Daniel Barenboim, the Argentinean-Israeli conductor and activist, who now holds triple citizenship.
- 38 For a recent example of this usage of the idea of a ‘demographic problem,’ see Taub (2010, 13). On Palestinian expulsion as a form of ethnic cleansing, see Masalha (1992) and Pappé (2006).
- 39 Larsen goes on to draw a suggestive distinction between ‘first-world’ and ‘third-world’ novels’ use of biographical form, through a comparison of Henry James and his contemporary, the Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis. For James’ protagonist Catherine Sloper in *Washington Square*, New York can be reduced to a ‘topographical parenthesis’ because Catherine’s ‘own “biographical form” is *already* the mediation of this (metonymically) national time/space,’ denoting ‘the existence of a definite, historically evolved form of narrative *socius* as biographical form.’ But for Machado’s Bento in *Dom Casmurro*, biographical form becomes a form of “‘*biographical parenthesis*” in relation to a national topology that almost possesses biographical features of its own’ (2001, 182–83). The national topology for Machado is exaggerated and explicitly marked: it is ‘conscious and overt,’ not already given or assumed.

Notes to Chapter 2: Exile and Liberation: Edward Said's *Out of Place*

- 1 The Lebanese academic Fawwaz Traboulsi published an Arabic translation of the memoir in 2000, *Khārij al-makān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb). Said notes in ‘The Hazards of Publishing a Memoir’ (Said, 1999c) that he signed the contract for the memoir with his publisher in 1989, not long after *After the Last Sky* was published, but that for personal and professional reasons it was delayed. During this period he was still publishing essays about Palestine, including his regular column in the Egyptian English-language weekly *Al-Ahram*, and working on *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004) and *On Late Style* (2006), which were published posthumously.
- 2 See, for instance, his 1999 essay ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ (Said, 2002a, 312–21).
- 3 Haroon Siddiqui notes that Weiner went to *Commentary* with the article only after the *New Republic* had insisted Weiner check the galleys of *Out of Place* before submitting it (2004, 222).
- 4 For defences of Said, see Hitchens (1999), Cockburn (1999), Elon (1999), and Said’s own self-defence (1999b). For defences of Weiner, see Halkin (1999), Krauthammer (1999), and Pryce-Jones (1999).
- 5 See, among others, Armstrong (2003, 100), Confino (2000, 191), Luca (2006, 138–40), Marrouchi (2004, 147–58), and Gindi (2000, 293–96).
- 6 Said repeatedly uses this phrase to describe his approach to colonial writers like Conrad and Camus. In the title of his posthumous book, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (2006), the phrase refers to an artistic methodology rather than a critical one, naming what Said sees, after Adorno,

- as the resistance to reconciliation in the work of Beethoven, Cafavy, and a slew of other artists.
- 7 On the memoir's representation of exile and the idea of the intellectual in relation to Said's scholarship, see Marrouchi (2004, 158–70), Confino (2000), and Luca (2006).
 - 8 He makes the criticism himself in 'Reflections on Exile': 'Paris may be a capital famous for cosmopolitan exiles, but it is also a city where unknown men and women have spent years of miserable loneliness: Vietnamese, Algerians, Cambodians, Lebanese, Senegalese, Peruvians' (2002c, 176).
 - 9 See also Parry, who cites Jameson's description of Adorno's 'negative dialectics': 'a negative dialectic has no choice but to affirm the notion and value of an ultimate synthesis, while negating its possibility and reality in every concrete case that comes before it' (Jameson, 1971, 56; qtd. Parry, 2010, 504). Admittedly, in 'Reflections on Exile' Said is a little less careful with Adorno's fragment: here, he *does* stop at the line 'it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home,' though he cryptically describes it as voiced with a 'grave irony' (2002c, 184).
 - 10 The notion of point and counterpoint bears an obvious relationship to thesis and antithesis, even if Said refused to describe or conceive of it as such. Parry sees the contrapuntal as an inadequate substitute for the dialectic, since it assumes a "static" positioning of poles' which cannot do the same work of thinking about the transformative confrontations between antagonistic social practices (2010, 507). Brennan also queries Said's failure to engage in any sustained way with dialectics, but, unlike Parry, he argues that Said's reliance on a left Hegelian lineage, as represented by his frequent reference to thinkers like Fanon, Williams, Gramsci, Goldmann, and Auerbach, 'cannot be in doubt' (2005, 418). Brennan suggests that the term 'contrapuntal' was actually devised as an alternative to the then ascendant notion of hybridity, 'conjuring images more of independently directed harmonizations and contacts than of mixtures and mutual complicity' (2005, 411).
 - 11 The identification of Said with a non-aligned left humanism is Lazarus'; he suggests that 'it is in the context of a debate between what we might call *aligned* and *non-aligned* leftisms that Said's work is likely to prove most energising and illuminating in the years to come' (2011a, 203).
 - 12 The claim draws on Jameson's earlier gloss, in *Marxism and Form*, of Walter Benjamin's notion of allegory (Jameson, 1971, 72). Benjamin is reversing the Romantic perception of the symbol as organic and allegory as mechanistic, although ironically, 'what Romantic aesthetic theory embraced in the concept of the "symbol" was nothing less than Neoplatonic allegorical thought' (Copeland and Struck, 2010, 9).
 - 13 On the biographical tradition in Arabic literature, see Fay (2001).
 - 14 Aboul-Ela links the memoir's confessionalism to the rise of the confessional memoir in American pop culture in the 1990s, but this seems something of a stretch; the 'confessions' Said offers are tame by the standards of Mary Karr's *The Liars' Club* (1995), which Aboul-Ela uses as a point of comparison (2006, 24–25).
 - 15 See also my discussion of Rancière in Chapter 1.
 - 16 Said explains that his father was born with the name Wadie, and at some point in his life changed his name to William, a name which, Said writes,

- 'soon appeared to me suspiciously like a case of assumed identity, with the name Wadie cast aside except by his wife and sister for not very creditable reasons' (*OP*, 6).
- 17 In Arabic, Said's first name is written as 'Idwār,' with French rather than English inflection.
 - 18 Said's sister Jean makes similar observations about her name at the beginning of her memoir: 'My name is Jean, and in my name lies my history. I was named after my father's mother, Hanneh Shamma, but my name was anglicized. Naming me after his mother was, for my father, an act of devotion and affirmation. Anglicizing her name, however, was an act of repudiation: like so many Arab men of his generation, my father saw the future as lying in Europe or America [...] In anglicizing the name that he bestowed on me, he showed his belief that my future lay, hidden, curled up, unborn, in the English language' (2005, 27).
 - 19 Ashcroft and Ahluwalia claim that Said 'promotes affiliation as a general critical principle,' and that he sees affiliation 'positively' as a way of identifying the worldly networks in which literary texts are situated (2009, 24–25). Rosemary Marangoly George goes still further, claiming that Said 'approves of' the transition from filiation to affiliation (1999, 207n12), and criticizing him (mistakenly) for posing filiative bonds as 'natural' and affiliative bonds as 'artificial' when 'both filiations and affiliations are learned, created, recalled and/or forgotten' (1999, 17). Interestingly, Hallward and Lazarus, who generally read Said's work very differently from these critics, also see affiliation as positive for Said: Hallward describes it as 'distanced' and 'self-reflexive,' as opposed to the 'blind adherence' of filiation (2001, 53), and Lazarus associates it with the 'affiliative ties of political participation, solidarity, and community' that compensate for the ostracism of the dissident (2011a, 201).
 - 20 Said's sister Jean offers an instructive point of comparison: in her memoir, she recalls her resentment of Edward for not being made to sew, as she and her sisters were (Makdisi, 2005, 99).
 - 21 It is worth noting the rather dismissive tone here of Said's account of his own work as a teacher and critic, which seems to suggest that literary scholarship is inherently an uncontroversial and apolitical activity. For an account of Said's ambivalent attitude towards the social value of academic work, see Harrison (2013).
 - 22 This formulation does not exclude commitment to a social movement, though its lionization of the 'lonely condition' of the activist intellectual (1994b, xviii) arguably makes it harder to imagine. See Lazarus (2011a, 200–2) and Hallward (2001, 56–61).
 - 23 Said's description of the struggle as 'uncooptable' comes from the original text of the 1979 edition of *The Question of Palestine*. After Oslo, his assessment was to become much bleaker: he would observe in *Al-Ahram* in 2000 that 'no other liberation group in history has sold itself to its enemies like this' (2002a, 345).
 - 24 See, among others, Shehadeh (2002), Turki (1972), and Hany Abu-Assad's film *al-Janna al-'ān* (*Paradise Now*, 2005).
 - 25 Said's attendance at St George's is, not surprisingly, one of Weiner's primary targets, since it represents a period of residence in Jerusalem. Weiner claims that Said's name does not appear in the school's registry and that a Jewish

- classmate of Said's, David Ezra, who makes a brief appearance in *Out of Place* (111–12), does not remember him. Said counters that Weiner does not acknowledge that the school's records end in 1946, whereas he was a student there in 1947, and that he did not bother to contact any other teachers or classmates (1999b).
- 26 Said's sister Jean corroborates this account, but adds an identitarian dimension: 'I think of Auntie Nabiha as quintessentially Palestinian, not only in a nationalist sense, but in another more mysterious and even mystical way. For I have ever heard the names of Palestinian towns and villages in her voice; the geography of our ancestral land sings in my memory in her voice' (Makdisi, 2005, 57).
- 27 In the introduction to *The Politics of Dispossession*, Said is more explicit about the collective nature of this epiphany: 'Friends I had known in America during the 1950s, usually as fellow-students, were suddenly galvanized into new and highly politicized activity [...] Those of us who were concerned sought each other out across the oceans and despite years of silence' (1995, xiv–xv).
- 28 Hallward suggests that Said's ambivalence on this point in *Culture and Imperialism* in particular puts 'the PLO and other national liberation movements in an almost impossible position' (2001, 56). Lazarus also notes that Said 'doesn't quite nail his own colours to the mast,' making it unclear in some of his literary criticism whether he sees the era of liberation as over and done with, even though we know from his Palestinian activism and his identification with Fanon, Césaire and others that he did not (2011a, 185).
- 29 On his critique of the Palestinian leadership, see Said (2002a, xxv–xxvi).

Notes to Chapter 3: 'Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction': Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*

- 1 A few of Barghouti's poems had appeared in English translation before *I Saw Ramallah* was published, in Salma Khadra Jayyusi's PROTA-funded anthology *Modern Arabic Poetry* (1987), but *I Saw Ramallah* was his first book-length publication in English. Barghouti's collections available in English translation at the time of writing are *A Small Sun* (2003c) and *Midnight and Other Poems* (2008a). A sequel to *I Saw Ramallah*, entitled *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* appeared in Arabic in 2009 and in English in 2011.
- 2 The publication of an English translation by the American University in Cairo Press is awarded to all winners of the Naguib Mahfouz Medal.
- 3 See Galford (2001), Paulin (2004), and Shlaim (2004).
- 4 Part of Ashrawi's dissertation was published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Ashrawi, 1978).
- 5 Salah D. Hassan notes that Jayyusi's introduction to the *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature* espouses 'a rather reactionary position' by using 'modernism' and 'avant-garde' as 'code words for stylistically mature writing' (2003, 20).
- 6 Barghouti uses both '*al-manfā*' and '*al-ghurba*,' which mean 'exile' or 'estrangement,' to describe the experience of individual and collective displacement.
- 7 The Arabic reads: 'But the difference inheres [*takmun*, lit. "hides"] in this:

strange cities do not stay [*ta'ūd*, lit. "return"] completely strange [*al-mufāraqa takmun fī ann al-mudun al-gharība lā ta'ūd gharībatan tamāman*]. Life dictates that the stranger adapt every day. This can be difficult at the beginning, but it becomes less difficult with the passage of days and years. Life is not pleased by [*lā yū'jibuhā*] the grumbling of the living' (2008b, 157, my translation).

- 8 For an evaluation of the role of these and other local newspapers in constructing Palestinian national consciousness (in addition and in opposition to Arab nationalism), see Khalidi (1997, 119–44).
- 9 Literally, 'our pains and our suffering'; the two words share the same root. Soueif's use of the word 'catastrophe' in the English translation implies a link to the *nakba* of 1948 which does not appear in the original phrasing.

Notes to Chapter 4: 'Israel is not South Africa': Amos Oz's Living Utopias

- 1 Oz frequently makes this claim: see, for instance, Oz (1994b, 69, 115; 2006b, 3).
- 2 On Oz's frequent reference to 'compromise,' see Cleary (2002, 163), Rose (1996, 34).
- 3 See Oz (2003) and 'Geneva Accord' (2004). Yerach Gover notes that the founding of Peace Now was a direct response to Likud's assumption of power in 1977 (1994, 40); the Geneva Accord, similarly, was a response to the policies of the Sharon government, particularly the attacks on the West Bank in 2002 ('Geneva Accord,' 2004, 81–82), which I will return to in the next chapter.
- 4 In one of the earliest (and still among the few) English-language monographs on Oz's work, Avraham Balaban argues that Oz's 'psychological ideas,' which Balaban sees as Jungian, shape his political views as well as his fiction: 'His explanations of the lasting Arab-Israeli conflict (tribal fears projected on each other by the vying parties; each party creates its own "shadow") are a direct extension of his Jungian worldview and terminology' (1993, 7).
- 5 See the introduction to Alan Mintz's *Translating Israel* (2001) for a discussion of metropolitan readers' presumed assumption that modern Hebrew literature is beyond their frame of reference, with a particular focus on the lack of interest in this literature among an American Jewish readership.
- 6 Cleary is characterizing this assessment of Oz, not endorsing it himself. Schillinger, on the other hand, in another *New York Times* review, echoes the terms that Oz uses to describe his own work by describing the 'understanding of "the other"' as Oz's career-long project.
- 7 For a discussion of the origins and import of this phrase, see Grumberg (2011, 49n13). Laor makes a similar claim about the international role of the Zionist left (2010, 40); Moshe Machover goes one step further, noting that left Zionism plays a much more important role in Euro-US politics than in Israeli politics (2011, xiv).
- 8 See especially Cleary (2002), Laor (2001; 2010), Piterberg (2008), and Makdisi (2011).
- 9 For useful discussions of the work of these writers, see Alcalay (1993) and Hochberg (2007).

- 10 'The Author' is the protagonist of the late work *Haruzey ha-hayyim ye-ha-mayet* (2007, Eng. *Rhyming Life and Death*, 2009), a self-consciously metafictional account of a jaded mid-career writer. Other fictional versions of Oz include Proffy, the chauvinistic child narrator of *Panter ba-martef* (1995, Eng. *Panther in the Basement*, 1997); Yonatan, the agonized second-generation kibbutznik of *A Perfect Peace* (1985); and Theo, the middle-aged male protagonist of *'Al tagidi laylah* (1994, Eng. *Don't Call It Night*, 1995), as I discuss in more detail below.
- 11 On the construction of the development towns as a means of consolidating Jewish Israeli control over the Negev (Naqab) desert, see Rouhana and Sultany (2003).
- 12 Cleary also notes that in Oz's work 'the contemporary political stresses of Israeli society are converted into narratives of psychological distress,' but he reads this as the 'literary objective correlative' of Oz's political views, rather than a carefully crafted literary (if also political) response to his readers' generic and contextual expectations (2002, 146, 149).
- 13 For a reading of narcissism as a *collective* condition affecting the entire kibbutz in Oz's short story 'Nomad and Viper,' see Brenner (2003, 208–20).
- 14 For diverging readings of the significance of this plotline as striving towards psychological and social unity, on the one hand, or as consolidating a Zionist outlook on the other, see Balaban (1993, 179–85) and Mazor (2002, 2–3) versus Cleary (2002, 179–81).
- 15 The notion of 'emancipation' is overdetermined, of course, in the context of European Jewish history, given its association with the Enlightenment-era expansion of Jewish political and social rights in Europe throughout the nineteenth century, following the post-revolutionary emancipation of French Jews in 1791. For a general overview of this period, see Goldfarb (2009). Aamir Mufti argues, drawing on Arendt, that emancipation laid the ground for Zionism by granting individual but not corporate rights to Jews: it 'strip[ped] Jews of the possibility of having a distinct political identity that might become the basis of a struggle for rights' in Europe, such that the Jews' 'restoration' to Palestine becomes 'a means of imagining the final resolution of the political crisis of the modern world' (2007, 55, 78).
- 16 See the discussions of this novel in Balaban (1993), Cleary (2002), Mazor (2002), Omer-Sherman (2004; 2006), and Grumberg (2011).
- 17 The claim that 'Israeli doves are no pacifists,' that Oz himself is a 'peacenik, not a pacifist,' and that there 'is no chance of survival for a pacifist Israel' appears five times in *Israel, Palestine, and Peace* alone (1994, 5, 16, 47, 69, 108).
- 18 Gover names Oz as a representative of a 'hegemonic voice,' along with Grossman and Yehoshua (1994, 18).
- 19 On Oz's reliance on Jungian archetypes, see Balaban (1993), especially pp. 1–7. Oz regularly cites Spinoza (along with A. D. Gordon, the founder of the non-Marxist labour Zionist movement Hapoel Hatzair) as a point of reference in his interviews and essays.
- 20 Machover sharply rebuts this view: '[M]ost Israeli leaders genuinely wish for peace – *peace on Israel's terms*: their cherished wish is that the Palestinian people, dispossessed and subjugated, should peacefully accept their lot and give up the struggle. While the colonisers' aim is to impose peace – on their own terms and, if necessary, by force – the indigenous people tend to have a

- rather different view of the matter. Their concern is not to make peace with their dispossessors but to resist being dispossessed' (2010, para. 12).
- 21 I discuss this context in more detail elsewhere (Bernard, 2010, 349–50; 2012, 199–200).
 - 22 See the entry for *The Case for Peace* at: <<http://eu.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0471743178,descCd-reviews.html>>.
 - 23 See, for instance, Cleary, who argues of *A Perfect Peace* that 'because there are no Palestinians in the novel, there are no subjugated knowledges, no outlawed memories, to infuse [Sheikh Dahr] with alternative significance' (2002, 172). On Oz's use of Palestinians as vehicles for his protagonists' emotions, see Ramras-Rauch (1989), Chapters 11 and 12.
 - 24 Hillel Halkin translates the phrase as 'like coolies all day long' (1993b, 210), which captures its racial offensiveness but leaves out the light-dark opposition at work in both passages.
 - 25 Hebrew-language critics of Oz's fiction have frequently accused him of an anti-Mizrahi politics, with particular reference to his racist depiction of the Moroccan Michel Sommo in *Black Box* as a dogmatic, avaricious, and rabidly right-wing figure. In *Don't Call It Night*, published seven years later, the distinction between Mizrahi and Ashkenazim is still marked, and Mizrahi characters still occupy minor roles, but Oz makes a concerted (if arguably patronizing) effort to include both groups as members of the national community delineated by the boundaries of Tel Kedar.
 - 26 While the indigenous inhabitants of the Negev region were nomadic tribes, this portrayal also has specific political implications. As in American history, Israeli settlement on lands travelled by Bedouins can be justified by the argument that the land does not 'belong' to them; that is, they have no system of individual ownership or fixed residence and therefore cannot be displaced in the same way that settled communities can. Moreover, because Bedouins are not connected to the settled rural and urban communities associated with the Palestinians (and because a significant number of Bedouins serve in the Israeli army), they are not automatically considered to have a sense of Palestinian national identity. For a refutation of this view and a historical overview of the Bedouin community in the Negev, see Abu Saad (2005).
 - 27 For a related reading of the 'Aatef/Noa analogy, in the context of the spatial division between Arabs and Jews in Oz's work, see Grumberg (2011, 68–69).
 - 28 On Mizrahi critiques of the projection of an already realized Israeli pluralism, see Shohat (1988), Chetrit (2000) and (2009), and Shenhav (2006).

Notes to Chapter 5: Intersectional Allegories: Orly Castel-Bloom and Sahar Khalifeh

- 1 For examples of critical studies and anthologies that adopt one or more of these approaches, see Cooke (1996), Domb (2008), Feldman (1999a), and Glanville (2006).
- 2 On the iconography and rhetoric of an already existing women's liberation in Israel, see Hazleton (1977) and, more recently, Feldman (1999a) and Fuchs (2005).

- 3 The term 'intersectionality' was coined by the legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989); it has since become widely used in feminist theory and policy-making alike. For useful discussions of these competing imperatives in relation to Arab and Palestinian women's writing, see Valassopoulos (2007, 8–30), Moore (2008, 1–16), and Ball (2012, 1–17, 46–71).
- 4 For a more recent version of this gendered critique of Israeli militarism from the perspective of a younger generation, see Shani Boianjiu's (b. 1987) English-language novel *The People of Forever Are Not Afraid* (2013).
- 5 For an early portrait of Khalifeh as a dissident figure in the socio-political context of the West Bank, see the Palestinian director Michel Khleifi's 1980 film *al-Dhākira al-khaṣba* (*Fertile Memory*).
- 6 This title is an English transliteration of a Hebrew transliteration of Arabic; the Arabic would normally place the article 'al-' before 'shughl' ('work').
- 7 Deborah Starr makes a similar claim, though with a different emphasis. She notes that the Israeli literary establishment's embrace of the 'arrival' of postmodernism in Hebrew literature has drawn on the discourse of normalization: Israeli texts are 'unceasingly' compared to great European (and North American) works, asserting Israel's membership in 'Western' culture and its status as a 'normal' nation (2000, 222).
- 8 For summaries of the dominant critical interpretations of Castel-Bloom's work, see Ginor (2005, 235–36) and Mendelson-Maoz (2006, 163).
- 9 On Castel-Bloom's failure to include non-Jewish Arab characters in her fiction, see Hasak-Lowy (2008, 99–100). Starr suggests that Castel-Bloom is a Levantinist like her predecessor Jacqueline Kahanoff, the Anglophone Egyptian Jewish novelist, in that both celebrate a vibrant, multiethnic, pre-WWII Levant. However, Castel-Bloom's Levant is 'almost completely devoid of Arabs,' which signals her failure to transcend a Zionist discourse despite her emphasis on the region's 'diversity' (Starr, 2000, 237, 240).
- 10 The Arabic text ends: 'qālū: 'irhāb,' lit. 'they said: terrorism' (2004, 374). The emphatic repetition is the translator's addition.

Notes to Chapter 6: 'An Act of Defiance Against Them All': Anton Shammas' *Arabesques*

- 1 Shammas uses the term 'Israeli-Palestinian' in a later piece (1989a, 11, qtd. in Elad-Bouskila, 1999, 55). For a discussion of the use of this term as a mode of self-description among Palestinian citizens of Israel during the period in which *Arabesques* was published, see Smooha (1989, 172, 211; 1999).
- 2 Translations are taken from Silberstein (1999, 139) and Kimmerling (2010, 223), respectively. For summary and discussion of this exchange, see Kimmerling (2010); Silberstein (1999, 139–45); Masalha (1997: ix, 157); Grossman (1993: 250–77). Shammas' response to Yehoshua appears to refer to Genesis 12:1, 'Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country'; as Yehoshua's first name is Avraham, this is probably intentional. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who drew this point to my attention.
- 3 For a useful comparison of the positions of these three writers, see Kayyal (2008).

- 4 Substantial analyses are included in Hever (2002), Brenner (2003), and Hochberg (2007).
- 5 For example, Brenner's 1993 essay on *Arabesques* in *PMLA*, arguably the most prestigious journal of academic literary criticism in the United States, is entitled 'In Search of Identity' and characterizes the novel as a 'hybrid text' with a 'political-dialogic' agenda, seeking to 'link hostile nations through art' (1993, 432–33, 444).
- 6 On the 'politics of being,' see Brennan (2006, ix–xiii), and my discussion in Chapter 1 of the use of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to promote the idea that political conflict is essentially identitarian.
- 7 Fassuta has been part of the state of Israel since the drawing of the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line), although it was not originally included as part of Israeli territory in the UN Partition Plan of 1947.
- 8 Shammass moved to the United States in 1987 to take up a position at the University of Michigan, where at the time of writing he continues to work as a professor of Comparative Literature, Modern Middle Eastern Literature and Modern Near Eastern Studies. He has not returned to live in Israel.
- 9 Shammass attended the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in 1981. See his University of Michigan faculty webpage: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/complit/people/faculty/ci.shammasanton_ci.detail>.
- 10 The fictional Shammass' father works as a barber and a cobbler, as the real Shammass' father did (Shammass, 1983, 32).
- 11 Though Shammass has denied having based the character of Yehoshua Bar-On on the real Yehoshua (Grossman, 1993, 253), Bar-On's fantasy that a critic will accuse him of using an Arab character as a solution to his personal problems 'and not to the problems of fiction' (A, 91) is almost certainly an allusion to Mordechai Shalev's 1970 critique of Yehoshua's 1968 short story 'Facing the Forests' (Hever, 1987, 194). In the same passage, Bar-On also quotes A. B. Yehoshua twice.
- 12 For a critical account of such readings, see Hochberg (2007, 86) and Ginsburg (2006, 196–97).
- 13 On *Arabesques*' insistence on its own fictionality, see Ginsburg (2006, 190). The epigraph is taken from Clive James' *Unreliable Memoirs* (1981). Shammass makes frequent reference to intertexts in English, Spanish, and other 'world' languages, as I discuss in more detail later in this chapter.
- 14 Shammass articulates his opposition to a non-egalitarian cultural and linguistic 'mixing' more forthrightly in a recent essay, observing that the 'mixed city' of Haifa 'appears initially to be a dialogical linguistic space, a negotiated space, but [...] it's all a sham' (2007, 308). While it is possible to read this essay as a sign that Shammass' politics have become more separatist in the decades since *Arabesques* was written, I see it instead as consistent with the novel's efforts to challenge culturalist models of reconciliation that do not include a political settlement.
- 15 A version of Hever's essay also appears in Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd's collection *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, which popularized the idea of 'minor literature' in postcolonial literary studies (Hever, 1990).
- 16 See Gluzman (2004, 319–20), Hochberg (2007, 73–75), and Kayyal (2008, 36).
- 17 Hever observes the text's parodies of 'dynastic political genealogy,' with

- reference to the account of the etymology of Fassuta's name, a 'Jewish-Crusader compromise' (A, 11; Hever, 1987, 56).
- 18 The assumptions Shammās challenges affect the reception of 'Jewish' writing too, as Alcalay has noted: 'Shammās has also presented solid reason to examine, a little more thoroughly this time around, some of the ethnocentric assumptions that have so long and exasperatingly governed so many (un)critical readings of "Jewish" writing' (1993, 279).
 - 19 For an overview of this literary history up to the time of *Arabesques*' composition, see Ramras-Rauch (1989).
 - 20 See Ginsburg (2006, 196–202), Hochberg (2007, 85–91).
 - 21 Feldman offers another explanation: 'all this chronology' allows Shammās to 'eat his cake and keep it too' in an attempt to 'reconstruct mythic time while engaging historical memory,' after the models provided by Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez (1999b, 382).
 - 22 On the convergences between Hebrew and Euro-US literary modernism, see Gluzman (2003, 36–67) and Shaked (2000, 113–38).
 - 23 Hochberg notes that the language used in this scene contains a direct reference to the language of the book of Exodus: the Israeli commander's heart 'held to' (*ya-yeḥezak*) the money the Fassutans give him just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened (*ya-yeḥezak*) against letting the Israelites go (2007, 84).

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